

Managing Partnerships Andrew Kelly & Melanie Kelly

Bristol Cultural Development Partnership, 2002

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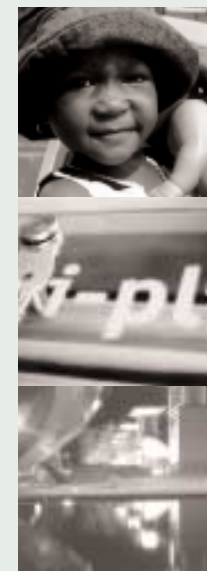
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The illustrations in this book are from partnership projects in Bristol,
or of projects that are managed by partnerships in the city.

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Contents

Foreword	5
Why are partnerships needed and what can they create?	9
What do we mean by partnership and how do we make it work?	21
Concluding thoughts: partnerships, networks, social capital and optimism	57
Notes	61





1. *Anchor Square, At-Bristol*
2. *Broadmead Shopping Centre*
3. *Bristol Legible City*

Partnership working is essential in most public sector and not-for-profit projects. Anyone working in the arts, education, health, housing, regeneration and local authorities generally may already be involved in partnership working or seeking to develop partnerships with other organisations, companies and communities.

This is not surprising: when partnerships work they deliver what those involved want and create wider benefits for society. However, partnerships are not easy to manage, involving sometimes fragile coalitions and alliances, with leaders needing to be brokers and negotiators at the same time as inspiring vision and delivering mission. It is little wonder that the complexity of partnership working is seen to be the most common obstacle to establishing and developing local strategic partnerships – the latest manifestation of joint working – according to the Local Government Association.¹

Despite their importance and the challenges they face, there has been little discussion about partnerships. There is only limited training available in managing them. There are surprisingly few consultancies. Is partnership working simply an abandonment of mutual loathing in pursuit of funding or is it a mechanism for delivering what society needs as well as what each partner wants? The furore over Private Finance Initiative funding for public sector projects in 2001 led some to question not only whether partnership working with the private sector is the right way to make progress, but also whether it is right in principle. Apart from this, there has been limited debate nationally (there has been a lot in Bristol) and the academic literature is not extensive, though it is better in the US than here. This is partly due to extensive partnership working being relatively new, even if the word and concept is already stale with misuse; partly due to each partnership being unique; and partly due to there being no recognised methods of evaluation.

This short study attempts to open up this debate and so contribute to the creation and development of better partnerships in the future. It focuses on management – from the development of vision to evaluation. It is put forward as a starting point: even from this limited survey, it is clear that more work is required to assess the value of partnerships, identify where they work most effectively, and determine how best to manage them in the future.

To highlight some of the points raised in the literature and in the material we have gathered from research, case studies based on interviews with participants in partnership development and management in Bristol are used. Over the past decade, many partnership initiatives have been formed in Bristol, covering activity as diverse as housing the homeless, tourism, economic development, community regeneration, culture, transport and city communications and information, among others. A study based on the experience of only one city may be restrictive, but we believe that the lessons learned here, good and bad, are applicable elsewhere.

It should be noted that this is a personal view: one of us has been involved in partnership management for 10 years; both of us have been involved in research about the management of not-for-profit projects for the past six years. The main example used is the Bristol Cultural Development Partnership (BCDP), which Andrew Kelly has managed for seven years. The findings also reflect the experience of establishing, and leading initially, six partnership companies or initiatives of BCDP: At-Bristol, the city's successful millennium project; the Harbourside performing arts centre; the Brief Encounters Short Film Festival; the Animated Encounters Festival; DA2 – the Digital Arts Development Agency; South West Arts Marketing agency; and Bristol 2008, the bid to be European Capital of Culture. Lessons have been learned also from involvement in Bristol Legible City (BLC – a partnership promoting better movement and information in the city), from working with and learning from other Bristol partnership companies and from workshops and conferences where partnership working has been debated.

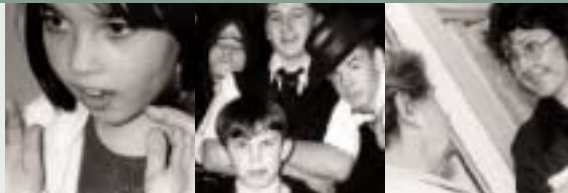
The study covers the role and benefits of partnerships, examines key issues that make a successful partnership and identifies some of the challenges of partnership working. Section one looks at Bristol and the reasons why partnership working was needed and accepted. Section two investigates what we mean when we talk about partnership, the challenges partnerships face, and some of the answers to these challenges found in Bristol. This is followed by a discussion about how partnerships can be managed better in the future. Some concluding thoughts consider partnerships, networks, social capital and optimism.

It is worth saying finally that this strives to be an honest document. Bristol has achieved much through partnership working. There have also been failures and mistakes have been made. Exploring these, as well as successes, as part of this debate, and learning from them all, will help those involved in partnership working achieve greater success in the future. We should remember that the most important partnership of all is that of marriage and co-habitation. More honesty here could help reduce divorce rates. More honesty in our working partnerships will help create better partnerships in the future.

Many people have been of help in the preparation of this study. We would like to thank especially Adrian Ellis, Barry Taylor, Paul Smith, Alastair Brook, Karen Thomson, Lyndsey Renwick, Caroline Collier, Dave Sproxton, Colin Mercer, Ron Griffiths, Keith Bassett, John Savage, Penny Gane, John Hirst, Keith Harrison, Nicky Rylance, Mike Zeidler, Anna Schiff, Chris Humphrey, Mike Rawlinson, John Hallett, Richard Holden, Councillor Helen Holland and Andrew Gibbins. This book was published for the first Managing Partnerships Conference, Bristol 2002. We would like to thank Bristol City Council, Broadmead Board, Western Partnership for Sustainable Development, At-Bristol, South West Regional Development Agency, Business Link West and South West Arts for their support for the conference. None of these are responsible for what is said here, which remains the view of the authors.

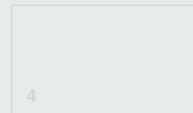
Why are partnerships needed and what can they create?

Cities will prosper through new leadership and partnership between public, private and voluntary sectors; between local, national and international government; between regional agencies and the city. Crucially, they need partnership between the people of the city and those that lead and manage it.



John Gardner, the American political scientist, wrote 30 years ago that community renewal started with communication between elected politicians, business people and minorities in a city.² This is a good starting point, but more is needed.

The complexity of modern society, the search for funding and the competitiveness of the global economy demand complex solutions. Old forms of governance and representation are changing and need to be changed further and quickly. If cities are to prosper, they need new leadership and partnership between public, private and voluntary sectors; between local, national and international government; between regional agencies and the city. Crucially, they need partnership between the people of the city and those that lead and manage it.



1. *Lawrence Weston Kids' Theatre*
2. *Lawrence Weston Boys' Youth Project*
3. *Northern Arc information bus*
4. *Easton Community Nursery*



College Green, Bristol

Three decades on from Gardner, we have moved from communications to a position where partnership working is a fact of life in the delivery of cultural, housing, environmental, health, education, urban and community regeneration projects, among others. It may simply be a funding relationship, a partnership between a business and an activity. It may involve a strategic alliance between public, private and voluntary sectors. It may be a partnership developing a major capital project.

Despite this change, the management of partnerships has yet to be addressed. Partnerships require new ways of working including the development, motivation and co-ordination of networks of stakeholders, the strategic assimilation of different organisational cultures, skills in leadership and marketing, and a focus on process as well as product and outcomes. As this is achieved rarely, there is a need to identify how partnerships can be managed better in the future.

Why are Partnerships Needed?

Partnerships are needed because, in most cases, they are the only way most city projects and services can be delivered. A city is made up of organisations, companies and people. It contains pressure groups, special interest bodies and opinion formers as well as excluded groups – all stakeholders in the jargon. It will be subject, especially in a boom, to development pressures at the same time as needing to maintain and enhance green space. It must meet statutory requirements as well as promote areas of activity where involvement is discretionary. It may have an informal responsibility for a wider area than its defined physical boundary. All the time, it has to look forward to create a new future, and to ensure that all are involved in decision-making and debate. Finally, it needs to consider the most important stakeholders of all – those too young to participate and those not yet born.

Partnership working is both informal and formal: partnership with a small p, in the sense of building alliances and relationships, as well as Partnerships, capitalised, in joint ventures and limited companies.

Each requires similar skills. Take BLC, the initiative to promote better and easier movement in Bristol through new signage, artwork and information. BLC is an informal partnership of many organisations and companies including Bristol City Council, Adshel, South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA), Bristol Tourism and Conference Bureau, Harbourside Sponsors Group, Broadmead Board and Public Art South West. It does not exist as an organisation, and yet is responsible for a major project. It is not just a joint venture, an arrangement between the local authority and a private sector company. It seeks to integrate the work and wishes of amenity groups, artists and transport companies. It has to manage these as well as the partners and stakeholders in each organisation. The Harbourside Sponsors Group, for example, brings together Lattice Properties, Crosby Homes, JT Group, Bristol City Council, Crest Nicholson, the Bristol Chamber of Commerce and Initiative (BCCI), SWRDA and Lloyds TSB in co-ordinating the development of the whole of Canons' Marsh, 66 acres of prime waterside space in the city centre.

Other partnerships have similar and just as complex groups of stakeholders, many involving members of the public, with some operating across the region, not just in the city.

The Complexity of the City: the Bristol Context

Bristol, an historic port, is the leading city in the South West of England and a centre of excellence in aerospace, education, financial services, law, retail, media, new technology, arts and culture. The city has a population of 405,000, though it caters for a sub-region of just over one million people, meaning that it has to provide at least regional facilities, even though it has only a city budget. Twenty-eight per cent of the working population is employed in banking, finance and insurance. Just over 25 per cent are employed in the public sector and education. The next most significant areas of work are distribution, hotels and restaurants, manufacturing, transport and communications. Bristol is also strong in tourism, in its own right as well as being a gateway city to the South West. Politically, Bristol City Council has been under Labour Party control for nearly 20 years.

Since 1993 Bristol has undergone a transformation, moving out of recession to become the economic powerhouse of the South West. Bristol City Council has ditched its reputation for conservatism to embrace innovation in many areas of service delivery. Aspirationally, Bristol has moved from being a city reluctant to play its full role as a regional capital to becoming a major European city with ambitions to grow further. At the heart of all this has been the promotion of a better quality of life for all. Community development is paramount, sustainability is a key principle in city transport and business and, though once peripheral, arts and culture are now central, symbolised by the bid to be European Capital of Culture in 2008.

There are many reasons for this renaissance. Growing economic prosperity, local government reorganisation, a more amenable city council approach to development, national lottery support and government investment (especially in regeneration funding), have all played their role. Most significant of all – in that this underpins all other work, providing the conditions for success – has been the decade-long partnership working between public, private and voluntary sectors in the city.

Bristol's partnerships include:

At-Bristol
 Bristol 2008
 Bristol Community Housing
 Bristol Community Sport
 Bristol Cultural Development Partnership
 Bristol Regeneration Partnership
 Bristol Tourism and Conference Bureau
 Broadmead Board
 Building a Better Bristol
 Business Link West
 Connexions
 Rough Sleepers Initiative
 West of England Strategic Partnership
 Western Partnership for Sustainable Development

These have created significant achievements for Bristol, ranging from major capital projects to small initiatives promoting education, housing and retail, among others. Just as important are the relationships that have been built in the city and the region and the trust that has been developed, as well as the greater awareness on all sides of the difficulties each face and the opportunities available.

Through partnerships, Bristol has got its act together as a city, encouraging the development of new ideas and wider involvement, promoting debate and knowledge-sharing in networks and presenting a better case to government and investors. More resources have been made available for project development, including considerable investment by private companies, with BCCI alone providing nearly £15 million over 10 years to support partnership initiatives. And this has not just been for big and fashionable projects – though these have been prominent. Partnerships exist on community development, housing the homeless and solving drug abuse just as they do on economic development, capital cultural projects, town centre management and festivals.

What have partnerships done for Bristol?

- Provided space for independent thinking
- Brought new people into projects
- Helped find new solutions to old problems
- Created new vision
- Built local confidence
- Created trust in the city by national government and investors
- Brought in greater investment, including Single Regeneration Budget, New Deal, and lottery
- Promoted better co-ordinated services
- Helped build a higher quality of life for people in the city and visitors to Bristol
- Provided long-term thinking

Successful Bristol partnership projects

- Maritime – the Matthew; Festival of the Sea; restoration of Underfall Yard
- Social – helping to house the homeless by developing understanding, food voucher scheme, one-stop shop, Bristol Foyer, rough sleepers initiative; after-school arts and sports activities for school students
- Retail – successful city centre management established with expansion planned
- Tourism – better marketing through new partnership between Bristol and Bath
- Environment – New Deal scheme and environment festival
- Culture – Doors Open Day; Brief Encounters Festival; Animated Encounters Festival; At-Bristol; Bristol 2008; South West Arts Marketing; new investment in sports facilities; strengthened arts sector

Though partnership working is now central to Bristol's development, the city came late to the idea and suffered as a result when dealing with national government and funding agencies. Why did Bristol embrace the partnership approach? There were three factors: an embattled city facing serious decline; a sustained campaign by the local media demanding change; and determined action by knowledgeable and influential people in public, private and voluntary sectors in the city. In short – there was a need to change and the will to change.

Bristol in the late 1980s and early 1990s was facing major problems: manufacturing industry decline was relentless; recession had started to overwhelm the inherent resilience of Bristol's diverse economy; the port was sliding into deeper trouble; major companies and retailers had begun to leave the city centre for expanding out-of-town locations; housing conditions remained poor in many communities; homelessness seemed to be reaching epidemic proportions; there was social unrest in the south of the city; traffic congestion appeared

to be getting worse, and with it the threat to health and the environment; and government hostility towards Bristol seemed to be confirmed by rate-capping, the imposition of an urban development corporation and the rejection of an important City Challenge bid.

The feeling of impending doom was intensified by the influence of the media. It was possible for the city to shrug off some criticism, but not the sustained campaign in the local and regional media, backed up by occasional broadsides from the national press. This suggested that Bristol had lost its way and was being left behind by other cities, that local government was letting the city down, that the private sector was heading for a fall and that the economic, social and environmental prospects for ordinary citizens were being blighted.

But these factors might not have been enough in themselves to inspire successful partnership working. The third factor was the determination of particular individuals in the public, private and voluntary sectors to understand one another better. Those involved went beyond the traditional hostilities that had dogged the city's progress, recognising that partnership did not mean relinquishing one's own interests, and grasping the opportunity to make Bristol a great city once again. This quickly moved beyond vision and rhetoric – for example, when Bristol City Council and BCCI stood shoulder to shoulder on the issue of persistent government under-funding of public services in the city.

All this led to shifts in planning and development. Wider involvement in governance has posed challenges: private sector companies had to learn about and cope with public sector bureaucracy and what they saw, often correctly, as endless and pointless consultation; elected members had to accept that others could help run the city and that decision-making had to be accelerated. It meant overcoming suspicion and building trust.

Bristol City Council has had to undergo great change. Responsibility for city development traditionally resides with the local authority as only an elected body has a democratic mandate and can, in theory,

be ejected by an electorate dissatisfied with its record. This has changed, first due to the emasculation of local authorities by central government; secondly, due to central government direct involvement in city affairs; and thirdly, due to a realisation that achievement is impossible through one organisation only. There is also a crisis of local democracy. Many local authorities operate as one-party states, elected by fewer and fewer people, in what is a vicious cycle of decline. Electoral turnout in Bristol is better than in comparable cities, but the council still felt it necessary to embark on a major campaign to strengthen local democracy by introducing a citizens' panel and taking a range of other initiatives.

Involving the business sector in governance was also difficult. 'If they want to get involved, get elected' was all too prominent a refrain in Bristol 10 years ago amongst some councillors.

Given the needs of city development, partnerships offer one way forward. They are not perfect, but they do bring relevant stakeholders into governance and help and promote economic and cultural life and social cohesion. Partnerships also help overcome the short-termism of politics and business. Governments are driven by elections; business, by the bottom line of return on investment. Partnerships look beyond these to create long-term thinking and action. They make projects, and create the culture, that offer both the magnets and the glue to build a better quality of life for all, and attract companies and people to a city and help to make them stay.³

Successful cities in the future will be those which extend governance further and which embrace change. Globalisation and e-commerce could see the further decline of cities. Only those which have common purpose, backed by action and resources, will succeed. Above all, cities have to rethink how they present themselves, both to their existing customer base and to the outside world. For cities to appear on the map of the 21st century they will need to focus on how they communicate, and in particular how they can trade on their differences. Successful cities will be those that are engaging, welcoming, accessible and easily understood. Joining up within the city offers one way of moving towards this.

To do this requires partnership between all who live and work in the city – a huge, complex but essential task. This does not mean that the leadership role of a local authority is no longer valid and Bristol's partnerships have never sought to usurp this role. For all their limitations, democratically elected bodies, when they work well, satisfy the leadership needs of the city and are still the only bodies capable of developing a vision shared by enough people to make it meaningful. Bristol City Council now works in partnership on most major projects, without sacrificing its leadership role. If there are issues raised about partnerships now, it is that there are too many and that the local authority does not lead them sufficiently.

Bristol's first partnership was formed to build and operate the Matthew, the replica of John Cabot's ship that sailed to Newfoundland in 1997, 500 years after the initial voyage. The success of this project, and the associated Festival of the Sea, offered a high profile for Bristol, at little cost to the city council. The partnership was formed in 1993 and helped to build confidence in working with the private sector. The Bristol Cultural Development Partnership (BCDP) was one of the first city-wide strategic partnerships. Demos, a British think-tank, described BCDP as '...a creative idea – the first independent agency formulating and implementing the strategic cultural policies of a large European city.'⁴ The case study provides further details:



Bristol Cultural Development Partnership

BCDP is a partnership of Bristol City Council, South West Arts (SWA) and the Bristol Chamber of Commerce and Initiative (BCCI). The partners are involved because all want to see the full potential of Bristol realised. Specifically, Bristol City Council can only deliver key projects by working with others; for SWA, a strong Bristol helps create a strong region; for BCCI, and for the others, great and prosperous cities are built on culture and good cultural facilities.



BCDP is a limited company, with the three partners taking most board places. Directors from business, higher education and individuals from community organisations form the rest of the board. It has two core members of staff. Its brief is to develop and implement a medium-to-long-term strategy for cultural development. Over the past six years it has created new heritage and leisure buildings, public art and film festivals and has been involved in lobbying local and national government, organisational change and consultancy. The aim has been to initiate projects and, once established, move on to new initiatives. By doing this BCDP is able to innovate consistently.

There were great expectations of BCDP right from the start when a local consultancy put forward the proposition. One of the first independent organisations, possibly *the* first, to adopt what is now called cultural planning – a strategic, integrated approach to culture and the management of cultural resources – it was not only going to deliver results, but use creative ways of developing new projects. It would have a long-term outlook; risk was welcomed; projects built on the strengths of Bristol to exploit opportunities and use the skills of organisations and people in the city. BCDP works with both commercial and subsidised organisations. The definition of culture was left deliberately wide, with an initial concentration on arts, technology and the environment. This was essential to avoid sterile discussions about words and to concentrate on action.

Much of this work has been successful. BCDP has cost £600,000 over seven years. During this time, it has helped attract over £100m of investment.⁵ Most important of all, BCDP has contributed significantly to the enhancement of quality of life through the creation of cultural buildings, a renewed city centre, new arts programmes and extended support for existing organisations.

There have been some failures, not least of which was The Harbourside Centre, a proposed flagship concert hall and dance studio which collapsed in acrimony, when the Arts Council of England (ACE) refused to provide final support in 1998 after it had already invested £4.5m. Another was stabilisation, an ACE lottery programme

Clifton Suspension Bridge – one of Bristol's many tourist attractions promoted by Bristol's tourism partnership.



to help arts organisations renew their artistic mission to achieve long-term creative and financial stability. This failed, as two of the three organisations involved were unable and unwilling to deal with issues of change. Generally, however, the record has been positive.

The history of BCDP shows some of the benefits of partnership working. Outcomes have included the promotion of synergy in aspects of city development, greater levels of involvement and participation in projects, increased financial support, and a higher quality of management and marketing skills in cultural organisations as well as a greater profile for the city. Schemes that found it difficult to make progress – such as the project that eventually formed At-Bristol – have had help in development, including early feasibility work, fundraising, management and, sometimes, financial support. Peter Hewitt, Chief Executive of the Arts Council of England, in the midst of the failure of The Harbourside Centre, acknowledged the importance of the approach, saying 'There is a very good partnership between the private and public sectors which is determined to improve the arts in Bristol.'⁶

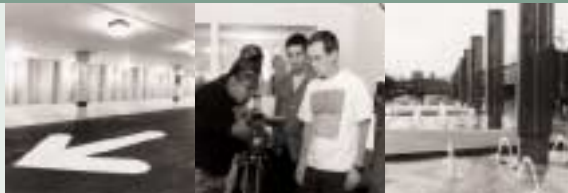
The fact that partnership working continued after The Harbourside Centre disaster is testament to the success of the Bristol experiment (the renewal of BCDP is covered later). Barry Taylor, formerly a senior officer in Bristol City Council, now at the University of Bristol, says: 'Partnerships have made all the difference. As well as the obvious, tangible products of partnerships – from buildings to projects to events – there are the more subtle benefits. These include a shared sense of purpose and progress, greater civic pride, a significantly improved reputation and a better atmosphere in which to work. The overall transformation has been extraordinary – it is as though the city has recaptured the pioneering spirit which is an essential part of its character but which went into near-hibernation during the rigours of the 1980s and early 1990s.'

The reasons for this success, as well as some of the challenges of partnership working, are covered next.

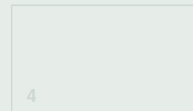
What do we mean by partnership and how do we make it work?

21

Partnerships believe that more can be achieved together than alone. They are about promoting creativity and creative thinking, using collaboration to tackle complex issues and find new solutions.



Partnerships exist in many areas of work and life. These include: arts and culture; communications; community banks; community safety; conservation; economy and employment; education; energy; environment; health; housing; local government; prisons and criminal justice; R & D and technology; roads and transport; sports facilities; tourism and leisure; urban regeneration; welfare.



1. At-Bristol car park
2. Centre for Employment and Enterprise Development
3. Bristol city centre
4. Bristol 2008 Seven Ages street art project

Though they have increased in importance in recent years, public/private partnerships are not new: the 1909 Chicago City Plan, for example, was the result of collaboration between public and private sectors.

There are many different types of partnership. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, partnerships are a 'person associated with others in business of which he shares risks and profits (one who engages jointly).'⁷ In Bristol the legal definition of partnership would be added where partners are 'jointly and severally liable' for failures and successes. However, there is more. The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) in their 2001 report about public/private partnerships said: 'PPPs are a risk-sharing relationship based upon an agreed aspiration between the public and private (including voluntary) sectors to bring about a desired public policy outcome.'⁸ Demos says 'At the centre of the idea of partnership is collaboration. Partners work together in a mutual fashion to achieve a common goal' by bringing different resources, constituencies and skills together.⁹

We would take this further. A partnership initiative brings together people and organisations from public, private and voluntary sectors sharing risks, failures and successes, to maximise intellectual and financial resources for a common purpose for long-term development. Fundamentally, they are about creating a community – those who may or may not have interests in common, but who want, or need, to achieve social goals. This aim may not be philanthropic. A business performs better where there is social harmony and prosperity, where educational attainment is high, and where there are good cultural facilities. Even enemies collaborate for the greater good: Bristol's two football teams set aside long-held rivalry to back Bristol 2008, for example.

Even rival football teams can work in partnership – Bristol Rovers and Bristol City



Partnerships create what Chris Huxham calls collaborative advantage:

...when something unusually creative is produced – perhaps an objective is met – that no organization could have produced on its own and when each organization, through the collaboration, is able to achieve its own objectives better than it could alone. In some cases, it should also be possible to achieve some higher-level...objectives for society as a whole rather than just for the participating organizations.¹⁰

Partnerships may be informal, where organisations collaborate in response to new funding schemes, or formal, where projects are planned and implemented through joint venture companies and charities. They are not just networks, though networking is a key role. Distinction should also be made between strategic partnerships and project partnerships. Both are about joining together and adding value to the work of individual partners – pooling, allying and linking financial, intellectual and physical resources, as management writer Rosabeth Moss Kanter says.¹¹ Partnerships are also about connections and connectivity, 'joined-up thinking', building links between groups, organisations, communities and individuals responsible for development.

The foundation of partnership working is the belief that more can be achieved together than by working separately. It is not about privatising services: it is about promoting creativity and creative thinking to tackle complex issues. A BCDP principle has been that the wider the network involved the greater the opportunity for innovation. Additionally, and influenced much by the work of companies and organisations as diverse as Hewlett Packard, Disney and Black Mountain College, creative collaboration in teams is encouraged. This is both formal and informal: formally,

with companies, groups and individuals joining the local authority to fund and manage projects; informally, with strategic work on capital initiatives, arts marketing, media development, festivals, city renewal. Both approaches have seen input from companies, organisations and individuals who would not normally have become involved, even though they may be affected fundamentally by such projects. More pragmatically, partnering with companies means that neither BCDP, nor most of its projects, has had to pay for legal and accountancy work and office space, and does not have the burden of administering salaries. Other partnerships have seen an immediate boost to income in being able to claim VAT and rate relief.

What Makes a Successful Partnership?

The best partnerships – and hence the most successful – are formed for opportunity, not simply in response to failure. Those formed simply because things have gone wrong rarely work. Those establishing partnerships need to answer key questions: how can vision be created and shared? How can mission be delivered? How are stakeholders identified, integrated and managed, especially hard-to-reach groups, ethnic minority communities and others? How can the needs of individual partners be delivered as well as the overall aims of the partnership? What is the right management structure and how should boards be created and managed? How can relationships be made and developed? What specific skills and competencies do partnership leaders need? Where do we find these people? How are partnerships accountable and how should they be evaluated? Above all – what is the opportunity and what is needed to deliver that?

One of the leading American not-for-profit think tanks, The Drucker Foundation, has identified partnership principles. They believe that partnerships require not just an understanding of the values, goals and constraints of each member, but also the values, goals and constraints of the partnership itself. Partnerships must, in addition, translate goals into measurable targets and timetables. Finally, partnerships rely not just on clarity of mission but also on a mutual understanding of partners' roles.¹²

The Bristol experience suggests the following additions. First, there must be an overwhelming need to work together with all partners accepting that each is unable to achieve what it wishes to do on its own, whether solving drug abuse, building a concert hall, developing a literacy initiative, creating social housing. Linked to this is that each partner needs to be honest about motivations and recognise that all may expect to gain, and encourage such self-interest when necessary. Thirdly, whatever form the partnership takes, there needs to be a marketing focus so that relationships are built with stakeholders. Good relationships are essential; without them progress is limited and the brokerage role required to achieve enrolment in sharing and implementing vision cannot be created. Fourthly, credit should be ceded to others, preferably to partners. Fifthly, short-term solutions are few. Whilst quick wins are important in building confidence, the timescale should always be the medium-to-long term, with significant results often occurring only after the partnership ceases to exist or be involved. At-Bristol opened five years after the partnership was first formed, for example.

There is a need for continuous organisational development. Partnerships need to promote widespread learning and knowledge, not just about the partnership itself, but for partners and other stakeholders. Information sharing is an attribute of successful partnerships, as it leads to better and more informed decisions. This can be modest: a press clippings service provided to the board of At-Bristol meant that all were aware of developments and could respond quickly to the demands of the Millennium Commission. It may be extensive: through conferences, seminars, publications and regular informal updates, key stakeholders in BCDP have been involved in a programme of continuous development since 1993.

Partnerships must be action oriented, even to the extent that they are prepared to end their existence once work is complete. Above all, the right conditions and people need to be in place. In his study of critical success factors in social phenomena, *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell says that change leaders need to be connectors, mavens and salespeople. *Connectors* are networkers who know a lot of



At-Bristol and Millennium Square – a new visitor attraction, a new heart to the city, and Britain's largest paddling pool.

people and know the right people; *mavens* accumulate knowledge and want to tell people about that knowledge; *salespeople* – well, they sell. This is not all that is needed: the knowledge that connectors are trying to impart to the right people must stick and the context has to be right.¹³

Though he did not look at partnerships, Gladwell is describing the reasons why Bristol has made a success of partnership working in recent years: a few knowledgeable people were hired who had messages to sell to people who wanted to hear. The context was right in that there was a need, and a receptive audience, with an elected political leadership wishing to work in partnership for the good of the city. The message also stuck. Finally, all partners worked to create the right context. Nowhere is this more evident than with At-Bristol, Bristol's successful millennium project, as the case study illustrates:



At-Bristol and the Redevelopment of Canons' Marsh

When the redevelopment of Canons' Marsh, 66 acres of dockside city-centre land, was first mooted in Bristol, the priority was a new concert hall. In the end this project failed. What was successful, even though there were no plans for this initially, was a millennium project, At-Bristol, made up of two new visitor attractions: Wildwalk, a natural history media centre, and Explore, a hands-on-science centre. These, together with an IMAX cinema and two new squares, have created a new heart of the city, as well as being successful visitor attractions, bringing in one million visitors within 18 months of being opened.

It took a long time to get the project going. It started with the natural history media centre, then known as the Electronic Zoo. Bristol City Council took the project up first, then BCCI, then the Bristol Development Corporation. None could deliver as time and financial resources were limited and the city was not ready. Vision, funding and will combined, however, with the arrival of BCDP and the launch of the millennium lottery fund. BCDP created Bristol 2000.

Bristol City Council and BCCI led the formation of the Harbourside Sponsors Group, a partnership to develop the waterside area of the city, providing land and seed funding. English Partnerships provided significant investment, £18m in total, and the partnership as a whole encouraged the Millennium Commission to make it a landmark project. A strong chairman and board saw the project through. It opened in June 2000.

At-Bristol brought together vision, will, the means to deliver, and sheer hunger for success, all at a time when good projects could get support. It is one of the most successful millennium projects, with nearly double the number of admissions originally anticipated. The impact is wider than crude visitor numbers. At-Bristol, and the work of the Harbourside Sponsors Group, illustrates effectively that partnership projects can succeed. A new area for leisure has been created, providing wider cultural choice to residents and visitors. Bristol is now a world-class centre for education about science, technology and the natural world – critical issues for the third millennium – and At-Bristol helps reinforce Bristol's position as a media centre of international excellence.

The success of At-Bristol has helped promote the wider commercial scheme on Canons' Marsh. Initially, it was thought that culture and leisure facilities would follow the development of new offices and housing. They have, in fact, led it. Over 3,500 permanent jobs will eventually be created in the mixed-use development renewing a brownfield site.

It is possible to illustrate social and cultural impact for many different elements of the project. A new bridge across the harbour, for example, has an arts impact, through the use of an artist in design and construction, and a social impact in terms of allowing easier mobility around the area and improved physical access to buildings. It also promotes better links between Arnolfini and Watershed, two leading Bristol cultural organisations. Finally, as it is named after a slave, it provides an important reminder of the most shameful aspect of Bristol's past.

The best partnerships have the skills to prosper in, and take advantage of, a rapidly changing economy and society. Such organisations are flexible, 'adaptable to change, with relatively few levels of formal hierarchy and loose boundaries among functions and units, sensitive and responsive to the environment [and] concerned with stakeholders of all sorts – employees, communities, customers, suppliers, and shareholders.'¹⁴ They '...empower people to take action and be entrepreneurial, reward them for contributions and help them gain in skill and "employability"'.¹⁵ A partnership, free from the burden of bureaucracy, is able to be this type of organisation. Partners themselves need to adopt similar cultures. Partnerships are likely to prosper if each of the key partners has a healthy organisational culture with the strength, confidence and authority to be flexible.

When Should Partnerships be Established?

Partnerships are seen as a panacea, but they are not relevant for every issue. Partnerships should only be established when there is a need and an opportunity – and then only when more than one group, organisation or sector should be involved. Partnerships that are established simply due to government diktat or to meet the cosmetic needs of a funding application might work, but they are not partnerships. The problems encountered in setting up local strategic partnerships show that more than legislation is needed. Learning Partnership West – now Connexions – was established because of a statutory requirement. What made it a more effective partnership was that this need was complemented by interest locally in linking together complementary work.

The Broadmead Partnership, established to protect Bristol's main retail centre from the threat of out-of-town shopping, now devotes its time to 'planning for expansion' according to co-chair and council leader George Micklewright. This is not simply a matter of new shops: the city council works with BCCI to create a more attractive and safe environment. 'If we imagine the centre of Bristol without Broadmead, or a run down equivalent, the story would be very bleak indeed and

not conducive to our members' needs', said John Savage, BCCI chief executive. 'This provides sufficient justification for the Chamber's involvement.'¹⁶

The Bristol Regeneration Partnership was established in the face of failure, but it was also seeking to make new opportunities, especially in connection with Single Regeneration Budget funding, as the case study illustrates:



Bristol Regeneration Partnership

Bristol Regeneration Partnership (BRP) was set up in 1995, led by Bristol City Council, with key organisations from the city's private, public and voluntary sectors, to act as the focal point for regeneration activity in Bristol. It brings together representatives of Avon Health Authority, Bristol City Council, Black Development Agency, BCCI, Avon and Somerset Constabulary, Learning and Skills Council, VOSCUR (Voluntary Organisations' Standing Conference on Urban Regeneration), South West Trades Union Congress, University of the West of England, City of Bristol College, the Employment Service, Business Link West, Bristol Housing Partnership, the City Council's Education Service, Hartcliffe and Withywood Community Partnership and Barton Hill Community at Heart.

BRP aims to give all Bristol's residents opportunities to contribute to and share in economic prosperity, as well as strengthen local communities. It believes sustained regeneration can be achieved only through the active involvement of local people in schemes that affect their lives. It is organised as an industrial and provident society.

BRP was established after the failure to attract City Challenge support and sought to overcome previous difficulties between public and voluntary sectors. From its establishment in 1995, it was intended that BRP should be a multi-sector, single issue strategic body, but by 1996 it already had a significant management responsibility for Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) funded schemes.



The BRP team



Its core funding comes from the five per cent management and administration funds that can be top-sliced from SRB. BRP has not been funded through SRB to do wider strategic work, but it has done so nevertheless. Examples of this have been responses to a range of government policies, a funding strategy written in 1997, four city-wide conferences, producing the Community Regeneration Framework, advisory work to a range of city-wide and sub-regional partnerships and involvement in the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and European-funded Objective 2 work.

BRP manages seven SRB schemes, five geographically based and two city-wide, working with young people and the long-term unemployed. Since 1995, BRP has secured over £50m for these schemes. Key outputs include: 600 new jobs, 352 new businesses, and 986 dwellings improved or completed. In addition, 55,041 people have benefited from community safety initiatives and 1,885 new child care places provided.

Evaluation is important for BRP. Each individual scheme has an external evaluation element with contracts awarded on the basis of competitive tenders. BRP is undertaking some evaluation work for Hartcliffe and Withywood Community Partnership with residents from Barton Hill as part of a peer training exercise.

Partnership Creation and Development: the Critical Success Factors

Four issues guide the formation of partnerships, their management, and their continued development and prosperity: vision and mission, leadership and leading, a stakeholder focus, and a long-term perspective.

A vision and mission, based on core values and shared by all involved, is essential. This forms focus and common purpose, helps overcome differences of opinion during development and identifies the added value a partnership provides. Time spent on this delivers results later. BCDP has eight core values which guide its work.

These are: partnership, inclusion, audience development, flexibility, good value, added value, public access, and quality. These, in turn, inform the vision of 'a creative city that sees arts and culture as central; that welcomes, promotes and initiates a wide and culturally diverse range of artistic activity; that thinks and acts innovatively, and involves all communities in the enhancement of quality of life for all in the city'. This is a general vision, one that deliberately allows flexibility in the strategy. Research in Bristol shows that most involved in partnerships have a 'very clear understanding' of the aims of their partnership.¹⁷

Vision is important. However, visions need visionaries, and these are partnership founders and leaders. Though partnerships are built on collaboration, they are made up of people. One academic group looking at partnerships in urban regeneration wrote in 2000: 'Partnerships represent complex interpersonal and organisational interactions, so they are dependent on the quality of their people... Personal skills ought to be a key criterion in the selection of managers, staff and even board members.'¹⁸

There are three levels of leadership: partner leaders from organisations making up the partnership, partnership chairs and partnership directors. Establishing partnerships needs top leadership support from all partner leaders. Management writer Daryl Conner calls these sponsors – individuals and groups with the power to sanction and legitimise change.¹⁹ These have institutional weight, peer respect and the ability to commit resources. Such leaders need not form the management of the partnership – that should be left to those most able to deliver – but they need to maintain support. That support has to be sincere. Partnerships take real commitment; they cannot survive long on rhetoric.

Bristol has been fortunate in that in public, private and voluntary sectors there have been enough leaders to foment successful change. A major factor in changing Bristol was the formation of The Bristol Initiative (TBI) in 1990, bringing together civic leaders, business and voluntary sector representatives in an informal partnership.

Under the dynamic leadership of a chief executive, who secured the confidence of the local authority, TBI was able to garner support and resources, motivate the right people, and change attitudes. Critically, it got early media support, in particular through the Building a Better Bristol (BABB) initiative, a conference which launched BCDP in 1993. The TBI's quarterly dinners (it has now merged to become BCCI) have promoted networking and collaboration and, after 11 years, made all sides better aware of the challenges faced by each other and the opportunities available. Such knowledge clusters build social capital and trust in the long term. It is hard to see how partnerships can work where this dynamic support and leadership is not present either in the form of an active chamber of commerce or other initiatives where civic pride has been developed over a long period of time.

There have also been enough leaders in the local authority, especially at political, chief executive and chief officer level, to drive successful change. Again, where these are not present, partnerships will find it difficult to make progress.

Partnership chairs 'are crucial in terms of providing vision and leadership and steering a middle course in potentially stormy water', said one partnership leader. They need to be senior people who are respected, have a hunger for success and time to commit to a project. In all BCDP initiatives, chairs have been sought who want to make change happen. This has worked, though as most have come from business, some council officers and councillors have been critical of them. Some BCDP directors attacked the appointment of a senior private sector leader from a privatised utility to head At-Bristol, for example. However, he proved to be the ideal chair – leadership when needed, always available to support the executive staff, and he delivered the project. Sometimes partnerships need benevolent dictators if success is to be achieved.

Chairs need to lead the board, or steering group, and wider consultative bodies effectively. Boards should be devoted to action, not to being a talking shop. Generally, they should be kept small. Wider involvement and debate should both precede the formation

of the partnership and influence it, but decisions should be left to the board. The best boards are made up of the right people, chosen following an audit of the skills required. They should serve until the job is done and then go.

A high quality chair and a high quality executive officer make the partnership work. The type of executive heading a partnership can vary: they may be full-time and appointed through competitive interview; they may be seconded by one of the partners; some may be managing the partnership as part of everyday tasks. Whoever they are, partnership executives need a variety of skills and competencies. Interviews for a study conducted into SRB partnerships in the South East and Yorkshire and Humberside identified a range of skills needed by board members and regeneration practitioners:

Skills Needed by Regeneration Practitioners and Partnership Board Members

- Preparation of funding applications
- Preparing forward strategies
- Evaluation techniques
- Community consultation by commercial groups
- Partnership development
- Project appraisal
- Value for money
- Financial accounting
- Housing law
- Briefings on current practice – for example Objective 1
- Business planning skills
- Generic training for partnership managers
- Induction and initial basic information for board members
- Asset-based development
- Risk management
- Working with communities
- Using data
- Partnership structures and relationships

Source: Macdonald, K., 'Providing Training for Practical Needs', Urban Environment Today, 13 September 2001, p. 9.



It is rare to find anyone trained or experienced enough with these skills. There are other, softer skills and competencies needed as well. These include imagination and vision; welcoming wide involvement; extensive research ability; diplomacy and tact; lateral thinking; a not-for-profit management ethos with for-profit rigour; creativity in ideas and delivery; the ability to manage expectations as well as ideas. They need to be confident, understanding of others, have patience and staying power, and be passionate and dogged in pursuit of goals. A thick skin is useful, belligerence is sometimes needed, but this should not lead to arrogance. They need the experience, training and knowledge of the academic, the realpolitik skills of the politician and an endless capacity for work. They must be able to work across all sectors and with many different people. They need to be articulate and enthusiastic. They should have freedom to operate, to speak openly and honestly. They should be as at ease with a community organisation in a depressed area as with a council officer, a cabinet minister, a member of the Royal Family. They should be intolerant of bureaucracy and look to the future, not the past. They are risk managers, not risk averse. They have to be trusted. Given that most partnership work takes place with stakeholders, one leader said that what is needed is 'people skills, people skills and people skills'.

Above all, they need to make a difference. They need to be connectors, mavens and salespeople. Having the right skills is important; using these skills is essential. It is no good just building relationships and alliances – these need to be used; leadership is good, but extending leadership to others is essential; being able to conduct research is a rare skill – using what is found effectively is even rarer. Because of the skills and competencies needed, most of the best partnership leaders come from organisations or companies outside of the mainstream, and sometimes from outside the city. Certainly much successful change in Bristol in recent years has been driven by these outsiders.

Chair, board and executive need to be able to engage with community leaders and gain their support, confidence and trust. They should have a sympathetic approach to public sector

organisations involved in partnerships, in particular those who hold elective office. Even if local authorities are facing a democracy crisis, it is necessary to work to involve and integrate local people in discussions. Partnerships need to enrol and manage a range of organisations, companies and individuals. No partnership should start without a stakeholder analysis identifying who to involve, how to involve them, and what each expects and needs to get out of the partnership. It needs to embrace all, though the intimacy required with individual stakeholders differs with each project. It helps to achieve the balancing act required in moulding competing agendas into common purpose. This is not easy, as Jim Hacker, the fictional British politician, found in *Yes Minister* when he debated partnerships with a businessman and trade union leader:

Sir George Conway: I'd just like to repeat that there's nothing wrong with the principle of partnership provided that there's no interference in management decisions from the state or the work force.

Presenter: Thank you, Sir George. Joe Morgan?

Morgan: Dear, oh dear, oh dear. We all know that Sir George Conway is talking out-of-date capitalist claptrap. If partnership is to mean anything at all it must be an equal partnership of unions, government and industry. In that order.

Presenter: Minister – a final word?

Hacker: Yes, well, I think basically we're all pretty much in agreement. Fundamentally. Aren't we? We all realise that if only we can work together we can forge a new Britain. And I'm delighted to have had this chance to talk about it with two of the principal forge...principal participants.²⁰

Finally, only a long-term perspective can allow the necessary flirtation, courtship and marriage to create trust and confidence and build, enrol, sustain, develop and renew the stakeholder base. BCCI sees its role in terms of decades, not years; the Bristol partnerships need a similar timescale to create the capital infrastructure required, and build public and private sector support to fulfil the role and aspirations of the city. Even though many years have passed, there remains much to do to fulfil the partnership vision and mission.

The Challenges of Partnership

Partnerships sometimes go wrong, or do not work. There are many challenges in partnership working relating to the concept itself, through to the inability of partners to work together and deliver, to partnership leaders being unable to lead. Partners may be available, but not suitable; some not involved may oppose the partnership. The Western Development Partnership, an organisation devoted to economic development across the sub-region, never recovered from a poor start and is operating better now as a straightforward inward investment agency. The partnership behind Bristol's high-profile Harbourside Centre failed to survive the decision of the Arts Council of England not to provide funding. The City Council is now working on its own on concert hall development, even though they will ultimately have to work with others to deliver the ambitious project needed.

Managing partnerships is not easy, as they demand change to new ways of working, especially for the public sector. Some partners are not used to change, let alone working with others. Partnerships can also alienate people who work in partner organisations. Faster decisions are possible but consultation can be accelerated to such a degree that public and voluntary sector organisations are left behind. In addition, the business relationship is more than charitable giving or sponsorship, as is traditionally seen and as some would wish it. The private sector is an active partner in development. This needs to be recognised. It is not involved simply to provide money, staff and legitimacy.

Aardman Animations, famous for Wallace and Gromit, are involved in partnership working with film festivals in the city. In addition to providing funding support, staff members help to manage and programme two of the film festivals. Festivals are important for Aardman as they help the business retain and attract high quality employees and develop a relevant skills base. They also promote personal and professional development for staff. Finally, they allow Aardman to market their film, advertising and merchandise products.²¹

Adshel is a partner in BLC. There are significant benefits to the city and to Adshel in this partnership. Adshel gets a financial return but they also see Bristol as a shop window for their work. In addition to financial investment, Bristol gains a range of new and modern street furniture and one of the most extensive programmes of urban public art currently under development in the country. It also has the opportunity to promote free-of-charge civic events and cultural activity in the city centre and elsewhere in the country through the use of Adshel poster sites. Adshel is not in BLC for philanthropic reasons: they want a return as much as Bristol City Council and other stakeholders want the benefits. In this case, the return is both financial and in terms of profile, with Bristol being a showcase city for this new type of project and partnership.

Adshel has identified four key needs in working with a local authority: responsiveness, co-ordination, strong political support and a can-do attitude. For them, Bristol has all these factors. From their side, Adshel believe that they offer investment, risk-sharing, flexibility for delivery, an ability to build collaboration with other partners, access to the latest technology, and the contacts to communicate the messages of success. Bristol City Council also point to gaining access to specialists at the forefront of good graphic and street furniture design as one of the benefits of the partnership.

All of these factors – and from all sides – are essential if the partnership is to succeed. It is finding them, and helping to deliver them, that takes time in partnership working, but, given what these relationships have achieved, it is worth it.

Making the connections is one of the challenges facing the partnership leader. As part of this research, partnership leaders were asked to identify other key challenges. Most pointed to inadequate levels of funding, a perennial problem. It is often difficult to make a start: one leader said that the tendency to listen to the one person who says no, more than the others that say yes, is too prevalent. Other issues raised include: identifying and retaining appropriate partners, and managing and reconciling their different and sometimes competing cultures, interests and expectations; achieving a consensus on overall aims, strategy and outcomes; and identifying and engaging those people that count in partner organisations. Others pointed to the problems of making 2 + 2 actually equal 5, the classic partnership formula; coping with poor management skills generally in the public sector; preventing partnership fatigue and burn out; building consensus among key stakeholders; and selecting the right person to lead.

People are key. As one leader commented: 'Managing partnerships internally and externally is a real skill that too few people have. Partnerships are the people that run them and the relationships that they maintain: poor people with little understanding of the ethos and potential of partnerships lead to the inevitable.'

A good example of some of these points is BLC as the case study illustrates:



walkietalkie – Bristol Legible City poetry commission
i-plus information point
Adshel bus shelter

Bristol Legible City

As both a concept and in terms of delivery, BLC has faced and met many of these challenges. Joining up cities and departments in local authorities is not easy, especially in bringing together and managing the stakeholders involved. There was only limited support for the joined-up approach initially. This, combined with a lack of funding, put constraints on early development. BLC has had to create innovative formal and informal working arrangements: traffic engineers work with artists; designers with planners; advertising providers with council officers; tourism with retail. All of these have to work with each other. The position is complicated further as many of those involved directly have no formal contract with BLC, and provide services as part of normal duties. These have to be motivated and made into a team like any other project.

As a partnership, the management structure is loose. A client group, made up of leading partnership organisations in the city and Bristol City Council, brings together tourism, retail, culture and transport organisations, among others. Formal and informal specialist working groups on identity, transport and communications support this. Specialist consultants undertake much of the work, though overall financial and management responsibility remains with Bristol City Council.

The involvement of artists has provided a particular challenge. Sean Griffiths, lead artist, talks about the problems in bringing art to the project, especially in terms of collaboration (itself a problem for the artist used to pursuing a project independently): 'Collaboration is a buzz word of the moment. It, of course, goes hand in hand with the idea of team work but it also obscures the real nature and difficulties of team dynamics', Sean says. He adds: 'Collaboration is suggestive of a cosy sharing of ideas. In the context of BLC, the word evokes the image of the great minds of the artist, the transport manager and the politician meeting across the table. The reality is, of course, not like this. Artists do think in a very different way to transport managers.'



They also speak different languages. This goes for all the members of the BLC team, from way finders to urban planners. Curiously, whilst the idea of collaboration implicitly criticises the received notion of the artist as an egoist and creative force, this received notion seems to persist amongst other people the artist comes into contact with in a project such as BLC.²²

This causes problems. The artist is expected to bring creative genius to the table, but this attitude towards artists can lead to easy condemnation as to their being impractical and too creative. Overcoming this was essential if the BLC project was to be more than a signage replacement system. Here continuing advocacy and persistence paid off.

There were also some difficulties initially within the city council in pursuing the extensive and costly procurement design process. One of the key quick wins in the project, indeed, was the creation of the three main briefs for the work. Finally, the name itself proved problematic. Mike Rawlinson, City ID, term consultant to the project, says 'BLC is not simply a question of signage; it is a philosophy of city communication, management and development. As a result, ownership of BLC was difficult at first within the authority. Ironically, though, it was the nebulous name that proved a key factor in ultimate success as it meant that the project could be seen as being relevant to many departments' work, though much persuasion was needed.'

BLC signage



BCDP has not been immune to the difficulties described above, despite its overall success. Challenges faced include lack of clarity of purpose, confused governance, "departmentalism" amongst some partners, funding, and a failure to agree methods of evaluation.

The most serious problem for a time was lack of clarity and purpose. Though strategy is agreed annually, for some time it was not clear what each of the partners wished to get out of the partnership. This may be inevitable. Partnerships, and partnership leaders, need to have freedom to operate. However, this must not be done in a vacuum – the ultimate *raison d'être* for partnerships is what can be done to assist, but more especially add to, the objectives of each partner. Too much freedom, without strategy and partner networking, can lead to accusations of pursuing a personal agenda, though a personal vision may not be a bad thing on occasion. It is clear at the same time that where a project exists, partnership is much easier to create and develop: keeping interest high for a concert hall is easier than maintaining interest in strategic development.

Governance has also proved a problem. Though it worked well initially, the BCDP board failed to gel after five intensive years of activity. Directors were confused about roles, rights and responsibilities, and continuity of activity was difficult due to absenteeism and political membership changing annually with local government elections. More serious for a time was the lack of business people willing to become involved. This was partly the price of success as some senior members of the BCDP board moved on to manage BCDP initiatives such as The Harbourside Centre. For a time, though, it looked as if there were no new business leaders emerging. Partnerships need new participants to renew thinking and to spread the burden.

Why is there reluctance to get involved? The time required is one factor; another is that some fear becoming involved in a talking shop. There may also be concern induced by seeing those currently involved suffering from partnership fatigue.

An additional cultural problem is the acceptance of the principles of partnerships by some of the partners. This is particularly the case with the joining of new employees who often question the role of an external body encroaching on their patch. There are problems also caused by turnover of staff in partner organisations. Constant education and advocacy about the benefits of partnership working, and what is needed to work in partnership, is essential. Identifying the role of BCDP in cultural development, within the work of SWA and Bristol City Council, needs debate and negotiation to find the added value that working in partnership brings.

Responsibility for BCDP in Bristol City Council up to 2000 was with the arts unit in Leisure Services, even though cultural planning covers more than the arts (the original proposal to be placed in the chief executive's unit was never implemented). A good relationship was developed with Planning, Transport and Development, though this was informal; a more formal relationship was attempted with Education, but this failed – a disappointment given the role of education in developing culture but perhaps not surprising given the crisis Bristol's education service finds itself in. Relationships have improved greatly now that the departments of leisure and planning have merged, though there is more to do. Only when partner organisations recruit staff experienced in working in partnership, or put their staff through partnership training programmes, will this be resolved.

"Departmentalism" exists also between partnerships. The Western Development Partnership (WDP) wanted to work, for example, on the economic impact of the arts and undertake arts lottery planning. High level discussions were needed to offset such potentially damaging work that clashed directly with BCDP.

Another problem is funding. A test of partnerships is when the money runs out (another is the first row). If the partnership is of value then partners should find funding. Some partnerships have decent budgets, though never enough; others, including BCDP, have limited funding available. Core revenue costs were covered

Pero's bridge



in the first three years, but a need to earn consultancy fees, simply to balance the books – in addition to raising project costs of £100,000 annually – created a burden on BCDP staff that was never incorporated in the work programme and went unrecognised by the board. Moreover, working elsewhere – sometimes outside Bristol – diverted attention from core strategy, leaving little time for long-term thinking. This has now been solved.

A final problem is performance measurement. The best partnerships measure activity. However, there is little conclusive published evidence on the value of partnerships apart from that put forward anecdotally. In the case of BCDP, measurement of cultural activity, and of service provision generally, is difficult. Stakeholders have different views about delivery of mission, and assessments of quality of life, social change and new cultural products involve subjective judgements.²³ Bristol City Council defines success as outputs – positive change in economic activity and increased demand for services – and in resource acquisition and fundraising. These are standard performance indicators. The problem is that such indicators are of limited value in assessing cultural activities. The position is complicated further by the fact that partnerships, as long-term projects, need long-term evaluation.

Accountability is a related issue. In their report, IPPR said that working in partnership led to increased accountability, transparency and responsiveness. The Bristol experience suggests that this is the case, as more stakeholders have become involved in debate and governance generally, and in helping promote more informed decisions about things that affect their lives and their work in particular. Those involved in partnerships in Bristol think hard about this issue. Research shows 35% are accountable to the organisation they represent, 34% to the people of Bristol with the rest being accountable to the partnership.

Communities, not Community

One of the common challenges posed to partnerships worth exploring in detail is that of involving the community. We need to define our terms carefully. What is meant by community is either the voluntary sector, or a particular group. In the complex societies we live in, and the complex organisations we need for success, we need to be working with *communities*, not seeking representatives of a homogeneous body which is not there. In Bristol we deal with many communities in creating and developing partnerships: geographic, interest, ethnic, gender and sexual orientation. A good illustration of this is the work with different communities for the Capital of Culture bid. These include the Somali community, the black community, women, gays and lesbians, the media community, the jazz community, among many others.

Another example is Bristol's film festivals. These involve a particular interest group with the media community in the city, nationally and, increasingly, internationally as the case study illustrates:

Bristol's Encounters Festivals

BCDP has initiated two film festivals: Brief Encounters short film festival and Animated Encounters. A Bristol short film festival was proposed initially by staff in Aardman and BBC Bristol. Originally anticipated as a one-off event to celebrate the centenary of cinema, success in 1995 led to Brief Encounters being launched as an annual festival the following year. Animated Encounters was launched in 2000 backed by the local industry, with financial support from DreamWorks from 2001.

Both festivals have achieved considerable success with audiences, critics and film-makers due to BCDP devoting resources to the project in those crucial early stages when no time is available and little funding exists. Equally important were media involvement and investment; sponsorship opportunities and a strategy to achieve funding; a market-centred approach which generated new audiences and

maximised stakeholder involvement; and a private sector that wanted to make things happen and was prepared to invest the initial funding.

It is the city's media that provides the festivals' strength. Bristol has a strong record in short film production and animation in BBC Bristol, Aardman, A Productions, bolexbrothers, Fictitious Egg and 4.2.2 Videographics, as well as a talented pool of freelance and independent talent. This forms a community, as David Sproxtton, from Aardman, says: 'It's not just that the facilities are there but rather the attitude and culture are in place to help generate excellence in creativity, with a sense of co-operation and understanding which is difficult to articulate in abstract terms but which you almost feel when you encounter it. I guess it's something to do with the spirit of the place which encourages not only participation in creativity but also great aspirations.' Many sponsors of the festival talk about the importance of interacting with this community and providing support to it.

Encounters, the organisation that manages both festivals, is a not-for-profit organisation. This means that there is a wide customer base, there are stakeholders, not shareholders, it is reliant on public funding and sponsorship for support and any surplus made is retained for future project development. Based on this, there have been key principles in the Encounters approach to sponsorship and fund-raising: there is a wide base of stakeholders involved and a relationship is developed with each; sponsors and funders are stakeholders; a marketing, customer-centred approach is taken which involves a continuous search for new sponsors and funders; this is long-term, not short-term and three-year funding is arranged where possible on a rolling programme; good value for money is always given; a return is always provided; time is not wasted approaching stakeholders who are not interested – there are always targeted approaches.²⁴

The result is two successful festivals. It has not all been rosy – the board needs strengthening currently – but their reputation and near-capacity audiences are testament to the fact that the projects started right and the partnerships have been managed well ever since.



Scene from the film *Rush*, a Brief Encounters project.

Enrolling significant communities in Bristol was a challenge also with the Canons' Marsh development. After making considerable progress with the cultural projects, the associated commercial development hit the buffers with planning permission refused twice. It was only after the plans were changed substantially, following the most extensive and scientifically balanced public consultation that has ever taken place in Bristol, that it gained the support of key stakeholders and the general public.

Analysing and Enrolling Stakeholders

From the personal experience of being involved in Bristol's partnerships and in research and discussions, it is clear that the key task is managing stakeholders. There are three levels of partnership stakeholders. First, those immediately connected to the partnership; secondly, project stakeholders; finally, the extended stakeholder family in the community, regionally, nationally and sometimes internationally. The table provides BCDP stakeholders in 2001:

BCDP Stakeholders	
Resource Providers Bristol City Council Bristol Chamber of Commerce & Initiative South West Arts Consulting income Other grant-awarding bodies and charitable trusts Private sector sponsors: Wessex Water, BT, Crest Nicholson, Burges Salmon, Pearce, SWEB	Customers For projects For consultancy work Suppliers Paid for equipment and services Pro bono equipment, office accommodation, services

BCDP Stakeholders contd.	
Personnel Staff Board Employees Volunteers Political Local and regional councillors Local and regional MPs MEPs Department for Culture, Media & Sport Owners and Enablers Funders	Community – Geographic Bristol – residents/ visitors/ business Regional – residents/ visitors/ business Regional cultural and government agencies National cultural and government agencies Community of Interest Arts organisations Wider cultural organisations Business/ civic leaders Regional and national arts organisations, business and government agencies General Bristol population Wider regional population Commentators and Influencers Local/ regional media National media Associated Partnerships At-Bristol Brief and Animated Encounters DA2 South West Arts Marketing Agency Other Bristol partnerships

This creates a wide stakeholder portfolio. Bringing together, satisfying and exceeding the needs of all these involves time-consuming research to assess needs and wants. However, as a result, projects are more robust with wider involvement at all levels than might ordinarily be achieved. This is particularly evident in recent BCDP work on establishing a new arts marketing agency, determining capital priorities, developing a strategy for media development and work on the programme and campaign for Bristol 2008. For all these, practitioners, artists and administrators, business people and the people of the city have debated opportunities and future strategy.

The Bristol position is not dissimilar to initiatives elsewhere. The Leeds Initiative, established in 1990, brings together a range of partners:

The Partners of the Leeds Initiative

Leeds City Council
 Leeds Chamber of Commerce and Industry
 West Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council
 University of Leeds
 Further education colleges
 Leeds Metropolitan University
 Leeds Health Authority
 West Yorkshire Police
 West Yorkshire PTA
 Business sector
 Leeds/ Bradford International Airport
 Yorkshire Television
 Leeds Voice
 Yorkshire Post
 Civic Trust
 TUC
 Culture and arts sector
 Environment sector
 Retail sector
 Government office

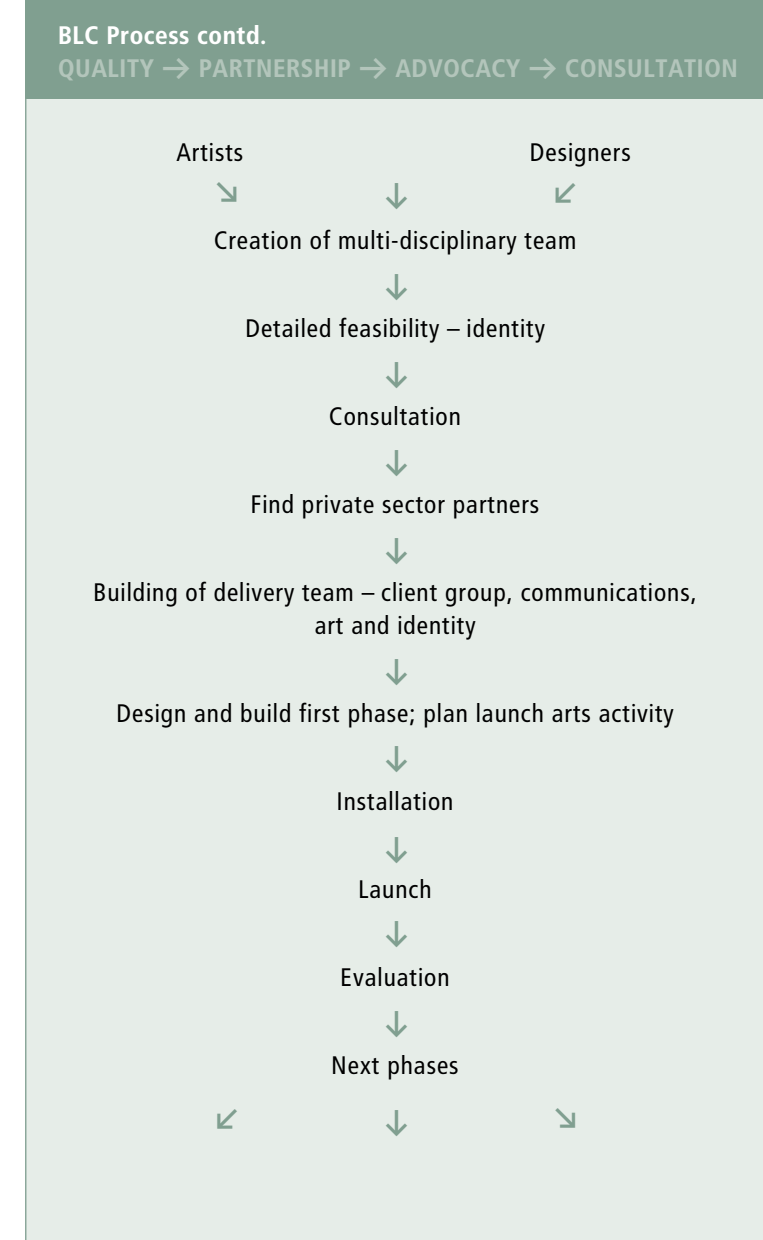
How Have These Challenges Been Met?

Many of the challenges described above are inevitable. Most relate to renewal – the period, five-to-seven years into a partnership, when new energy, thinking and membership are needed. Some are the result of embarking on new ways of working. In establishing new BCDP partnerships, the aim has been to start right: develop a shared vision and mission, appoint the right chair and board directors, total quality management as a principle, a marketing-centred approach in practical application, and regular review and appraisal. There have also been attempts to promote better partnership co-ordination, but monthly meetings could not be maintained initially. This has been disappointing, particularly where interesting and profitable opportunities could have been developed relating to sustainable development and the arts and greater regional cultural planning. A new attempt, restricted to fewer partnerships, started in 2000 and has been more successful. Meetings between partnerships – and preferably co-location of officers where more than one initiative exists – are essential also to overcome problems of loneliness and isolation, two of the problems faced by partnership leaders according to a review of partnership working in the mid-1990s.

The solution to these challenges is often simple, though sometimes still elusive. In the case of BLC, for example, at a basic level, well-organised meetings with regular attendance, which are minuted correctly and action arranged, ensure smooth management. Informal networking outside regular meetings maintains momentum. Regular contact with council officers, those with a long-term commitment and responsibility for the project, means relationships with the city council are maintained. Finally, leadership at the political level, again, from someone with a long-term relationship to the project, is essential for maintaining links with elected members. The principles of partnership come into their own here, with differences of philosophy, approach and working practices discussed openly and compromises achieved. Fortunately, leading councillors – especially the recent chairs of planning and the council leader who promoted the concept of neighbourhoods – supported the initiative and this meant that the project had the critical political support.

BLC needs to develop further. Though the process has been smoother than most partnerships, more formal management is required for the project to develop in the future. A charitable trust to manage the arts programme is being established. The client group may need a more formal constitution as a partnership with an independent chair. And communications, not a priority so far, will need greater resources to promote the debate needed for progress and to learn from stakeholders. There is also a need for member, officer and partner training programmes to ensure that all are working effectively and are at least aware of the needs and responsibilities of working together, though this is a wider issue for all partnership working.

Ideally, and with hindsight, the strategic approach should have been as follows:



Renewal has been critical for BCDP. A new strategy was agreed in October 1999. Deliberately, strategy development was lengthy, it was done with the partners and reflected a wide consultation exercise. For the first time in three years, the partners agreed the strategic direction of BCDP. Given problems of governance, the management of the implementation of the strategy was devolved to a new executive group. All three partners agreed to increase their funding to meet the needs of the new strategy, though it took pressure from two to convince the third. For one year, BCDP performed to programme. The onset of Bristol 2008 meant that all existing work was put to one side with all resources devoted to the bid.

Further renewal took place in 2001 with the board being strengthened to take on the 2008 bid. New members include: Nick Porter, Managing Director, Unite Group; Ruth Davey, Bristol East Side Traders; Bertel Martin, Afrikan Caribbean Arts Forum; Derek Lickorish, Managing Director, SWEB; Paul Kearney, Managing Director, Bristol United Press. These are in addition to the representatives from Bristol City Council (where the membership is now all party), South West Arts and BCCI. The result is a strong and united board focusing on a specific task. BCDP is thus working to its full potential.

With Brief Encounters, effort was taken to attract the right board members, ensure that their role was clear and that they contributed to and shared vision. The festival goes through an annual review where the report is treated as an awareness exercise in how the project is meeting, and exceeding, objectives. All key funders and sponsors are interviewed annually to identify views and future needs. Every two years, a review seminar determines future strategy. Extensive resources are devoted to marketing and an assessment of the impact of marketing. Finally, a commitment is made to staff training and is delivered annually following appraisals. It is interesting to note that, after six years, it was felt that the original mission and objectives of Brief Encounters had been achieved. As a result, the organisation was renewed, new staff appointed, and Animated Encounters, a partner festival, launched successfully.

Even Canons' Marsh has continued to make progress. The revised plans received the unanimous approval of the Planning Committee in late 2001, bringing to an end a debate that had jeopardised not only the partnership running the project, but had threatened to set Bristol's development back at least five years.

Most partnerships evaluate their work. New performance indicators, and measures of social, cultural and economic impact for BCDP specifically, as well as for other not-for-profit organisations generally, are being prepared.²⁵ Techniques used include assessing objectives against delivery through to measuring what has been achieved in economic, social and cultural terms. Research work includes benchmarking, mystery shopping, customer complaints and comments, membership numbers, improvements in service. At the basis of evaluation are the questions 'has the partnership made a difference?' and 'what would Bristol be like if the partnership had not done its work?'

Some partnerships evaluate themselves; others commission external consultants. All agree that it is best not to be obsessive about evaluation – too much auditing leads to paralysis by analysis – and, in any case, it is difficult to measure a partnership's work, especially where success is often taken by a partner. There is a natural tendency for a partnership not to crow about what it has done, preferring to get on with the next project.

Further evaluation work is needed. It would be interesting to have some overall assessment of what partnership working has achieved in Bristol over 10 years. In addition, local government corporate governance audits will demand greater assessment of the value of partnership working.

The Fragility of Partnerships: Partnership Working and Tough Decisions

Working in partnership and having a stakeholder view does not remove the need for tough decisions. It makes them harder. Taking and managing tough decisions tests relationships, and even where such action takes place within the pursuit of agreed vision, they can still end collaborative working. Stakeholder enrolment can only go so far. At-Bristol suffered a public row in Autumn 1999 when the founder of the Bristol Exploratory, a hands-on science pioneer, attacked Explore, its replacement, as being the preserve of business people, and its science philosophy as nothing more than a masquerade. The Exploratory vision remained important. However, new management was needed to build, administer and develop a £40m project.

Another problem was the fallout from The Harbourside Centre debacle. When the project collapsed, the Harbourside Centre board considered legal action against ACE. Bristol City Council did not like this, but as a creditor remained within the organisation. Settlement of outstanding issues meant that legal action was averted, as was a damaging split between public and private sectors in the city.



*Harbourside – one of the great success stories
of Bristol's partnerships*

Conclusions

Despite all the challenges, partnerships in Bristol have been successful. One partnership leader felt that partnerships had created a 'feeling of greater engagement and progress in a wide range of work encouraged by the dynamic tension of leaders from different backgrounds working together'. Another said that the difference had been 'tremendous'. For him, partnerships have created a culture that 'enables things to happen and a sense that we are all working towards common goals'.

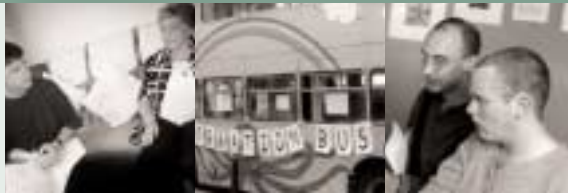
Talking about BCDP, Barry Taylor says: 'What's impressive about the Partnership is the fact that despite its relatively meagre resources, it achieves consistently high quality output across so many fronts. From promoting the development of cultural buildings, humane urban spaces and innovative sign systems to getting new arts projects off the ground and initiating research and debate about culture and cities, the Partnership is both prolific and effective. Its work is informed by a broad but coherent notion of culture and sustained by energy, commitment and good communication. The Partnership deserves a large slice of the credit for Bristol's continuing renaissance.'

The success of partnerships is based on hard work by all involved. There are many challenges in managing partnerships. Given the range of people and organisations involved, the basic problem is the management of multiple stakeholders. New thinking is needed here. If we look at partnerships as not simply organisations, but as networks, and manage this extended family of stakeholders, we will have better partnerships in the future.

Concluding thoughts: partnerships, networks, social capital and optimism

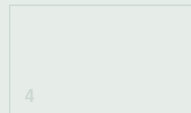
57

A cultural shift is needed to put partnership working at the centre of city development. We must go beyond counting logos to build and use relationships for the common good. Networking, managing networks, and building social capital are key.



Already important, partnership working will become critical to the future development of social and public projects and the regeneration and management of cities.

This is not just expediency; where partnerships work, greater innovation results, often surprising ideas emerge, and more resources are found. The results are good for society and for the partners involved. A cultural shift is required, however, to put partnership working at the centre of thinking about city development. The relationship with business and organisations needs to go beyond counting logos on a funding application. We need to pursue continuously our search for organisations, businesses, communities and people that we can work with and to build relationships with these.



1. Inner city lifeline – Bristol Care & Repair
2. Northern Arc information bus
3. 'Your scheme' – Brave new world
4. Bristol 2008 Seven Ages singing group project

We shall achieve this by promoting excellence in partnership management. This requires a marketing focus by partnership leaders, partners and their staff if stakeholders are to be engaged, enrolled and the fragile relationships that develop be nurtured and maintained. The critical issue is that it is not only an organisation that is being managed, but also a network of stakeholders. Wide networks promote creativity and innovation, but the search for collaboration and synergy requires time, and networks that emerge can be difficult to manage. With projects, the network becomes wider still. Creating the network and building network capacity is the partnership. Making a successful partnership work needs the management of this network. Thinking in terms of network, rather than organisational management, enables more creative thinking and innovation through the incorporation and enrolment of stakeholders. It helps also to identify the added value of partnerships, overcoming problems of departmentalism.

Networks involve the bringing together of a range of people – internal and external to the organisation – as teams of knowledge workers devoted to working together to achieve results and the necessary trade-offs, which the organisation and its partners need for success. Management is about building networks, promoting consensus and co-operation, seeking opportunities and solving problems jointly. The organisational culture of managing networks needs to be a flexible one, promoting involvement and integration. It should eschew elites and hierarchies in favour of flat structures, teams and coalitions. Partnership leaders are conductors, guiding stakeholders, maximising the performance of each for the common good. Their task is to lever creativity by ensuring better interaction and uniting missions and aims.

These are the strategic issues. Other, practical things are needed. Greater awareness of what partnerships have achieved through research, better case studies, even perhaps a journal is essential. Correspondingly, there is a need to build the capacity of partnership staff and existing and future staff in partner organisations. From the recruitment pack, which should stress the importance, history and

future of partnership working, through specific training programmes when in post, staff working in partner organisations need to be made better aware of the needs of partners and better able to participate in and benefit from partnership working. It may even be worth introducing a special qualification in partnership management. As well as building staff capacity, there is a need to renew boards, even to consider paying some directors.

Above all, we need to create a new group of partnership entrepreneurs as the builders of tomorrow's cities. These will be leaders committed to social progress and serving the city. They will be highly educated and trained, marketing-adept, able to take good ideas and deliver them. They must be able to build the relationships needed for success, consult well and effectively. We need to ensure as well that council members and officers, private sector developers, voluntary sector campaigners, are all trained better. They need to know more about the city they work in, its history, the views of its citizens (not just the usual suspects), and its regional, national and international responsibilities.

There is a wider reason for building partnerships. There has been much talk about the decline of social capital – those essential institutions and networks that make up and help maintain a healthy society. Concerns range from the fall in involvement in parent-teacher meetings through to lack of engagement in politics. If we are to create what society needs, this decline needs to be reversed. Building partnerships between stakeholders responsible for city development is one step forward.

Building and managing partnerships is not easy, though. Ten year's experience in Bristol means that important lessons have been learned. What is clear is that partnerships have transformed Bristol, turning the city where good ideas came to die into the city that gets things done. Without them, it is easy to imagine where Bristol might be now. Above all, partnerships have created a new mood of optimism. Cities need optimists. In his book *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*, David Landes says: 'In this world, the optimists have it,

Notes

not because they are always right, but because they are positive. Even when they're wrong, they are positive, and that is the way of achievement, correction, improvement, and success. Educated, eyes-open optimism pays. Pessimism can only offer the empty consolation of being right.'²⁶

Innovative projects require innovative management if creativity is to prosper and delivery is to be achieved. Though the lead responsibility in city development is the local authority, wider partnerships are needed to bring in the full range of experience, knowledge, skills and funding required. The issue, then, is one of managing a wide network. Bristol is fortunate in having a decade of partnership working to learn from and develop further. Through this work, it has levered creativity and promoted innovation, helping to build a new city.

- 1 See *Urban Environment Today*, 6 December 2001, p. 24.
- 2 See Jaworski, J., *Synchronicity: the inner path of leadership*, San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1996, p.63.
- 3 See Kanter, R. M., *World Class: thriving locally in the global economy*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995.
- 4 See Landry, C. and Bianchini, F., *The Creative City*, London: Demos, 1995, p.53.
- 5 See Kelly, A., and Kelly, M., *Impact and Values: assessing the arts and creative industries in the South West*, Bristol: BCDP, 2000, pp. 22-23.
- 6 Quoted in Adburgham, R., *Partnership in Governance: 10 years of the Bristol Initiative*, Bristol: BCCI, 1998, p. 61.
- 7 See the dictionary definition in Sykes, J. B., *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976.
- 8 See *Building Better Partnerships: the final report of the Commission on Public Private Partnerships*, London: Institute of Public Policy Research, 2001, pp 2-3.
- 9 Jupp, B., *Working Together: creating a better environment for cross-sector partnerships*, London: Demos, 2000, p. 7.
- 10 Huxham, C., (ed.) *Creating Collaborative Advantage*, London: Sage, 1996, p. 14
- 11 Kanter, R. M., Stein, B. A., and Jick, T. D., *The Challenge of Organizational Change: how companies experience it and leaders guide it*, New York: The Free Press, 1992.
- 12 See 'Emerging Partnerships: new ways in a new world', *Report of the Drucker Foundation for Nonprofit Management*, New York: The Drucker Foundation for Nonprofit Management, nd. Available at <http://drucker.org/forms/partners.pdf>
- 13 See Gladwell, M., *The Tipping Point: how little things can make a big difference*, London: Little Brown, 2000, 288pp.
- 14 Kanter, Stein and Jick, op. cit., p. 3.
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 Quoted in *Bristol Partnership Directory*, (BCCI, no date), p. 20.
- 17 See *Take Your Partners: conference report*, Bristol: Bristol City Council, nd.
- 18 Carley, M., Chapman, M., Hastings, A., Kirk, K. and Young, R., *Urban Regeneration through Partnership: a study in nine urban regions in England, Scotland and Wales*, Bristol: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2000. p. vii.
- 19 Conner, D. R., *Managing at the Speed of Change: how resilient managers succeed and prosper where others fail*, Chichester: Wiley, 1998.
- 20 Lynn, J. and Jay A., *The Complete Yes Minister*, London: BBC Consumer Publishing, 1989.
- 21 Information based on results of interview with David Sproxton, 2001.
- 22 Information provided by Sean Griffiths, January 2001.
- 23 For general information see Kelly and Kelly, op. cit.; and Kanter, R. M. and Summers, D. V., 'Doing Well While Doing Good: dilemmas of performance measurement in nonprofit organizations and the need for a multiple-constituency approach', in Powell, W. W. ed., *The Nonprofit Sector: a research handbook*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987, pp. 154-166.
- 24 For further information see: Kelly, A., 'Briefly Encountering Short Films', *Journal of Media Practice*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2000, pp. 108-113; and Kelly, A., 'Creative Partnerships: fundraising for short film projects', *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 9-20.
- 25 See Kelly and Kelly, op. cit., and Matarasso, F., *Use or Ornament: the social impact of participation in the arts*, Stroud: Comedia (1977).
- 26 Landes, D., *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*, quoted in, Johnson, E. W., *Chicago Metropolis 2020*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001, p. xv.