

Successful Partnerships for Economic Development

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the role of the private sector and civil society in local economic development has changed significantly. Business and civil society were seen as part of the development problem, whereas over the past couple of years they have increasingly been recognised as key players in the local economic development discourse.

A spatial cross-section partnership model is actively being promoted through this paper in the belief that it contains a valuable win-win potential. Active and structured collaborative relations between the various sectors of society are believed to increase the possibilities of tackling the pressing social, economic and environmental challenges and make important contributions to societal development as well as benefit the various partners in the collaboration.

1. INTRODUCTION

The World Bank (2003:4) states that Local Economic Development (LED) offers local government, the private sector, the not-for-profit sectors and the local community the opportunity to work together to improve the local economy. Canzanelli (2001: 9) states that LED is a process where the local actors shape and share the future of their territory. Blakely (1994: xvi) argues that LED refers to the process in which local governments or community-based (neighbourhood) organizations engage to stimulate or maintain business activity and/or employment.

These statements seem to emphasize the relevance of a spatial cross-section partnership, i.e., they refer to the different partners working together towards a common or shared spatial objective, for example increased employment for a specific region or city. Therefore it is possible to argue that in effect LED is or should be primarily based or founded on an effective spatial cross-section partnership. LED is thus about partnerships, or at a minimum it pre-assumes an effective partnership between the local stakeholders in reaching the shared spatial objective/s.

The Collective Leadership Institute developed the partnership cycle through which they argue that working in partnership holds real benefits; for example 1) the pooling of competencies and experiences, 2) increased problem-solving capacity, 3) increased learning ability of the partners and 4) the increased likelihood of implementation (<http://www.empowering-partnerships.org/Why-partnerships.43.0.html>). Given the suggested partnership advantages, it seems only logical or it pre-assumes that the LED effort should be based on an effective spatial partnership.

On the other hand, it is possible to argue that some of the non-delivery of the LED effort or non-realization of the LED potential in South Africa (SA) and KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) can be attributed to haphazard or failed spatial partnerships. For example when the stakeholders follow their own mutual exclusive interest, the allocation of scarce resources may be sub-optimal. The accompanying Pareto sub-optimal allocation of resources¹ and associated rising opportunity costs could significantly constrain the economic future and welfare of its citizens.

¹ An allocation is Pareto non(sub)-optimal if someone's utility can be increased without harming anyone else, by effecting another arrangement. See Buchanan (1985) Ethics, Efficiency, and the Market, pages 7 and 8.

It is therefore possible to argue that an effective spatial cross-section partnership is a necessary but not sufficient condition for LED. A necessary condition for some state of affairs S is a condition that must be satisfied in order for S to obtain. A sufficient condition for some state of affairs S is a condition that, if satisfied, guarantees that S obtains. Conversely mistrust, competition for resources, resistance of key people/organizations etc seems to be a sufficient condition for failure but not a necessary condition. Failure of the LED effort can therefore in some way or form be attributed to the lack of an effective spatial cross-section partnership.

The paper is structured as follows. The next section will include a brief international overview of spatial cross-section partnerships. Section 3 will put forward some of the key characteristic or attributes of successful spatial cross-section partnerships. A discussion on two theories of partnerships for LED will be the focus of section 4, whilst a discussion and development of a spatial cross-section partnership model for LED will be the focus of section 5. Finally, the summary and conclusions will be presented.

2. SPATIAL CROSS-SECTION PARTNERSHIPS AND LED: AN INTERNATIONAL OVERVIEW

McQuaid (2000) states that at the local level continued or greater involvement in partnership approaches is likely between public bodies and/or private bodies and non-governmental organisations due to pragmatic factors such as resource constraints, as well as more ideological factors (see Leach *et al.*, 1994). These factors include: a belief in the overall advantages of a partnership approach; the move towards enabling local government, a recognition that any one local actor often does not have all the competencies or resources to deal with the inter-connected issues raised in many policy areas; and greater agreement that urban regeneration should include the genuine participation of the local community.

Helmsing (2001) states that LED may be defined as a process in which partnerships between local governments, community-based groups and the private sector are established to manage existing resources, to create jobs and stimulate the economy of a well defined territory. It emphasises local control, using the potentials of local human, institutional and physical capabilities. Local economic development initiatives mobilise actors, organisations and resources, develop new institutions and local systems through dialogue and strategic actions.

Swinburn and Yatta (2006) gives a number of definitions for LED including

- Local economic development is a strategically planned, locally driven partnership approach to enabling employment growth, poverty reduction and quality of life gains through improved local economic governance. *Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation*
- The purpose of LED for ECOLOC is to accelerate the transition from the informal to the formal market economy. This is achieved through sound analysis, visioning, and careful strategic planning and resource mobilization. It is lead by local government in partnership with the private sector and community stakeholders. *Municipal Development Partnership: ECOLOC Handbook Volume 2*

Swinburn and Yatta (2006) went further and developed ten guiding principles of LED from Global Practice. Guiding principle 4 focuses on partnership, i.e.

- Best achieved through partnerships both for design and implementation. LED strategies are normally designed by partnerships of public, private and community actors led by local governments

The authors conclude by stating that the development of LED policy making and practice has moved from largely project led, investment attraction, hard infrastructure, public sector run to multi-sectoral, integrated, partnership and locally specific strategies involving broad based investments in hard and increasingly soft infrastructure and more sophisticated institutional design and delivery systems.

The International Labour Organization (ILO, <http://www.ilo.org/empent/areas/local-economic-development-led/lang--en/index.htm>) argues that national and local governments, as well as enterprises and other organisations have to rethink development strategies to cope with ongoing events such as financial contagion, globalization amongst others. In contrast to traditional development policies, LED strategies need to promote local dialogue and enable people to be more proactive, amongst other strategies, to withstand changes in the global economic environment rather than top-down development imposed by national planners.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, <http://www.oecd.org/employment/leed/forumpartnerships.htm>) established the Forum on Partnerships and Local Development, which is a network of practitioners in the field of economic development, employment, skills and social inclusion. The Forum aims to build the capacities of stakeholders at all levels to work in partnerships to better tackle current economic and social challenges. It groups partners from national government, local authorities, employment and training agencies, businesses and non-governmental organisations to exchange experience on how to achieve cross-cutting goals in times of limited resources. The OECD states that partnerships can be a great help in improving the performance of LED: area based partnerships provide a mechanism for local organisations, in particular, to work together and adapt their policies to better reflect the needs of people

and the economy at the local level. Partnerships are thus a key instrument of local governance (OECD, 2006).

The United Kingdom (UK) Department for Communities and Local Government (2014) stated that the UK economy is too dependent on a narrow range of industry sectors and therefore need an economy driven by private sector growth. One of the solutions put forward by the UK Government is to create local enterprise partnerships. It is based on businesses and councils coming together to form local enterprise partnerships whose geography properly reflects the natural economic areas of the UK. A local enterprise partnership network has also been established to help local enterprise partnerships share knowledge and ideas.

Given the international emphasis and acknowledgement that spatial partnerships is a necessary condition for LED, it is not surprising that the SA Government through the National Framework for LED (2006) specifically focuses on the issue of spatial partnerships as a key principle underlying LED. It specifically states that “LED involves local, national, and international partnerships between communities, businesses and government to solve problems, create joint business ventures and build local areas”.

3. WHAT MAKES SPATIAL CROSS-SECTION PARTNERSHIPS SUCCESSFUL?

McQuaid (2000) states that the term “partnership” covers greatly differing concepts and practices and is used to describe a wide variety of types of relationship in a myriad of circumstances and locations. McQuaid further states that it has been suggested that there is an infinite range of partnership activities as the methods for carrying out such partnerships are limited only by the imagination, and economic development offices are becoming increasingly innovative in their use of the concept.

Hamann, et al (2009) states that cross-sector (spatial) partnerships involve some form of structured collaboration between organisations from business, government and civil society on the basis of converging interests, focused on achieving joint objectives. Partnerships exist on different scales and take different forms, but they have in common the expectation that the participants can achieve their objectives more effectively and efficiently through strategic alliances with others rather than acting independently.

Aquila (http://www.aquilaadvisors.com/uploads/Chemistry_What_Makes_a_Great_Partnership.pdf) argues that it's critical that the partners focus on what makes a great partnership. The following seven characteristics form, according to Aquila, the foundation of a great partnership:

- The foundation of any good relationship is trust
- Common values is the very foundation for the successful partnership
- A good chemistry comes about as we learn more about the other person
- Set goals for each of the partners at the beginning of the year
- Develop a mutual respect for each other
- Great partnerships create more than the sum of the whole
- Good or great two-way communication

The European Union (EU, 2006) states that partnership working is an increasingly central feature of service provision. They went further and supplied a list of "ingredients" to blend the perfect partnership, i.e.

- The partnership is inclusive and representative of stakeholder interests
- The common interest is a higher priority than individual partner interest
- Partners use "we" when talking about partnership issues

- Partners are willing to change to achieve shared goals
- Responsibilities and rewards are shared
- There is a real will to succeed and dedicate resources to make this happen
- There is a shared vision of what success looks like
- Partners understand and respect each others' diversity and cultural differences
- Partners understand the use of strengths and talents within different organisations
- Effective communication methods are in place
- There is regular review in which partners assess how well the partnership is performing and decide on actions to improve if appropriate

The EU (2006) then states that you need more than just the above to make a good partnership. You need to make the above (ingredients) work effectively and as such the following is critical

- Leadership
- Trust
- Learning
- Review

The OECD (2006) argues that an area based (spatial) partnership is usually designed to bring together all relevant actors within a region that can contribute to improving a given situation on an equal basis. This seemingly simple principle actually raises a number of different issues. Firstly, bring together *all relevant actors*, although not an easy task, as this implies having around one table not only different government institutions but also social partners, entrepreneurs, NGOs, the education and scientific sector, representatives of the civil society and many more. Secondly, partners should have *equal rights* and in cases

where they don't, this should be agreed to as a partnership principle. The third key issue can be summarised under the term *ownership*, which stands for the partners' approach towards their partnership, its goals and its work.

Boraine (2011) draw lessons from Hamann and his colleagues through an overview of the international literature on cross-sector partnerships and through their research into 75 partnerships and analysis of 10 comparative case studies in South Africa. Boraine (2011) make the following observations:

- Cross-sector partnerships have a varied lifecycle, and need to constantly adapt to changing circumstances.
- There is a need to constantly renew partnerships, and not to take them for granted
- To build trust within a partnership, it is necessary to try and understand reasons for underlying mistrust
- A partnership is neither a lobby group nor a public entity
- The calibre of the people working within the partnership is important
- A partnership is only as strong as the partners
- Establish clear roles and responsibilities
- Understand different types of partnership

Kindornay, Tissot, and Sheiban (2014) states that cross-sector development partnerships (CSDPs) are commitments between or among public, private, and/or non-profit institutions in which individuals from partner organizations commit various resources and agree to work cooperatively toward common development goals. The report highlights three key characteristics of successful partnerships, i.e.

- Policy-makers and partnership practitioners should define from the outset the objectives and purposes of a partnership and outline the roles of different actors.
- The level of engagement between and among partners should depend on the objectives and purposes of the partnership.
- In addition to partnership objectives, the comparative advantages of different partners determine the types of value—associational, resource, interaction, and synergistic—derived from the partnership.

The National Centre for Media Engagement (2010) states that successful partnerships engage and transform communities. The majority of successful partnerships shares a lot of similarities.

4. THEORIES OF PARTNERSHIPS FOR LED

McQuaid (2000) put forward the theories of enforced co-operation and Game Theory to illustrate the pressures aiding or hindering co-operation between actors in urban regeneration and economic development policy. The main reasons for enforced co-operation are the threat of a central authority, common objectives or self-interest. In local economic development, co-operation can be forced onto the municipality and other government agencies through legislation or control of financial resources. Private enterprises will have commercial pressures making their motives more 'selfish' while some pressure groups may be primarily concerned with the interests of their own members rather than the wider community. Although self-interest is a powerful incentive for partnerships offering advantages to the individual partners, these may be insufficient to encourage participation, even though this may lead to increased overall welfare.

Axelrod (2001) states that to understand the theoretical foundations of a partnership, it is helpful to use game theory. In game theory, a relationship is defined by (a) identifying the players, (b) specifying the choices they have, and (c) spelling out the consequences of these choices in terms of the payoffs to the players.

- The players are the public (municipality and other government agencies) and the non-public (private sector and communities)
- To highlight the theoretical aspects of a partnership, the choices can be reduced to just two: cooperate or defect. Choosing to cooperate at a given point in time means that the player performs the agreed upon terms of the partnership promptly and fully. Choosing to defect means that the player fulfils its obligations less than completely, or slower than agreed upon.
- The consequences depend upon what each player (public and non-public) has chosen. The basis of a partnership is that there is mutual gain to be had by working together. Thus, if both cooperate, both do well. However, there is typically a temptation to defect, i.e., free rider problem².

The payoff matrix of illustration 1, according to Axelrod, is a fundamental tool for understanding the theoretical foundations of partnerships. The numbers are meant to be suggestive only; therefore what matters is their rank order. Since the payoffs reflect the incentives of the players, each side wants to get as high a payoff as possible.

The first number in each cell is the pay-off for the private sector/community and the second is for the public. R is the Reward for mutual cooperation, T is the Temptation to defect, S is

² The "free rider problem," arising from the fact that an individual may be able to obtain the benefits of a good without contributing to the cost. See Pasour (1981) The Free Rider as a Basis for Government Intervention

the Sucker's payoff for cooperating when the other defects and P is the Punishment for mutual defection.

Illustration 1: A Partnership as a Prisoner's Dilemma

		Public	
		Cooperate	Defect
Private sector and community	Cooperate	R=3, R=3	S=0, T=5
	Defect	T=5, S=0	P=1, P=1

Axelrod (1984) and McQuaid (2000) argue that the rank order of the payoffs in a partnership relationship (from best to worst) is: the Temptation payoff for defecting when the other cooperates, the Reward for mutual cooperation, the Punishment for mutual defection, and the Sucker's payoff for cooperating when the other defects. With payoffs in this order the game is a Prisoner's Dilemma. In game theory, betraying your partner, or "defecting" is always the dominant strategy as it always has a slightly higher payoff in a simultaneous game. It's what's known as a "Nash Equilibrium".

McQuaid (1999) suggests, based on the above payoffs, a number of factors which may promote or hinder partnerships.

- Enlarging the 'shadow of the future', i.e. to increase the importance of the future relative to the present may aid co-operation.
- Co-operation can be encouraged by changing the pay-offs, and by making deflections from co-operation more expensive.

- Partnerships are more likely to succeed if they are seen as a precursor to more intimate co-operation rather than as finite activities.
- Long term relationship can achieve the optimum outcome.
- Emphasis on capacity building to enable more local communities to participate in economic development initiatives.

5. A SPATIAL CROSS-SECTION PARTNERSHIP MODEL FOR LED

What kind of business models do partnerships for sustainable development rely on and what implications do these models have for the management and success of partnerships?

This question has become one of the focal points of attention in the discussion about partnerships, especially for donors and the private sector (The Seed Initiative Partnership Report, 2006).

The OECD (2006) indicates that when developing a successful model the following should be taken into account:

- selecting a partner,
- setting up a partnership,
- choosing a modus operandi,
- building trust,
- achieving selectivity,
- and performing monitoring and evaluation.

The above factors are essentially what differentiate the various partnership models, for example an association is a much more informal partnership model compared to a joint venture model, whilst a strategic alliance model normally doesn't consist of individuals

compared to an association model that predominantly includes individuals. A joint venture or coalition model in general focuses on one specific goal whilst a strategic alliance model or an association model might have multiple goals.

Sleijster (2009) makes reference to **Joint Ventures (JV)** as a possible model. A JV is "an **entity formed** between two or more parties to undertake economic activity together" (Child and Faulkner, 1998). The parties (partners) agree to create a new entity by contributing equity, and they then share in the revenues, expenses, and control of the venture. The venture can be either for one specific project only, or a continuing relationship.

Sleijster (2009) also makes reference to **Strategic Alliance (SA)** as a possible model. A SA is "a **membership driven formal relationship** between two or more organizations to pursue a set of agreed upon goals or to meet a critical development needs". It's a form of cooperation which aims for a synergy where each partner hopes that the benefits from the SA will be greater than those from individual efforts. But importantly each party remains independent from the other. They usually consist of organizations as opposed to individuals.

A **Coalition** on the other hand is an "an umbrella term used to describe a group of people or organizations coming together (**informal relationship**) to achieve a specific goal, usually of an economic and/or political nature (Creech, 2006). Cohen, Baer and Satterwhite (2001) states that a coalition is a union or network of people and organizations working to influence outcomes on a specific problem. Coalitions are useful for accomplishing a broad range of goals that reach beyond the capacity of any individual member or organization.

An **Association** is a model of cooperation between many teams (individuals) which have common views, interests and a number of goals. It leans more towards being a social group. The framework for this kind of cooperation might be set by a common geographical area,

common sets of services, similar constituencies or sector of operations etc (European Union Agency for Network and Information Security).

Networks are generally loose-knit groups formed primarily for the purpose of resource and information sharing. It's a time-bound and purpose-driven group of expert institutions working together, to build each other's capacity and develop solutions for use outside of the network (Creech, 2006).

The below table displays some of the main similarities and differences between the five partnership models.

Table 1: Characteristics of a number of Partnership Models

	Joint Venture	Strategic Alliance	Coalition	Association	Networks
Partner	Two or more organizations	Two or more organizations	Group of people or organizations	Many Individuals	Many Groups
Organized group	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Degree of Organization	Contractual/Legal Binding	Formal	Formal	Informal	Informal
Size of the Partnership	Limited	Limited	Limited	Large	Large
Purpose	Limited and Specific	Unlimited and specific	Unlimited and specific	Unlimited and general	Unlimited and general
Focus	Short term	Long term	Short and long term	Long term	Long term
Partner linkages	Tight	Tight	Tight	Loose	Loose
Common Values	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Resources	Shared	Shared or Individual	Shared or Individual	Individual	Individual
Rules and regulations	Contractual	Formal	Formal	Informal	Informal
Membership	Contractual	Formal	Formal	Voluntary	Voluntary
Degree of Permanency	Temporary	Temporary or Permanent	Temporary or Permanent	Temporary or Permanent	Temporary or Permanent



The characteristics suggest that there exists a specific to general continuum specifically with regards to the formality of the partnership model; joint ventures being the most formal model and networks being the most informal. The characteristics also suggest that joint ventures, strategic alliances are fairly similar and that associations and networks are fairly similar.

The German Institute for International and Security Affairs (2012) states that partnerships can be differentiated mostly based on their goals. Based on this assessment the Institute suggests that most partnerships fall into one of three types.

- Knowledge partnerships
- Standard-setting partnerships
- Service partnerships

Table 2: Types of Partnerships and Partnership Models

Type of Partnership	Description of Partnership	Best Suited Model
Knowledge partnerships	Pool experience and formulate proposals on the best way to implement the spatial goals and objectives as agreed by the partners.	Association, Networks

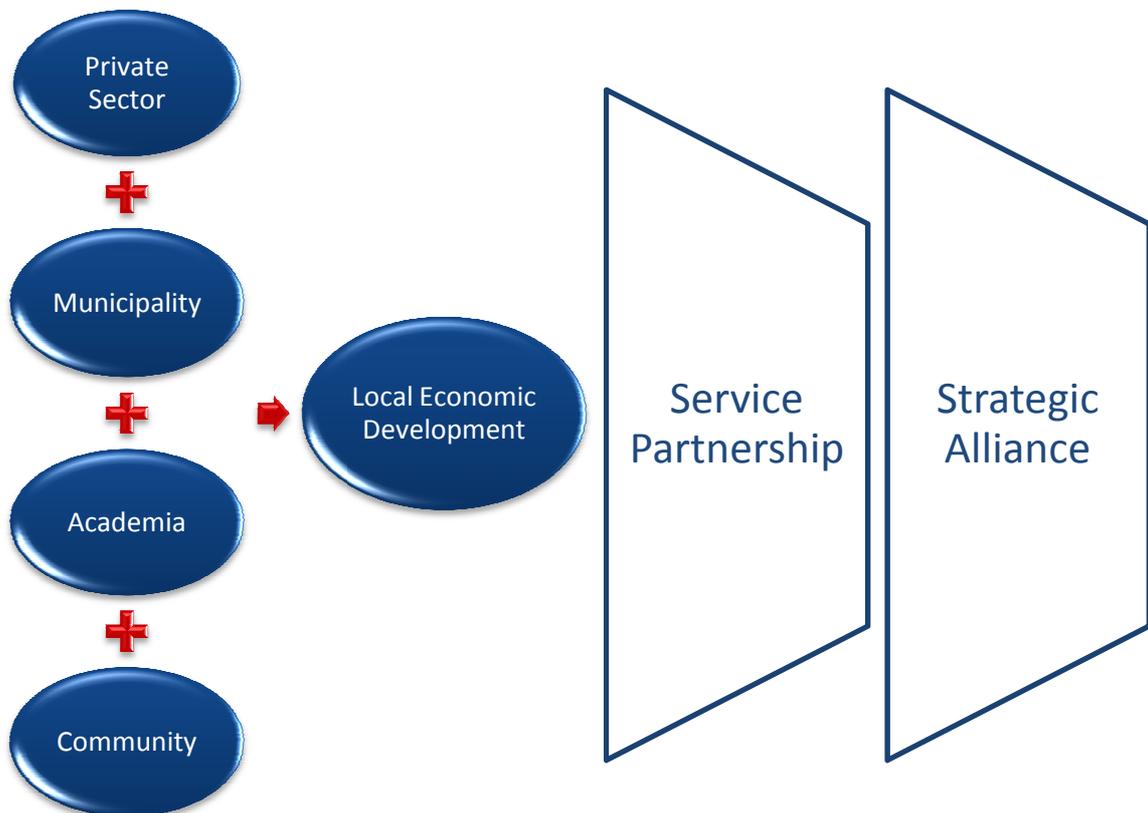
Standard-setting partnerships	Develop and facilitate voluntary standards in areas not yet subject to binding goals or regulations.	Strategic Alliance, Coalition
Service partnerships	Focus on initiating and realizing projects designed to implement spatial goals.	Joint Venture Strategic Alliance

Table 2 make some suggestions with regard to the most appropriate partnership model/s in terms of the three types of partnerships.

The below illustration attempts to capture and display an optimal LED partnership model.

The model is based on a strategic alliance model that focuses on initiating and realizing projects designed to implement spatial goals. The main partners are also indicated.

Illustration 2: Proposed Spatial Cross-Section Partnership Model



6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

To better respond to the current and future set of concerns of the population and to promote sustainable local economic development, governments, private sector and civil society actively seek a broad partnership. It is widely agreed that innovative solutions to the key challenges facing societies can be found through an open public debate. It is especially at local levels, closer to the problems and the individuals, that partnerships should be a key strategy to address issues of collective implications.

Local partnerships have the potential to foster better, more adequate and innovative solutions to societal problems on the basis of a constructive dialogue between the actors involved and an exploitation of their different resources and comparative advantages.

Although many forms of spatial cross-section partnerships have been tried and tested, the majority of them seem not to have delivered on their potential for a number of reasons. All of them (both the failed and successful ones), however, have demonstrated the importance of treating the private sector and communities as full partners, allowing enough time for change to happen in the complex systems of economic development and to include monitoring and evaluation. There are many obstacles to the success of spatial cross-section partnerships, but these obstacles are outweighed by the many potential benefits of a collaborative effort.

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