

# Turning Belfast Around

Dr Peter Tyler

## Belfast: State of the City



Innovation Centre; Northern Ireland  
Science Park

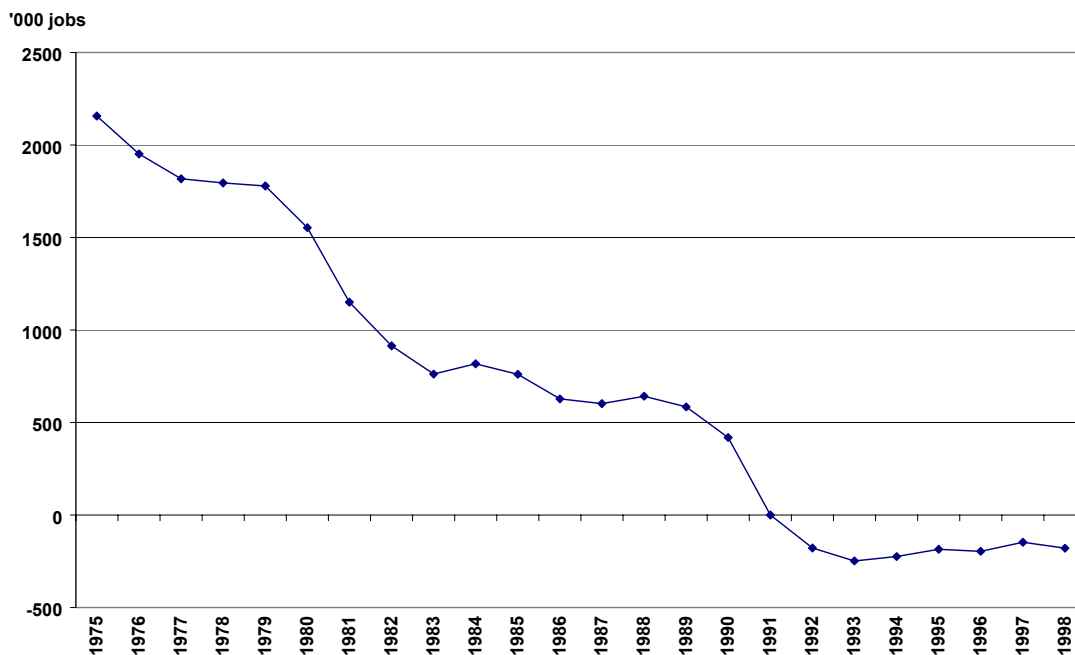
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Department of Land Economy  
19 Silver St  
Cambridge  
CB3 9EP  
Tel: 01223 337138  
Email: [pt23@cam.ac.uk](mailto:pt23@cam.ac.uk)

# 1 THE NATURE OF THE CHALLENGE

Economic adjustment in the post war period has hit the larger UK cities hard. There has been significant restructuring on the back of the decline of the industrial sector. By the early 1980s a significant part of the stock of human and physical capital of some cities was committed to the production of goods and services that either no longer existed or which were produced elsewhere.

**Figure 1 Differential decline of employment in the large UK conurbation's relative to European Average.**



Source: Cambridge Econometrics

Throughout the next two decades the process of adjustment has been painfully slow inhibited by dereliction, contamination and a whole range of imperfections and rigidities in labour, land and property markets as highlighted clearly in the Roger's Report and the Urban White Paper.

Much new investment was constrained by the availability of good serviced land. But some of the biggest challenges have been in the labour force where the existing skill base was inappropriate to meet the needs of modern industries.

## **1 THE NATURE OF THE CHALLENGE**

Moreover, it has not just been about changing the characteristics of the existing workforce. Dynamic cities need to attract new people with the skills required by modern industries. Growing cities have to be attractive places to both people and industry if they are going to increase their vitality and turn themselves around. In terms of bringing about business success they need to deliver a quality of life that is attractive to those people and companies who wish to be enterprising.

Cities have to be competitive locations if they are to restore their former prosperity. But what this means is complex. Competitiveness is a vague concept anyway and for cities there are a number of key considerations and sectoral issues. With the decline of their traditional industrial base they have tended to concentrate more on the provision of tradable and non-tradable services and technology/ knowledge based industry for their economic well being. But what ever they do the United Kingdom large cities compete with other areas for investment/ capital, labour, and technology.

Competitiveness is more than productivity growth and a more robust measure of competitiveness has to recognise that competitive cities are those that can move their resources from mature markets to developing markets. Declining cities are characterised by too many resources in relatively mature market places. Expanding cities use technology to ensure innovative responses to market requirements in the broadest sense. The link with Knowledge Based institutions (Universities/ High Powered Research institutions connected to hospitals) is absolutely crucial.

The emphasis has to be on the general flexibility and adaptability of the resource base (human resource, supply chains, finance and capital and land and property responses). Rapidly growing urban regions and their cores are characterised by small business growth, flexible supply chains, adapting infrastructure, mobile skill base, rapid internal innovation and adaptability of resources together with flexible institutional responses. Effective transport/ communication essential. There are significant clustering economies to be realised.

## 1 THE NATURE OF THE CHALLENGE

However, whatever the precise mix of factors that make for a competitive location, successful and growing cities will:

- have an environment that attracts a high proportion of decision takers who are likely to be good at demonstrating enterprising behaviour wherever they are;
- have the economic, physical and institutional characteristics that enable enterprising behaviour to occur;
- be places where people and businesses want to come to, stay in and leave reluctantly.

Some signs of renaissance in some of the large UK cities—a wind of change that is overcoming the gloom and despondency associated with much of the decline of the post-war period. Cities are coming back and it is essential that Belfast share in this revival. It is still early days, renaissance is patchy and often concentrated in certain parts like the City Centres—but some promising signs.

However, the evidence from recent years is that turning things around does not come easily. Revival has required actions by the market and the state, and indeed all of the key stakeholders working in partnership—although the structure and form of this has varied considerably. And, getting cities to grow again has only been a part of the problem. The growth needs to be shared across the communities of a city. Trickle down has often been weak or even non-existent and thus successful cities are having to work hard at sharing hard-won gains in their prosperity with their more deprived neighbourhoods.

Cities have adopted a number of different regeneration models in order to secure change. This short paper describes some of the approaches adopted, their key characteristics, what we know about their relative strengths and weaknesses and what makes for relative success.

## 2 WHAT MAKES FOR RELATIVE SUCCESS?

What have been the factors associated with relative success in turning areas around? Despite many different types and form of approach there has been considerable variation in what has been achieved.

In order to begin to answer this question it is possible to draw upon the regeneration experience relating to some 1028 regeneration partnerships in England over the last ten years that has involved an expenditure of £26 billion with a heavy emphasis on large urban areas. Other evidence has also come from an ongoing study into what makes for enterprising places in the United Kingdom and this work, particularly in relation to technology based development, has compared and contrasted experience in the United Kingdom with that of the United States. The emphasis in this work has been to identify what are the key elements behind a successful regeneration scheme that can turn an area around.

The balance of the research indicates most clearly that the more successful areas over the last ten years are those that:

- enhance the **core competencies or attributes** of the area and its residents so that it is a relatively attractive place for businesses to want to invest in and people to live in;
- bring together the relevant **agents of change** from across all sectors be it the government, businesses, voluntary sector stakeholders or residents to work together to address the problems concerned and;
- to do so by adopting a **strategic** approach.

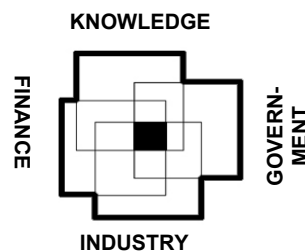
In some places the balance of relative economic opportunity and need is such that these components can come together in a relatively seamless and timely manner such that adjustment is fairly spontaneous. However, in most other places, and certainly in the larger cities, the process of adjustment has been too slow for the reasons discussed above and there has been a need for concerted initiatives to move things along. It is with this that we are we are concerned with to day.

In relation to the big cities the evidence indicates that it is important to bring together key players from four key realms namely; **knowledge, finance, industry** and the **State**.

## 2 WHAT MAKES FOR RELATIVE SUCCESS?

The knowledge realm consists of the people, skills and ideas and related education and research institutions that are located in a particular place. The finance realm represents the capital, institutions and people that sustain investment in a place over time. The industry realm consists of the companies and support services located in, and around, the place. The Government realm represents the institutional and regulatory context and the public agents, both central and local, that influence the development of a place.

**Figure 2. Key Player Interaction**



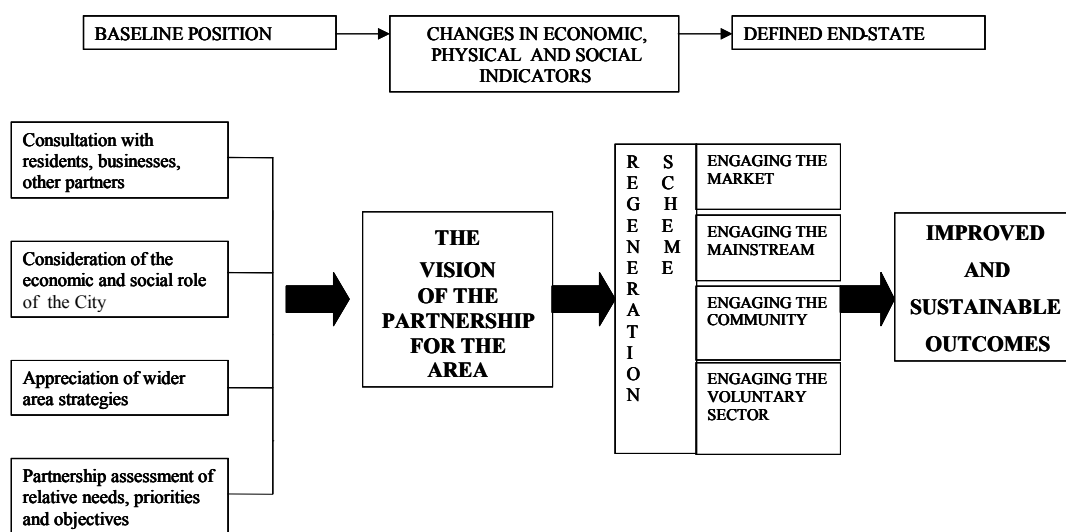
If a successful regeneration outcome is to be attained then in each of these realms there must be innovative activity that actively shapes that realm. Entrepreneurial and innovative behaviour cannot be limited to industry but has also to be present in the Government, knowledge, finance and state realms as well. But it is also crucial that the key players in each of the knowledge, finance, industry and state realms interact with each other in a reinforcing manner that enhances the location's competitiveness – the “shared” area in the Figure 2. In successful places, entrepreneurship matches innovation and translates into economic production.

Just having some of the necessary core competencies and attributes does not guarantee that a City will be enterprising and successful. The attributes can lay relatively unused and dormant for many years. The City's relative success is determined rather by how the attributes are developed and this usually requires dynamic and effective partnership between the key players in each of the realms. The precise form that this partnership takes can vary significantly, but there has to be a strategic approach.

### 3 ENSURING A STRATEGIC APPROACH

The strategy of the partnership has to identify how its work and thus activities over the period concerned will engage with all the key stakeholders to produce improved and sustainable outcomes and this requires a clear understanding of how to initiate change. The key elements of the process are illustrated in Figure 3 below.

**Figure 3 Key elements of the Strategic Approach**



It is essential that regeneration initiatives think through how physical, social and economic initiatives can come together to deliver the best outcomes and this can only be achieved through a well articulated strategy from the outset.

What has to be recognised in the strategy is that all aspects of the underlying aspects of City decline have to be addressed. Namely;

- strengthening the economic base;
- raising the competitiveness of the labour force;
- and improving the physical environment.

To achieve any one or even two of these is not sufficient to bring about a sustained regeneration and small improvements in any one area can be rapidly offset by further deterioration in the other two.

### **3 ENSURING A STRATEGIC APPROACH**

Moreover, it is also necessary to engage all of the key stakeholders including those from across government (central and local) tasked with the delivery of core services. The regeneration will be illusive if left to attempts to overcome market failure or state failure in isolation.

A clear strategy can only be achieved if there is an adequate recognition of where the City is starting from. A baseline is required that should consider the nature of the economic, physical and social problems that the area faces, relative needs, priorities and objectives and what are the assets or competences of a wide variety that the regeneration partnership has to work with. It is crucial that the partnership considers how the regeneration of the City is harmonised with the pattern of development in the wider regional and maximises the opportunities for positive linkage.

Land and property market interventions remain central to the regeneration challenge, particularly in the older urban areas. Land and property-based initiatives are particularly relevant because they enhance quality of life, external image and visual appearance of an urban neighbourhood.

To secure good city regeneration schemes the key issues are:

- To identify how the impact of changes to the physical nature of the area (i.e. land, property, buildings etc) relate to the desired effects on people and how all the effects sum to achieve the central objective of turning the area around. A common problem is to presume that changes to the physical environment of an area will be sufficient-virtually never the case.
- Identifying how all of the key service areas (i.e. employment, health, crime, education, housing, environment, leisure, community development, transport and shopping) are considered in the drive to improve the relative attractiveness of the city and ensure that resources are deployed appropriately. The emphasis is on considering how specific initiatives are co-ordinated to maximise synergy in the attainment of the overall city regeneration objective. It is often the case that individual components of the regeneration scheme operate in something approaching splendid isolation to the detriment of overall goals and objectives.

### **3 ENSURING A STRATEGIC APPROACH**

- The need to ensure inclusive outcomes and recognise how the needs of the residents in different parts of the city can be met as part of the growth process. This often requires facilitating greater interaction between areas, including the wider sub-region, particularly in the labour market.
- The importance of considering how changes to the delivery of mainstream programmes including transport can be shaped to the betterment of the city. And this means thinking ahead.
- Ensuring an evidence based approach to regeneration that is on the front line in identifying the nature of the key problems being tackled, the instruments available to tackle them and Best Practice at an international level. It is essential to baseline and monitor and evaluate change and ensure that this is fed into the strategic management of the process of change.
- Resourcing the initiative from conventional routes but also through more innovative mechanisms-City Bonds/ Local tax initiatives, particularly around property etc.

## **4 BRINGING THE PLAYERS TOGETHER; DO WE NEED FORMAL STRUCTURES?**

There are very few cities in the United Kingdom who have achieved a reversal in their economic fortunes without a coordinated development agency/partnership based approach. Where strong partnerships have been created enormous strides have been made in regenerating old structures, although removing pockets of social exclusion, particularly in the inner city areas, continues to remain more elusive.

The background research indicates that making Belfast a truly world competitive city presents significant challenges that can only be met if the main players within the business, the voluntary and Government sectors all come together to play their part.

The advantages of adopting a partnership based model are well known and have been discussed at length. They can be summed up as:

- leverage and thus enhancing the resources available by drawing in funding from some or all of the partners including the private sector;
- achieving economies of scale in projects and programmes within a local area and thereby secure further economies in, for instance, project management, financial planning and control, recruitment, and purchasing;
- the attainment of synergy as partners modify their individual activities to bring them closer to the objectives of the Partnership;
- achieving coordination thereby avoiding duplication of activity, assisting large indivisible projects to go ahead, and allowing partners to specialise in areas of endeavour in which they have a comparative advantage;

However, securing these benefits has often been illusive and the gains from partnership working often illusive as discussed below.

In order to deliver the regeneration a number of regeneration models have been tried over the last twenty years.

## **4 BRINGING THE PLAYERS TOGETHER; DO WE NEED FORMAL STRUCTURES?**

### **The Urban Development Corporation**

Established under the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 as a key element of urban policy in England in the 1980s with some twelve UDCs established between 1981 and 1993. Limited life-time, varying between 5 and 17 years, directed by Boards comprising individuals with private sector backgrounds. (Birmingham Heartlands, Black Country, Merseyside, Plymouth, Sheffield, Teeside, Trafford Park, Tyne and Wear, Leeds, Bristol, Central Manchester and in Northern Ireland the Laganside Corporation). Their formal statutory objectives were;

- bringing land and buildings into effective use;
- encouraging public and private investment and the development of existing and new industry and commerce;
- creating an attractive environment; and
- ensuring that housing, social, (recreational and cultural-added in Laganside) facilities are available which encourage people to live and work in the area.

As a vehicle for delivering regeneration the Urban Development Corporation model has involved bringing together a range of key partners from the public and private sectors. However, the focus has been very much on the physical and economic regeneration of largely empty and derelict sites within a tightly defined designated area. There was no mention in the original statutory objectives of involving local communities in the regeneration process or in targeting benefits to deprived communities - which has become a component of current regeneration policy.

In London Docklands £12.59 billion (of which £2.90 billion directly from Government) has reclaimed 1,756 reclaimed hectares, created 2.43 million sq m of floorspace and created 44,000 net additional jobs and 24,000 houses). Other Development Corporations in England have spent £10.96 billion (of which £1.7 billion from Government) and reclaimed 2,565 hectares, provide 5.66 million sq metres of floorspace, net additional jobs of 81,387 and a housing impact of 18,500. Laganside associated with an original Designated area of 140 Ha (extended by a further 60 ha in 1997), Review suggested that 18000 net additional jobs at build out and an expenditure of about £150 million.

## **4 BRINGING THE PLAYERS TOGETHER; DO WE NEED FORMAL STRUCTURES?**

The advantage of the Urban Development Corporation model was that it brought a comprehensive approach to securing private sector development by undertaking land clearance and decontamination, environmental improvement, the provision of infrastructure and site services, and entering into partnership with developers through to marketing of sites and premises to potential end users.

The disadvantage is that the overlap with other instruments/components of regeneration has been fairly small outside the designated area. Good at bringing about land and property related outcomes in fairly tightly defined areas and bringing expertise together. All English UDCs had been closed down by 1998. The Merseyside and London Docklands Development Corporation had the longest life amongst English UDCs of twenty years - whilst others had a life of as little as 8 years.

The Laganside Corporation has been in existence for 15 years and in 1997 the rationale for the Corporation continuing its work shifted in two important respects. Firstly, the Corporation's designated boundary was extended to include an area of the City Centre around the Cathedral which had become neglected and run-down during the political troubles and which was not sharing the more buoyant economic circumstances and investment which was beginning to emerge in other parts of the City Centre. Secondly, there was a need to develop stronger links and accessibility between the Laganside sites, the surrounding residential communities and the City Centre.

## **4 BRINGING THE PLAYERS TOGETHER; DO WE NEED FORMAL STRUCTURES?**

### **Urban Regeneration Companies**

In England the Urban White Paper 'Our Towns and Cities: the Future' highlighted the creation of 12 new URCs over the period 2001-2004. Government has since increased this number. Independent companies with partners from the public and private sectors. Key players are local authority, Regional Development Agency and English Partnerships. Emphasis is on physical and economic regeneration. To ensure that more 'holistic area based regeneration' is achieved across main service areas like health, education etc its actions have to be coordinated with other agencies/ partnerships tackling the service mainstreaming agenda. URC does not receive specific funding from Government and thus relies on the powers (i.e. planning) and resources that the partners bring to the table. Benefits from the URC approach thus arise from any coordinating and overall synergistic role that it has.

From the beginning Government has seen the role of URCs as being one of co-ordination-engaging with the private sector in ensuring delivery as part of a 'wider, comprehensive approach to regenerating areas and communities-having a clear and agreed relationship with Local Strategic Partnerships and other relevant local or sub-regional partnerships' (DETR/ RPR3 2001). As the original DETR guidance pointed out the URCs should not be seen as Government bodies but independent companies answerable to the partners that support them. The Guidance indicates that the role of Government is to give a green light to the involvement of Regional Development and English Partnership in the company that is set up. Government thus provides the overall policy background, English Partnerships is a full partner, RDA as a key partner and local authorities as a key and leading partner. The private sector is also emphasised to have a central role, particularly in delivery with the URC Board probably private sector led.

Most recently ODPM in England has announced the formation of a new Urban Regeneration Corporation to bring about the economic regeneration of the Thurrock part of the Thames Gateway and a similar body is proposed or East London next year.

## **4 BRINGING THE PLAYERS TOGETHER; DO WE NEED FORMAL STRUCTURES?**

### **Local Strategic Partnerships**

The National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal emerged in January 2001 and identified an approach to closing the gap between the most and least prosperous neighbourhoods in England. The 'bottom-up' nature of the NSNR meant a focus at the local level and a cornerstone of this element of the Strategy was the establishment of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) designed to bring together public, private, voluntary and community sectors to provide a single, overarching framework for *local co-ordination*. LSPs are thus the vehicle in England designed to gather the different interests, users and providers in setting community priorities and aligning service provision. All local authorities in England are required to prepare Community Strategies that indicate how they will deploy their statutory powers of economic, social and environmental well being embodied in the Local Government Act 2000. The emphasis on the formation of LSPs is to provide a single strategic framework to the improvement of service delivery and quality of life in the districts and neighbourhoods concerned and to act as a coordinating vehicle.

Key functions of LSPs are to;

- prepare and implement a strategy for the area and monitor progress;
- develop and deliver the local neighbourhood renewal strategy to achieve outcomes relating to jobs, education, health, crime and housing-reducing social exclusion;
- be a forum through which providers of public services work together to address local needs.

## **4 BRINGING THE PLAYERS TOGETHER; DO WE NEED FORMAL STRUCTURES?**

In the 88 local authority districts that have been the subject of Neighbourhood Renewal Funding the creation of an LSP is mandatory and has been the subject of an accreditation process. LSPs are expected to work with related partnership structures but the original intention is that their breadth would be comprehensive enough to embrace virtually all aspects of local service delivery that impact on the quality of life of the individual. In all of the 88 areas there are requirements on local authorities to contribute to the delivery of national Public Sector Agreements (PSA) floor targets. Public Sector Agreements are being used increasingly by Local Authorities to provide a clearer focus on desired service improvements. The overwhelming majority of local authorities now have a LSP. In a survey carried out in 2003 (Evaluation of LSPs; Report of a Survey of English LSPS) the majority of the LSPs were identified as informal partnerships with no legal status, 40% had *evolved* out of a previous partnership. Many identified 'core' and 'non-core' membership.

Almost all LSPs include many statutory service providers, private sector usually represented by Chamber of Commerce or similar and representation from community and voluntary sectors was identified as being 'disparate'. The local authorities were often represented by councillors rather than officers. Mean number of core members is 20 and non core is 80 but the averages are affected by a few, large LSPs and median is 16 for core and 50 for non core. Some 4/5ths are formally chaired. Nearly three quarters had a core executive or Board with sub-structures. Most have formal or informal links with other Partnerships. Majority of LSPs have no resources of their own-mostly provided by local authority. Quite small staffing levels.

The recent survey of LSP partners has identified the main benefit of the LSP approach is seen to be an alignment of objectives and the provision of joint working. Many LSPs are trying to rationalise existing partnership structures and put in place structures. However, many are constrained by resources and their existing capacity. Moreover, most LSPs are about coordinating actions rather than delivery in itself.

## **4 BRINGING THE PLAYERS TOGETHER; DO WE NEED FORMAL STRUCTURES?**

In conclusion there are a number of points to make. A wide variety of different models for delivering strategic regeneration have been tried and they vary according a number of key characteristics that include;

- Their geographical spread;
- The emphasis they give to the economic, physical and social dimensions of the regeneration process and thus their core focus;
- The formal powers they have themselves to plan, provide infrastructure and key services, hold and vest land;
- Their stakeholder representation and whether a narrow or a broad approach is adopted;
- Their lifespan and the instruments, and particularly, resources that they can commit from their own funding base;

Virtually all of the models have played to some form of partnership based delivery-although what this has meant in practice has varied enormously and there has been a proliferation of partnership based approaches. In fact the exact form is not that relevant as long as there are a number of key elements in place and there is trust between and across the partnership.

Each of the models described above have strong and weaker features.

The Development Corporation model has a mainly economic/ physical orientation to regeneration. The Laganside Corporation illustrates just how much can be achieved by such an approach. However, the UDC is only part of the package required. The Urban Regeneration Corporation seeks to be more inclusive in the role that it gives to the local authority and thus the hope is for a more unified economic/ physical and social approach. However, URCs rely heavily on the resources and powers of their partners and they are, in some respects, a weaker version of the original UDC approach but somewhat more inclusive. Both models represent strong engagement with the private sector, mainly in land and property related development.

## **4 BRINGING THE PLAYERS TOGETHER; DO WE NEED FORMAL STRUCTURES?**

Local Strategic Partnerships are coordinating vehicles-in the main, at least so far, not directly responsible themselves for delivery. So far they have had relatively poor private sector engagement.

The exact structure of the model adopted thus has to recognise the existing patterns of service provision and regeneration in the City-who currently does what and how it is anticipated it may change. It has to consider how it can be effective in bring about high level, strategic change in economic, physical and social outcomes and thus have representatives from the stakeholders who are sufficiently senior to be able to commit budgets and shape policy. It has to be inclusive recognising the relevant geographical disparities that its work should strive to eliminate. It will need to articulate the policy levers, and thus, instruments that it should harness to bring about change and these are very wide ranging indeed. Infact, one of the significant advantages that Belfast has is its experience in devising and deploying policy instruments across the full range of policy instruments (grants, use of capital allowances etc).

## **5 BRINGING ABOUT SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION**

Some form of partnership working is the only approach when it comes to moving forward but there has been a proliferation of partnership delivery vehicles in recent years and Belfast must have one of the most significant concentrations of partnerships in Western Europe. The term death by partnership has become commonly used! And in some cases poor partnership working may be worse than none at all since the whole process can create expectations that are then frustrated and lead to disillusionment.

Again, it has been possible to identify through the studies mentioned earlier the factors that have tended to make for good partnership working over the last ten years. A number of points stand out from the experience of many .

The relative performance of partnerships is not systematically correlated with objectives, size, duration or theme. The evidence does not support the view that there is one size fits all format to successful regeneration schemes. Relative success is more to do with organisational and management issues, as well as the quality of the key players involved.

- It is important to avoid missing-out key partners, or to at least ensure that there is links to the missing partners through a link to a wider more strategic local partnership on which they are represented. It is also helpful to avoid a dominant partner(s) since this mitigates against good partnership by reducing possible synergies. The private sector has a critical role to play but provides best outcomes when playing to its key strengths and often prefers not to be a lead partner. The community can provide effective leadership but usually requires considerable capacity building often over many years in an area in order to be able to do this;
- City wide regeneration partnerships need to identify their key objectives (their 'do' list) and how they 'fit' with the wider goals of the mainstream providers/emerging policy items at an early stage. Successful partnership sources identify emerging policy agendas at an early stage and seek to work in tandem to maximise the impact on their place. Partnerships involving extensive geographical coverage have to ensure representation across areas and it is essential to have a strong secretariat

## 5 BRINGING ABOUT SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION

- Ensure that the partnership has effective monitoring and reviews procedures that inform the partners on a regular basis as to progress against scheme targets and to do this it is necessary to have monitoring information that encompasses the relevant themes (i.e. drugs, enterprise, employability) and relevant geography as appropriate (neighbourhoods, district, region). Too many partnerships have monitoring systems that are relatively good at housekeeping matters but weak at providing the information to make strategic decisions.
- Partnerships work by having people who are committed to the task in hand and have representatives that are senior enough to commit the resources and backing of their respective institutions. If the seniority is not there it will reduce the cutting edge of the whole partnership to bring about real and effective change.

But above all, for the partnership to work there has to be a desire to recognise the benefits to all players from promoting the **PLACE** and there has to be **TRUST** between the key stakeholders.

## 6 EXAMPLES OF EMERGING SUCCESS

There are a number of examples of where Cities are improving their relative performance through a strategic, partnership driven approach. A couple of examples serve to illustrate what can be done.

### **On the way up....**

Dundee- heavy emphasis on old traditional industries. Built on the back of Jute-however, over 40,000 jobs lost. An economy in decline with a heavy industrial legacy and associated problems of adjustment. Some success with inward investment (NCR in 1947) but mixed, closure Timex 1993. However, particularly from the early 1990s onwards a revival based around knowledge transfer through world-class universities and research hospitals, and a regenerated central urban fabric (£400 million). Now seeking to improve its connectivity with its hinterland to build strong linkages.

The Dundee Partnership is seen as being a key element in the renaissance that is now building. Established originally in 1982 as the Dundee Project-a partnership between the Dundee Council and the Scottish Development Agency with staff seconded from various partner organisations. However, in its early years not seen as successful as the approach did not maximise buy-in and commitment from the various organisations-the mere secondment of staff not fulfilling the requirement.

In the early 1990s the Dundee Partnership was established from local agencies-Dundee City Council, Scottish Enterprise Tayside, Dundee and Tayside Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Communities Scotland, as well as members from the private sector and other organisations in the City. Emphasis on establishing vision with specified aims and strategies. Partnership decides who should implement required actions and mandates an appropriate response. 1995 a series of action plans were produced and sub-committees agreed to oversee execution. Partnership also has a promotional arm that brands and markets the City.

## **6 EXAMPLES OF EMERGING SUCCESS**

Operates through an Overarching Forum, Senior Management Group and Working Groups. Reasons for success has been argued to be its emphasis on action, having right people involved and driven at Chief Executive Level, not politicised, able to pool resources, no formal offices, clear and defined objectives, established credibility and reviews key actions every three months. To improve Dundee's competitive attraction it was recognised that action was needed in relation to housing, arts and entertainment, transport infrastructure, skills and an emphasis on the knowledge economy.

Some of the key elements in the regeneration were;

- A whole series of enterprising behaviour based on a critical appraisal of strengths and weaknesses
- Played to strengths-hard
- Built on key assets-often knowledge based, and encouraged vigorously-Dundee brought the UKs best biomedical researchers to its City and provided the resources to facilitate (buildings, labs etc).
- Tackled key infrastructure deficiencies and developed public/private models to do so. Innovative solutions. Lot down to committed individuals communicating well and securing the resources to bring about effective change.

## 6 EXAMPLES OF EMERGING SUCCESS

### Starting to turn things around.....

#### Sheffield

Sheffield's First Partnership established in 1998 with the objective to be the overall regeneration vehicle for the city that brought together the public, private, voluntary, community and faith sectors. Recognition amongst many in Sheffield that there had been a lack of a coordinated response to enhancing the City's competitiveness following the dramatic decline of its traditional industrial base. The 1970s and 1980s very bad decades for the City in terms of industrial decline and there was a failure to re-position to City and to bring about the changes required to regenerate it. Recognised that what was needed was a strategic approach that was built on a clear appreciation of strengths and weaknesses and presented a unified approach - an 'economic' strategy that was capable of bringing about a step change in Sheffield's competitiveness. 'Incremental improvements to the existing economic base will not be sufficient to re-position the city as a distinctive regional economy with a sustainable economy and a prosperous population'. ( Sheffield City Strategy, 2002-5).

A high level strategic decision making body that operates through a number of thematic city wide partnerships. And local priority setting and involvement of communities and thus residents achieved through 12 Area Panels. In 2002 Sheffield First was accredited as the Sheffield LSP.

Sheffield First Forum	<b>Sheffield First for Learning</b>	<b>Sheffield First Partnership</b>
	<b>Sheffield First for Work</b>	
	<b>Sheffield First for Investment</b>	
Other Statutory City-wide Partnerships	<b>Sheffield One</b>	
	<b>Sheffield First for Inclusion</b>	
	<b>Sheffield First for Safety</b>	
Area Action Panels	<b>Sheffield First for Health</b>	
	<b>Sheffield First for Environment</b>	

Source: Sheffield City Strategy, 2002-5

## **7 DELIVERING THE GOODS: A WAY FORWARD**

The general conclusion is that like many once great urban centres Belfast has been under-performing in recent decades. There has been a relative decline for reasons that are fairly well known and have been widely discussed. But the real challenge is to ensure that Belfast gains a seat at the Core Cities table and becomes a truly international world class City.

The drivers to do this are not just economic but embrace all those actions necessary to provide a quality of life and thus first class level of service provision in line with Best Value delivery elsewhere.

The key resources are there and central is the quality of the workforce. There are some very positive signs. However, the challenge is significant given the adjustments to land, capital and labour markets that are required. The stakes are high.

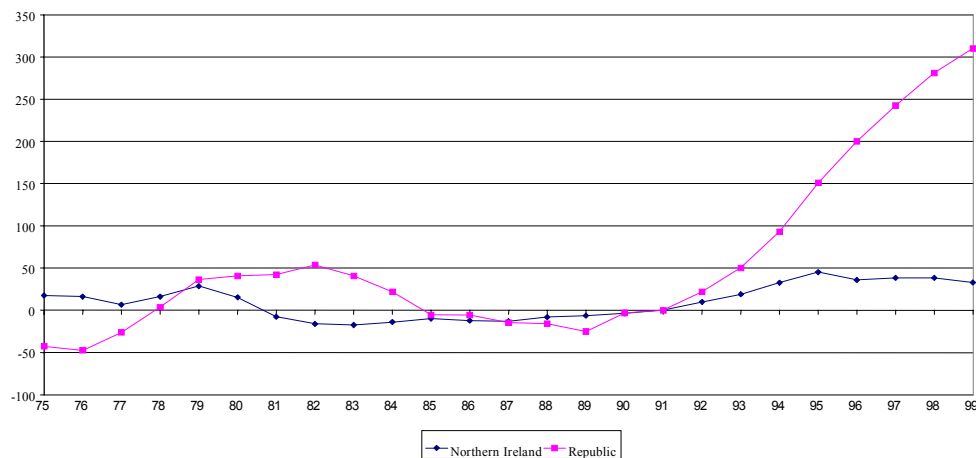
The research that has been undertaken for this conference describes a Belfast where responsibility is fragmented between central and local government. Local authority has few responsibilities and powers. There are many different partnerships and strategies-but they are not well linked. There is great inequality across neighbourhoods and tensions between the prosperity of the City Centre and expansion on the Harbour Lands. There is a lack of trust and no coming together under a common agenda- this is simply not happening at present and there is a real danger that the momentum and vitality associated with some of the achievements of recent years could stall. Dependency on Government as a provider and there are too many Departments. There are key issues around how Belfast develops in relation to its hinterland and how it might link with Dublin through an economic corridor. There will be changes in local governance and it is important to be ready for it. Overall partnership fatigue and a lack of a joined-up strategy.

## 7 DELIVERING THE GOODS: A WAY FORWARD

Although there are currently many uncertainties there would seem little to gain from inactivity at the present time. There are likely to be significant changes in the pattern of governance in Northern Ireland in the years ahead with some transfer of services from central to local government, some consolidation in the local government sector and an increased role for the private sector as local authorities form Strategic Partnership Agreements in the delivery of specific key services as has occurred in England over the last five years. New modes of service delivery are now only a matter of time and the Review of Public Administration does not preclude identifying and beginning to put in place a model for delivery with a timetable for action based on a coherent and plausible Delivery Plan.

As the 1990s was the decade when the Republic began to realise its potential developing Dublin and its immediate sub-region-the next ten years will be formative for Belfast and thus Northern Ireland as a whole.

**Figure 4 Employment growth relative to Euro average**



The economic vitality of Belfast, and thus Northern Ireland as a whole, hinges around the development of Belfast as a strategic cluster or economic hub that enables access to specialised inputs and employees, generates high levels of innovation and small businesses with a central emphasis on knowledge based industries (biotechnology based around university and medical research) and representation in financial services and other new and emerging sectors including representation in aerospace, information and communication industries. The success of the cluster will be a direct result of enterprising actions on the part of the knowledge, financial and Government sectors in Belfast working with industry.

## **7 DELIVERING THE GOODS: A WAY FORWARD**

A Regeneration Strategy for Belfast has to consider how the development of the cluster will be resourced including, crucially, the availability of new sites for development on the Arterial Routes as well as in the Harbour Lands. It will also have to identify how the City Centre can be upgraded in relation to both its retail and office pitch recognising the guidance and evidence contained in BMAP.

But other key components of the Strategy have to recognise the urgent need to overcome many of the deep seated problems of social exclusion that exist across Belfast and to identify how the benefits of future economic growth can be shared more evenly. And at the same time all of the key service providers have to consider how they can deliver quality services to their inhabitants in the years ahead-the hallmark of a truly Core International City.

What are the most appropriate structures? There are a number of models, all building or using some form of partnership. Many different formats and one has to recognise that what works well in one particular context might not work well elsewhere. Every format and set of institutional problems differ and thus the experience of Belfast is similar and yet different to elsewhere; A customised approach is required that recognises the existing urban form and regional settlement pattern, and can work and evolve with the changing pattern of governance in Belfast. There should be an urgent review of existing structures/ partnerships to assess the scope for rationalisation.

**The prime contender would seem to be a Belfast Urban Regeneration Company but considerable attention will have to be given to its composition to ensure it can deliver the changes required.**

## 7 DELIVERING THE GOODS: A WAY FORWARD

Whatever the model chosen it will have to be able to deliver;

- **Strategic direction** through the commitment and leadership of the statutory, private and voluntary sectors at chief executive level as necessary. This provides legitimacy and power to those in middle management who will be tasked with delivery. There will have to be frank and open debate and recognition of differing organisational cultures, budgets, constraints and opportunities. These roles will have to be undertaken by **a Core Partnership Board**.
- **Operational management** that follows on once clear priorities have been decided, and organisational buy-in secured that delivers the detailed project development and implementation. This requires the engagement of individuals with the appropriate skills, professional capability and technical expertise and will involve all the relevant organisations.
- **Coordination and delivery** of endeavour across strategic theme and appropriate level of geography. What has worked well elsewhere in a series of **Theme Groups**.

**A strong and well resourced Secretariat** to oversee the process including securing monitoring, evaluation and research and *benchmarking* progress.

To bring about this vehicle of regeneration will require a considerable amount of institutional change, resources, goodwill and, above all, trust. But it will all be worthwhile if Belfast can assume its rightful place amongst the Core League of Cities.