Community-University Partnerships for Affordable Housing

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Abstract

This article addresses the experience of university-community partnerships designed to tackle the issue of affordable housing. First, it contextualizes the housing issue, because housing problems at the community level are determined significantly in the wider political economy. Second, it provides a brief background on the recent rise in university-community partnerships in the housing area. The third and main section discusses the more general issue of partnerships, their strengths and weaknesses, and their political significance. The conclusion offers the outline of an optimal model of partnership between academy and community. Locating the promise and tension of collaboration within a wider framework of the costs, benefits, and best practices of partnership structures generally, the question is raised as to whether such networking can form part of a new urban governance better able to resolve problems such as housing need.

The Housing Issue in Socioeconomic Context

The Clinton era can boast the creation of 18 million new jobs, official rates for unemployment and inflation at their lowest for decades, and a rate of homeownership at just over 66 percent due to an influx of nearly 8 million new homeowners. Yet one in six central cities has unemployment rates of 50 percent or more above the national rate. One in five central cities recorded a population drop of 5 percent or more between 1980 and 1996, when the national rate grew by 17 percent. Persistent disadvantage besets one in three central cities, with poverty rates of 20 percent or more in 1995—50 percent higher than the national rate.[1]

Cityscape: A Journal of Policy Development and Research • *Volume 5, Number 1* • *2000*
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development • Office of Policy Development and Research

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In recent decades, worldwide deindustrialization has seen the hemorrhaging of traditional blue-collar employment, the greater feminization and casualization of labor, the accelerated suburbanization of jobs and investment, and a tendency in the new knowledge economy for a bifurcation of the labor market into low-tech and high-tech activity. Accompanying these changes has been a growth in inequality, particularly marked in the United States, and coming on top of a higher initial level of inequality relative to other rich countries. In the United States in 1979, the income of someone at the 95th percentile of the income distribution was 3 times the median income and 13 times that of someone at the 5th percentile. By 1996, the corresponding figures were 4 times and 23 times.[2]

While such massive changes have dislocated traditional urban communities in general, they have affected particular areas like housing in special ways. First, disadvantaged populations can be caught in a spatial mismatch between where they are housed and where the new jobs are located. At the same time, those most excluded in the new labor market for skill reasons are also restricted in their labor mobility because they are priced out of a booming private housing sector.[3] Public and subsidized housing alternatives are out of favor with the new politics, which seeks to curb the role of public finance in rescuing the victims of this contemporary uneven development. Partly, this is attributable to the perceived lack of electoral support for greater taxation and borrowing. But it is also due to the assumed disincentives of taxing profits and incomes at a time when entrepreneurship and private-sector investment are the preferred methods of stimulating economic growth.

As part of the drive to encourage greater self-sufficiency, homeownership has been encouraged. But while homeownership rates are 70 percent in the suburbs, they are just over 50 percent in central cities.[4] Affordable rental alternatives are in short supply. One estimate puts the gap between the number of affordable housing units and those in need of housing at 4.4 million.[5] The consistent decline of affordable units for more than two decades has continued in the recent period. Between 1996 and 1998 the sector has seen a 13-percent drop, representing nearly 950,000 units. Federal support for affordable housing has been reduced since the 1995 freeze on new housing vouchers; only recently have small numbers been added again. Compounding this trend is the retreat by some private developers from the Section 8 program in favor of higher market-rate rent yields.[6]

The Federal Government acknowledges that 12.5 million people comprising 5.3 million households have worst case housing needs.[7] Families with children make up 40 percent of those who become homeless,[8] and the incomes of such poor households have not been keeping pace with rising rents.[9] As stated by the National Coalition for the Homeless:

> [S]tagnating wages and changes in welfare programs account for increasing poverty among families. In the median state, a minimum wage worker would have to work 87 hours each week to afford a two-bedroom apartment at 30 percent of his or her income, which is the Federal definition of affordable housing.[10]

Moreover, the problem is getting worse. In 25 out of 30 major cities recently surveyed, requests by low-income families for housing assistance were on the increase.[11] Not only is the number of families on waiting lists increasing[12] but also the waiting times for public housing and for Section 8 housing vouchers.[13] As stated by the recent HUD report on the issue:

> At a time of unprecedented prosperity for so many, islands of despair remain. The very strength of our economy is forcing the poorest renters to compete for a shrinking pool of affordable units. With nowhere else to turn, millions of families with worst case housing needs join lists for HUD-assisted housing and are left waiting in vain.[14]

Thus the new inequalities generated by economic restructuring are not being redressed by either the private sector or public programs. Rather, they are penetrating so deep into the social fabric that they are assuming stark spatial form. In the worst situations, whole swathes of a city can be housed in communities characterized by work and social inclusion and the rest demarcated as the preserve of social outsiders, reliant on a welfare system increasingly under strain. The spatial isolation of the poor has risen in recent decades.[15] But despite the concentrated urban form of this problem, it is also the case that one in three households with worst case housing needs are found in the suburbs.

Finally, a clear race dimension to this pattern is discernible.[16] Despite modest progress toward integration in some cities,[17] three decades after the Fair Housing Act considerable segregation remains today in the Nation's largest metropolitan areas, especially those with large African American populations. Housing discrimination also remains prevalent.[18] One of the key means to reduce ghettoization is to ensure that troubled neighborhoods are revitalized to a point where their homes are in demand by racially diverse prospective residents. Concentrated-poverty neighborhoods housing only minority populations reinforce negative associations between race and social problems and provide whites with an incentive to pursue segregation.[19] Through the persistence of such patterns, the United States risks becoming a Nation balkanized by low-intensity apartheid.[20]

The Role of University-Community Partnerships

The academic world has a role in responding to these issues. As put by one housing practitioner:

> In the areas of research and public policy, these academicians cannot be content to sit on the sidelines as mere data collectors, issue forecasters, and analyzers. They must become actively involved in finding solutions to the social ills that result when racial discrimination and segregation perpetuate an unjust society.[21]

HUD established the Office of University Partnerships in 1994 to support universities as they forge and expand partnerships that address urban problems, from the neighborhood level to citywide.[22] The initiative's premise was that the long-term futures of both town and gown were so intertwined that their mutual survival was contingent on greater cooperation.[23] Such an approach recognizes that it is not sufficient for educational institutions to do more for (or better by) local disadvantaged communities. They have to work with such communities.

This approach implies that universities open up to greater influence by local constituencies, changing not just what they do but what they are. Just as the community becomes a learning resource in this process, so universities must become more of a community of interests, leading by example toward new democratic paths to development. Thus this partnership on housing has to be seen as part of a more general reconfiguration of the relationship between academia and its social hinterland, whereby its economic, physical, technical, and intellectual resources are on tap by, rather than on top of, local communities.[24] Going beyond a series of sporadic collaborations, this involves the incorporation of an ongoing culture of cooperation into a self-maintaining institutional arrangement.[25] Yet such grand strategic rearrangements may best stem organically from an incrementalist approach that seeks to build relationships and trust through practical projects.[26]

In the United States over the past three decades, the decapitalization and, indeed, demarketization of distressed urban areas has prompted two broad policy responses. One implies that because private-sector desertion of such areas cannot be easily reversed, they should receive instead government social programs to complement self-help

revitalization. But it cannot be the exclusive role of government to solve the problems of depressed areas. Top-down approaches are insensitive to local conditions and do not encourage self-responsibility. On the other hand, bottom-up approaches frequently lack the scale and critical mass necessary to make an impact. Accordingly, revitalization partnerships typically involve a multiagency, multidisciplinary approach, operate on the meso-scale to greater impact, and yet retain a human face in terms of visibility, accountability, and participation. Such collaboration involves value-added partnerships that allow all relevant agencies, through their distinctive contributions, to achieve more through acting together than they could by acting separately.

This second view regards welfare approaches as a poor substitute for remotivating the private sector to exploit untapped labor and market opportunities in the core city. The advocacy of public-private partnerships sits uneasily between the positions of cajoling and absolving private corporations. In the United States, a relatively unproblematic mutual interest between the private and public realms usually is inferred. Public-sector involvement is seen to facilitate project supervision where private developers would otherwise exercise greater autonomy, whereas public promotion and subsidization of private development is assumed to deliver general public good. These positive externalities are taken to include the enhancement of the economic base and the raising of real estate values, both of which help generate additional tax revenues that allow the provision of more services to the population.[27]

Private interests are held to contribute expertise, experience, financial resources, and technological and managerial proficiencies that are frequently less accessible to those in the public and community sectors.[28] Presumably, the private sector is motivated by an enlightened self-interest in ensuring the stability and prosperity of the local environment.[29] Such partnerships are expected to bring private investment within the influence of local government and also allow for the greater leverage of public funds.[30] Importantly, public-sector participation in such ventures permits the private sector to transcend the appearance of self-interest and assume the aura of civic leaders promoting public welfare, a mantle that can be a significant marketing asset.

Partnerships form a key dimension in Third Way thinking, transcending traditional juxtapositions between purely public versus private or market versus regulated approaches.[31] In general, this view affirms a notion of public and private engagement and, in particular, it holds that program beneficiaries should participate in program design and implementation. The need to find solutions to locally concentrated problems can be best served by the actors most immediately involved. Not only are they motivated by the urgency to respond, they also are well-placed to help assess the situation, to identify gaps in service provision, and to propose as well as promote methods for achieving social cohesion.

Universities engage in these public-private partnerships in an in-between kind of way regardless of their actual status as public or private institutions. Public universities generally enjoy far greater autonomy than most other public bodies, whereas private universities are expected to espouse civic values and a concern for the public good to a far greater extent than most private companies. Thus, in the public-private partnership, universities and colleges introduce yet another element, as do community organizations.

The new HUD programs (and the Department of Education's Title XI program before that) were a timely response to a new interest among universities and colleges in engagement at the local level. With the end of the Cold War, many institutions of higher education feared a decline in Federal research funding. Higher education came under increasing criticism for everything from rapidly rising tuition to the poor quality of undergraduate

education and "dumbing down" of curricula. In search of a new niche and mission, many institutions turned to a greater concern with addressing domestic societal needs in health, education, governance, economic development, and community revitalization. Given intellectual coherence and respectability in the concept of "the engaged university," this approach has received considerable attention over the past few years at conferences and in publications and task forces.

The Evolving Practice of Partnerships

Contrary to what one might expect from academic institutions, universities appear to go about establishing partnership arrangements in a fairly haphazard manner. Over the past decade, there has been an enormous amount of experimentation and creativity in the development of collaborative arrangements with little or no formal evaluation. However, there are many conference presentations and impressionistic articles related to the topic, and frequent visits to the better known university-community collaborative sites. Thus, a sense of shared practice and experience is slowly developing, stimulated in large part by the coordinating efforts of HUD's Office of University Partnerships.

The substantive activities of the partnerships in the area of affordable housing can be grouped in a number of categories.

Technical assistance. This includes having architecture faculty or students develop or review housing and neighborhood designs, having law students work on development agreements, establishing a neighborhood geographic information system (GIS) database, having the university's physical plant department help with construction estimates, or a multitude of other hands-on activities.

Applied research. This refers to more indepth activities that are not just the immediate application of knowledge and technical expertise but involve collection of data and analysis. Examples include analysis of demographic trends to estimate housing demand; research on changes in rent or price levels; review of public policies or program models elsewhere to determine local applicability; or research on low-cost design, construction, and energy-efficient technology.

Training. A direct extension of the educational role of universities, training may be directed at the staff of community organizations or at individual residents. For instance, the Urban Developers Program is a partnership between the Chicago Rehab Network, a coalition of Community Development Corporations (CDCs), and the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). It offers a yearlong training program, including course credits toward a master's degree, to qualifying CDC staff. On the other hand, Santa Ana College offers homeownership seminars to residents.

Financial assistance. One very direct way that universities deal with housing affordability issues is by providing financial assistance to enable their own faculty and staff to purchase housing in neighborhoods near the institution. Ohio State, Yale, Loyola University at Chicago, the University of Pennsylvania, Marquette, Clark, and Washington University all have such programs. Whether created out of necessity because of high housing prices or out of a desire to improve the surrounding neighborhood, this directly helps make housing accessible and affordable. Of course, in some cases financial assistance may drive up demand and even displace current residents, and it does not necessarily involve collaboration with a community organization. Other forms of financial assistance include the relatively rare direct provision of funds to a CDC or to homeowners, loan guarantees, or simply brokering access to funds.

Staffing. Several universities underwrite the placement of students at community agencies or make staffing available through internships.

Organizing and advocacy. The Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta developed a model land bank program to expedite the transfer of tax delinquent properties to nonprofit developers; university faculty also advocated for its establishment and drafted the necessary legislation. UIC's Voorhees Neighborhood Center did the background research for an affordable housing campaign spearheaded by the Chicago Rehab Network.

Physical development. In some cases colleges or universities become directly involved in actual physical development. Marquette University redeveloped several blighted properties close to its campus. Students at Hudson Valley Community College are trained to enter construction jobs and build several affordable homes per year in the process.

The experience of UIC demonstrates the nature of contemporary housing problems, some of the motivations for universities to create partnerships, and the range of activities. By the early 1990s, neighborhoods close to the university—located just outside of Chicago's central business district—were beginning to feel gentrification pressures. Their population—African American in the Near West Side and Latino in Pilsen—had very low incomes and suffered high unemployment despite their proximity to the large number of jobs in the Illinois Medical Center and Chicago's downtown. Planned redevelopment of public housing threatened to reduce the number of affordable housing units, but at the same time few believed that the Near West Side could be revitalized unless something was done about the very large concentration of extremely low-income residents.

UIC had always had significant involvement with community organizations throughout the city and operated a health center in the Near West Side in addition to its main hospital at the Medical Center. Nevertheless, in its drive to become known as a research university, it had at times seemed uninterested in its neighbors. In addition, UIC had not yet lived down the legacy of having displaced several thousand residents when the campus was first built in the 1960s. With the appointment of a new chancellor in 1991, the campus started the Great Cities Program as the organizing theme for its metropolitan commitment—the application of teaching, research, and service to improve the quality of life in Chicago and in urban areas worldwide. One of many new programs was the UIC Neighborhoods Initiative (UICNI), which started as a comprehensive neighborhood revitalization partnership between the university and its nearby neighborhoods. With funding from the State, HUD, and others, a broad array of programs involving faculty and students from throughout the university was initiated in partnership with schools, health centers, social service agencies, and community development organizations.[32]

UIC's programs were developed in close collaboration with community organizations and extend far beyond housing to include such areas as health, economic development, social services, and education. Architecture students provide technical assistance to homeowners deciding on home improvements, and urban planning faculty and students developed a GIS database to pinpoint properties that could be acquired by local CDCs. Students also conducted an analysis of trends in the rental market to document the spread of gentrification. The Urban Developers Program, a systematic yearlong training program, trained community organization staff. Through its Joint Community Development (JCD) grant, UIC provided $100,000 to each of the neighborhoods for grants to homeowners who could not afford to keep their houses up to code. Along with that, funding was provided to staff the program at one community organization in each of the two target neighborhoods. Graduate research assistants, paid by the university, were also placed with community organizations, and several of the regular staff members were themselves students or graduates of the university. UIC's Voorhees Neighborhood Center played a key

role in a citywide affordable housing campaign that made additional resources available to neighborhood organizations. The only type of activity UIC did not engage in directly in these two neighborhoods was its own physical development projects. However, it did so in a 40-acre area immediately adjoining the campus and in the Pilsen neighborhood, where UIC is working with private developers to construct more than 700 private-sector housing units, 1,000 units of student housing, retail, and university buildings.

All of the projects (except the last one) are coordinated by paid staff at the UICNI, in close consultation with a steering committee that includes equal numbers of neighborhood and university representatives and representatives from city government. The city is an important partner because more than half of the JCD funds flow from HUD to UIC to the city and then to the community. (This cumbersome structure resulted from HUD's insistence on creating partnerships between city government and universities as well as with community organizations. It took a whole year to negotiate the initial contracts.) Private companies have been brought into individual projects (for example, banks participate on the review committees for the rehab grants), and other technical assistance and intermediary organizations are involved in individual projects and have at times become active players in the UICNI.

The Benefits and Dilemmas of Partnership

Multiagency partnership provides a formal base for access to and negotiation with key actors in all sectors affecting communities, and generates a systematic information source from all partner agencies, amplifying transparency and accountability. It affirms that multifaceted problems of urban decline demand multiagency solutions. While not eliminating differences, multiagency partnership clarifies the conflicts and provides a site to help resolve differences among the various partners.

Thus, when a multiagency partnership works well, community representatives can regularly access a set of key agencies, which is more efficient than meeting with them separately only to find some issues raised to be in the domain of conveniently absent agencies. Such a forum lends institutional authority to the community's involvement in developing an integrated area strategy rather than tactical accommodations with particular agencies for specific projects. This can take a long time to develop, however, and requires significant buy-in from all partners. In the case of UICNI, for example, UIC's original intent was that the steering committee take ownership of the program as a whole and move to development of strategic plans for the neighborhoods. However, the community partners approached the program from a more opportunistic point of view—fed in part by an understandable distrust of UIC's intentions—and focused primarily on the programs and resources that could immediately benefit them. They certainly never went along with the idea of comprehensive neighborhood planning under the aegis of the university.

For public agencies, a partnership can allow for coordination among the public-sector departments within a neighborhood focus. Contributing to their obligation to public participation, it offers service providers regular feedback on the impact of their policies from concerned and informed consumers. It allows them to tap into an important resource—local knowledge—while piloting and evaluating innovative initiatives before their possible mainstreaming by relevant agencies. The Near West Side area was chosen in part because it was also the location of an experimental Strategic Neighborhood Action Plan project, an effort by city government to coordinate activities of all city departments in the neighborhood. The city gave up on this coordination attempt after a short period of time and sent a representative to the UICNI steering committee only intermittently. Nevertheless, UICNI meetings have continued to play a role in bringing together governmental and other agencies with an interest in developing programs in these two neighborhoods.

Because factionalism is a common feature of demoralized communities, some community partners believe such divisions to be vulnerable to exploitation by other sectors around the table to amplify their advantage. Thus there is the question about how a stable edifice of equal partnership can be established on such an uneven foundation. A related factor is the differential risk involved. Many evaluations remark that private corporations take few risks relative to their potential gain.[33] Compared with landowners and development investors, the development benefit to the poorest can be often bypassed.[34]

Criticism that partnerships are unequal, to the permanent disadvantage of the community's agenda, misses the point. Of course, unequal power relations, like uneven development, are intrinsic to market economies. That cannot be wished away any more than it can be ignored. More pertinently, the issue is whether such partnerships help to diffuse power in the direction of less favored social groups.

The requirement then is for institutions with freedom to maneuver while retaining accountability. In that respect, for all their deficits, partnerships can represent a new local form of governance. There are other practical reasons why partnerships need to be tried and tested. For one thing, we have exhausted many other local development approaches. For another, the partnership model is becoming more central to public policy. The real challenge is how to address its limitations.

The Strengths and Weaknesses of the University as a Partner

In the case of universities, the three conventional goals of teaching, research, and service have long been compartmentalized, with the service component usually relegated to the least prestigious place. The challenge of these new partnerships is to integrate the three while revisiting the meaning of the service objective. The latter could be seen as a university obligation to be responsive to community needs on the community's terms. But such a formulation denies the reality that the university itself is a local player, with the rights and duties of a local resident. Thus it has its own self-interest, and as with all vested interests, it preferably is declared openly. It also denies the reality that the people who need to become involved to get the actual project going—faculty—do not respond well to being told they need to work on the community's terms.[35] A clear acceptance of the legitimacy of each partner's differing motivations is more likely to lead to a successful partnership.

Typically, the university's motivations are very mixed. At the institutional level, it may include gaining credit and profile for delivery of its urban mission; being at the table when local development is being planned because its real estate interests may be affected; obtaining more funds, both from the particular project funder and potentially from State government impressed by the university's social contribution; providing access into the local community for its research faculty; and providing hands-on experience for its students in real-life arenas. Individual faculty members generally are looking for suitable research sites for themselves and their students, but they may also be attracted by the opportunity for project funding and in many cases are highly motivated to use their professional expertise to address problems they see in the community.

What then can the university contribute? It can provide a range of practical support, as described in the previous section. Moreover, besides its related roles as planner and capacity builder, it can facilitate a networking process that induces the involvement of other constituencies. (In this respect, the coupling between community and university does not need to remain monogamous. Indeed, the partnership will benefit from liaison with other civic interests.) Beyond these kinds of supports, the university brings its own status as a resource-rich institution of high social standing whose interventions and

analysis usually have at least the perception of rationality and neutrality and whose durability allows it to take the long view.

However, its potential to exploit these advantages is compromised by a set of formidable shortcomings. As a very large institution, the university often lacks flexibility and quick-response capability. Rooted in tradition, and inscrutable often to both outsiders and insiders, its bureaucracy can move at a snail's pace. The culture of faculty autonomy means that continuous persuasion rather than instant coercion is needed to induce faculty and staff participation in any university-community partnership. Given that its departmental structures remain bound by discipline, considerable effort is needed to construct interdisciplinary research teams. Limitations of internal systems of communication even in the digital age mean that faculty in one part can be duplicating the research effort of another without any collegial contact.

As generators and processors of knowledge, universities are significant agents in the new economy. The flip side of that coin is that they can adopt the guise of private corporations, driven to continuously enrich their financial base. This can include bidding for the most lucrative research funds rather than the most intellectually appealing or socially useful research, seeking exemptions that reduce the tax base for local social spending, and gentrifying their neighborhood in efforts to amplify the extent and value of their property. Overall, the historic social detachment in which many universities have happily remained has caused some in the wider society to view them as self-regarding and more given to abstract and arrogant theories about social problems than to their resolution. The community tends to feel: We know the facts; we have to live with them. The issue is, what do we do about them?

The Community as a Partner

What then of the community side? Again, its strengths are many. It brings to the partnership local knowledge, energy, credibility, and access. In its ideals for community building, it gives expression to the democratic impulse for citizen participation and responsibility. At best, such mobilizations ensure that the local project has wide ownership, legitimacy, and sustainability, while the voluntary input is a valuable form of social capital, even if difficult to calibrate. Given their motivation for community benefit, the community participants also can ground the partnership by prioritizing practical outcomes. Over the past 20 years, the sophistication of community development organizations to engage in housing development has grown enormously. With better trained staffs, more resources, and a network of support organizations, they have become better partners for other organizations with professional standards and approaches.

Without organized community intervention, the distress of deprived neighborhoods would likely be greater, with consequent negative effects for other social institutions such as universities. Of course, community efforts themselves have often been instrumental in calling attention to neighborhood problems and attracting resources to address them. But despite examples of competent and effective community organizing, traditional community development suffers from significant limitations that can impair its contribution to partnerships.

Compared with government and large institutions like universities, community agencies typically lack resources and expertise and have considerably less experience in making major strategic decisions, being taken seriously, and having their agenda taken seriously. Reference to the complementarity of top-down resources and power with bottom-up sensitivity and expertise[36] can underplay the extent to which development agendas are typically skewed toward a business logic.

While operating at the local level, community development confronts problems generated at national or even global levels. The pressures of gentrification, combined with the lagging incomes of the bottom half of the population, have given rise to a crisis of housing affordability that is well beyond most community organizations or even city governments to address effectively.

There is also a problem with the very concept of community. It assumes, often prematurely, that a community infrastructure already exists or can be easily created to which new programs can be readily attached. The concept of community implies distinct localities operating through social interaction with shared identity, solidarity, and social coherence. Yet local attachments or networks hold less relevance in an age of global communication. Instead of community as just a sociogeographic entity, there are more communities of interest, less territorially bound. Thus, the premise that people can be mobilized around common bonds in particular social spaces, even those spaces enduring acute social exclusion, is presumptive. Such communities often exhibit demoralization and fissures, wherein community organizing requires consummate skill in maximizing consensual agendas without sacrificing strategic focus.

Moreover, community action spread across small communities can promote territorial rivalries for scarce resources, a situation exacerbated where racial and social division interface. Such competition may redistribute resources among, rather than to, deprived areas. Thus, community activists tend to be overstretched and underresourced, while constantly obliged to demonstrate representativeness or face losing community support. In UICNI, some community representatives at times were discredited within the neighborhood because they were seen as being too close to the university. One community faction used opposition to UIC's plans as the litmus test for true community representativeness. Although ultimately largely discredited, for a period of time this placed constraints on even the university's best partners.

Part of the dilemma facing community organizations is that revitalization may change the social makeup of the community in which they work. For instance, some of the revitalization of public housing has reduced the number of low-income residents in specific neighborhoods, affecting the political strength of organizations and elected officials representing them.

Bringing the Partners Together

This more competitive environment faced by the community sector is echoed in the experience of the university sector. However, within these exigencies common cause can be found. In achieving trust and mutual respect, it is important that they do not caricature the real difficulties each sector faces. The university could waste time questioning the representative status of the community side, implying that the community is led by the vocal few. Similarly, the community contingent could claim to be intimidated by an overbearing ambiance of power and patronage in the university's hallowed halls. It could treat the university as a monolithic institution involved in partnership simply to broker community goodwill to ease the path for its larger corporate agenda. Or it could patronize the university as the new kid on the block or a Johnny-come-lately when it comes to community development.

Some posturing is probably inevitable when partnerships are just being developed, especially if there is no extensive history of prior involvement. Even once partnerships are under way, external political events or internal changes in leadership may lead to a repeat of earlier tensions and negotiations. For instance, one of UIC's community partners went through about five executive directors in as many years, while another had two significant

upheavals on its community board. Several of these changes caused a repetition of the process of changing distrust and cynicism, through the stage of pragmatic and opportunistic acceptance, to collaborative partnership.

Some of these difficulties arise from the failure to distinguish among the different components of both university and community. For instance, at the same time UICNI staff members were developing a HUD grant with one of the Pilsen community organizations, this same group was paying an organizer to mount opposition to the plans of UIC's administration to acquire the 40 acres located between the university and Pilsen. This led to tensions at all levels. Some in the community accused the CDC of selling out. The CDC director put pressure on UICNI staff to try to influence the university administration. The administration expressed displeasure with UICNI staff for "giving money to these guys who are pissing all over us." The fact that the partnership went ahead shows that in the end each of the organizations (and individuals involved) accepted that one can agree to disagree on some things and move ahead on others.

What is required is an honest acknowledgment of different interests and different cultures, within what may start as narrow common ground. For instance, the community sector tends to value intuition and experiential knowledge, whereas the university tradition elevates rationality and formal knowledge. Engagement between the two demands a new epistemology[37] that validates the efficacy of each in appropriate cases and seeks cross-fertilization between both rather than the colonization of one over the other.

Partnership seems to imply a "shared agenda," which some on the community side feel requires an agreed authority about more equal decisionmaking processes:

> [T]he rhetoric of partnership, masking unequal and exploitative relationships, must also be overturned and replaced by new, negotiated and strategically agreed structures and liaison machinery, both between and within agencies of government and non government organizations.[38]

Others will insist that, if conceived less as a set of institutional arrangements and more as dynamic engagement within and among sectors, partnership may better nurture comprehensive development. This involves a combination of discussion, analysis, and deliberation that might be called negotiated governance.[39] Indeed, this may be a more successful approach than focusing on the formal structures of partnership as its main manifestation. Seen in this light, UICNI was quite successful in maintaining a very active conversation with its many community partners as well as the city, regardless of its limited official authority.

A shared agenda may be less important than it has been made out to be. For instance, a recent HUD publication argues that successful partnership requires that "all partners share a common vision and approach to community development.…"[40] That may be asking too much. The evaluators of UICNI concluded that partners do not really need to agree, nor do they even have to like each other very much. Work may be more fun if they do, but as long as they can agree on the specific means and tasks at hand, useful outcomes can be achieved. Surely in business deals nobody would expect that people share the same values and agree on their philosophical approaches. As long as they can see clear benefits for themselves that they can achieve through joint action or exchange, a partnership is possible.

Similarly, both sides may seek assurance about the commitment of the other. Although there can be a problem with continuity and duration, particularly in transitional neighborhoods, the commitment of the community is often easier to assert because they are living with the problems. The commitment of the university requires more clear evidence. Does

the university's interest in partnership have support from the top of the organization? Is the university environment and administrative structure becoming more conducive to such an enterprise? Do internal reward systems of tenure and promotion demote community outreach work as a career choice for faculty?[41] Are there explicit incentives to foster interdisciplinary research?

Even when these things are nominally in place, success is not assured. For instance, UIC had commitments from CEOs of two large corporations that their companies would hire a certain number of community residents once UIC had developed suitable training programs with two neighborhood schools. However, months went by before the corporations designated appropriate contact persons. These individuals either were not necessarily committed to fulfilling the CEOs' promises or argued that the companies simply did not need people with the limited training envisioned. As plans were adjusted, one of the companies experienced severe financial difficulties that led to the departure of the CEO. Similarly, UIC itself had trouble living up to its own promises regarding hiring of community residents and contracting with neighborhood businesses, because State civil service and purchasing laws severely restrict the freedom of an institution to give preference to certain areas or individuals.

Another matter is that of the organization of the exchange. Typically, the community side is less given to legalisms and very formal meeting structures. But in partnerships not formalized by a clear set of agreements and defined membership, coherence, authority, and accountability can be impaired. During meetings, open exchange and consensual decisionmaking are best served by facilitating everyone's involvement: placing time limits on speaking to protect against domination by the most vocal; having everyone speak from their own experience and expertise; and being respected, with no dismissive comments or undue interruption.[42] These are simple but significant measures to ensure efficient engagement.

Compromise is also difficult. The community side may insist that there can be no compromise when it comes to poverty and housing neglect, and the university can reply with similar rhetoric. But it is neither feasible nor important to agree on everything before anything gets accomplished. Agree to differ, continue to contest, while maximizing agreed visions for joint action. Nevertheless, certain domains do not deserve compromise. For instance, academic freedom and intellectual honesty underpin the integrity of universities. Accordingly, they cannot affirm community analysis if it conflicts with the research evidence or evaluate projects softly to ensure their further funding. Such collusion serves neither university nor neighborhood. Of course, good action-research is participatory, with the community playing a key formative role in the research design, and ideally in the fieldwork and analysis as well.[43] The university has to accept that such time-consuming processes add to the production costs of the research enterprise. But none of this can preclude the need for open inquiry and robust interrogation of the raw data without predetermined outcomes.

The relationship between the two partners at best is one of mutual empowerment. It may be assumed that the community sector faces the greater learning curve. In reality, partnering capacity has to be built within both sectors. The community sector can help the university redefine its relevance to the wider society, and by prompting the creation of flexible interdisciplinary research teams, collaboration with the community can bring intellectual coherence to the university's mission to advance knowledge. Similarly, the university can assist with change on the community side to create new and sustainable institutions, funding streams, leadership, and relationships among private and public sectors to support community development.[44]

Several features of successful partnerships have been identified in a recent HUD publication:

■   Shared vision and philosophy of community development practice.

■   A way of working together that expresses the shared vision.

■   Partner relationships designed to address inequities of power, culture, class, and race.

■   Recognition and satisfaction of mutual interests.

■   Balanced roles, for example, between advocacy and organization, between partners that respect each partner's role.

■   A pledge to a long-term relationship between partners in the interest of the overall development of the community.[45]

In our experience, as we have discussed here, the shared vision is not as essential as the HUD report suggests, but satisfaction of interests is.[46] Furthermore, partners need to understand the power and class inequities that exist but rarely are in a position to address them actively—rather, they need to be managed.

Partnerships as Growth Machines or "Third Way"

In continental Europe, partnership is generally seen as aligned with concepts such as empowerment and equity, because it has been advocated as a form of more democratic and more local corporatism within a social democratic development model. By contrast, in both the United States and the United Kingdom, partnerships have focused more on the role of the private sector and have been described as "the local growth machine" (Molotch, 1987).[47] While Molotch did not discuss universities, they fit the place-bound characteristic of organizations such as newspapers, department stores, and utilities that are typically part of the growth machine. Is the interest of universities in partnering with community organizations around issues of housing and community revitalization, in general, an example of a localized growth machine, or does it reflect a more democratic "third way" approach combining public and private efforts in more democratic and participatory structures?

Savas, a key architect of 1980s U.S. urban policy, has stated unequivocally that "a greater reliance on the private sector, through privatization, public-private partnerships, and the like, [was] the hallmark of the Reagan administration."[48] Public-private partnership often is presented as a way to do good while doing well. However, skeptics have come to a different conclusion:

> In the United States, despite periodic proclamations of corporate social responsibility, there has been little evidence of sustained business interest in urban social investments.... For the most part, the activities that the private sector considers as sound investments and as within their domain of expertise have been property-development projects in areas selected for commercial potential and profitability.[49]

These areas have tended to be in downtowns and waterfronts, and not in the worst-off areas, with a tendency to spur gentrification, and thereby to create divided cities.[50] Summarizing this experience, Norman writes:

> [T]he goal of public and private leaders remains the same: to bring in enough investment in major facilities to keep the downtown competitive with comparable-sized cities across the nation in the hope that a general economic revival, rather than sharply

focused and well-funded programs, will be adequate to solve the problems of urban decay.[51]

By contrast, in the European concept of partnership, greater synergy is claimed to arise if the processes of conceptualization, decisionmaking, and implementation genuinely involve negotiation and cooperation among different partners. While a prominent role for the private sector is almost axiomatic in the United States, in Europe the notion that the public partner should pay heed to the common good remains strong:

> Good results can be achieved only if the municipal government, as protector of the common welfare, takes very serious account of any negative external effects (public-private) projects might entail.... No good government prefers short-term profit to long-term welfare.[52]

As universities buy into the rhetoric of partnership, it is important to distinguish these different philosophical and political implications. Even a cursory analysis of the types of partnerships around housing and broader community development that universities are engaged in, suggests that both aspects of the partnership idea are present. Universities' long-standing interest in the quality of their immediate environment has suddenly acquired a gloss of respectability and civic-mindedness when put in the language of partnership. Thus Yale's work to revitalize its New Haven community or Marquette's real estate development in Milwaukee are hailed as examples of university-community partnership (and funded in part by HUD) when they clearly serve an organizational self-interest first and foremost. UIC's Neighborhoods Initiative deliberately focused on neighborhoods proximate but not immediately adjacent to the university to avoid both the appearance and reality of self-interest or the possibility of conflict with the university's own institutional real estate development plans. As the university's administration developed plans for a major 40-acre development project, however, it adopted the Great Cities and Neighborhoods Initiative language to present its plans as examples of positive university-community engagement—despite (or, perhaps, because of) significant neighborhood opposition to the plans.

In most cases, however, the partnership programs of universities appear to be driven mainly by the interests of faculty in research projects or service-learning opportunities for their students or by the applied research and service agenda of university centers and institutes. As such, they represent a new approach to using resources of the university and reflect a new respect for the importance of community organizations as legitimate partners, rather than simply research subjects in the real-life laboratory of the city. It is as yet unclear whether these partnerships will have the staying power, institutional capability, and legitimacy to go beyond project-specific collaborations to become lasting alternate forms of neighborhood service delivery and governance.

The Future of University-Community Partnerships

Partnership that ranks equity alongside economy and efficiency may become part of a new form of governance that reshapes old-style distant public bureaucracies without abandoning vulnerable citizens to the exigencies of business or voluntary support. It implies that no one sector has all the resources or all the answers; that decisionmaking has to get closer to those most affected by those decisions; that people will appreciate more those services in whose development they have participated; and that straddling institutional boundaries in a new approach to social action offers opportunities for experiment and new thinking. Most of all, it implies that what can be achieved by the sectors acting cooperatively is greater than the sum of what each can achieve acting separately.

In this institutional form, a program is owned by all the partners, conferring opportunities and responsibilities on all the proprietors. Importantly, it allows also for the sharing of credit for what succeeds. While it means that the local community representatives cannot claim sole control, it also means that other partners are locked into accountability for the successful outcome of the enterprise in a way they are not in a traditional community action program.

From this wider experience of partnership, 10 main lessons can be drawn for university-community collaboration:

■ For the university, outreach is important, but what it does outside will be limited unless it changes what it is like inside. Similarly, the community sector has to be open to new ways of seeing and doing.

■ To achieve this, new structures are important but not as important as new cultures and processes of dialogue and cooperation and new mindsets of administration.

■ Such willingness for each side to change offers significant benefit to both. To the university, it brings the prospect of a new niche in higher education, a comparative advantage over other universities not yet so engaged because those academies making this brave leap can position themselves at the cutting edge of educational institutions. Similarly, the community side can move beyond the rhetoric and posture of confrontation into meaningful networking with sources of power and public policy influence.

■ The university as a corporation has to eschew the narrow privatism that has dominated conventional growth coalitions, and there must be open debate about the institutional self-interests of universities in partnerships.

■ A dual partnership may become too intense. Multiagency partnerships are balanced with other civic agencies, permitting the range of intervention needed to redress multiple problems.

■ Because the complexity of the social arena creates many imponderables, the university disposition for analysis should not promote paralysis.

■ New partnerships demand new vocabularies. For instance, instead of arguing about the downside of gentrification, the value of socially mixed communities and new investment in depressed areas needs to be mutually affirmed. A changed discourse can liberate new space for cooperative intervention.

■ Early clarity about mandate, constituency, and strategy is important, but it should not preclude the flexibility of improvisation within a principled opportunism.

■ Whatever can be agreed upon between the university and community must develop additional resources and be leveraged to influence private power and public policy to deepen its imprint on the urban landscape.

■ Housing development, like regeneration in general, demands long-term intervention. Universities must decide whether they can go beyond episodic cooperation to make a long-term commitment.

Authors

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