

BALANCING MEANS AND ENDS

KEY MESSAGES FOR CENTRAL GOVERNMENT FROM
THE "STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES THROUGH
LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS" RESEARCH PROJECT

Local Partnerships and Governance Research Group
June 2005



LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS & GOVERNANCE

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Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by Rachael Trotman on behalf of the University of Auckland Local Partnerships and Governance Group. This research group was led by Dr Wendy Lerner, and included Dr Melani Anae, Professor Maureen Baker, Maria Butler, Dr David Craig, Megan Courtney, Dr Bruce Curtis, Dr Tracey McIntosh, and Associate Professor Cluny MacPherson. Gerda Roelvink, Ann Walker, Alf Jones, Chris Beer and Andrew McVey were graduate student members of the research group. During the Strengthening Communities through Local Partnerships research project, the LPG group worked in partnership with Waitakere City Council under the guidance of Tony Mayow, and was also supported by Mary Richardson of Christchurch City Council.

Published 2005 by the Local Partnerships and Governance Research Group.
Funded by a grant from the Foundation for Research in Science and Technology.

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ISBN 0-473-10101-7

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Printed in Auckland by Publishing Press

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Executive Summary

Purpose of report

This report presents key messages for central government arising from a three year, FORST funded research project called 'Strengthening Communities Through Local Partnerships'. This project investigated the theory and practice of contemporary social sector partnerships in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Project overview

Beginning in 2002, the aim of the research project was to identify the overall range, scope and effectiveness of local social sector partnerships. Its focus was 'headline' partnerships typically involving central government, local authorities, community and voluntary sector groups, iwi/Māori and sometimes Pacific/migrant groups. These partnerships are often pilot programmes seeking new and innovative ways to address complex social problems.

The project involved academic investigation into a range of topics surrounding local social sector collaboration and partnerships, national and regional hui/forums, a local case study in both Waitakere and Christchurch, national and local mapping of partnership projects and investigations into Māori and Pacific peoples' experiences and perceptions of partnership.

Contextual analysis

A key aim of the project was to provide an analysis of the theoretical, practical and policy environment surrounding local social sector partnerships in New Zealand. Main themes captured in this process are as follows.

A 'partnering state' has emerged in New Zealand in the last five years in particular. This reflects a new 'social development' approach, which is in part a response to the failures of the 'more market' or 'neoliberal' era of the 1980s and 1990s. The social development approach involves a new focus on 'joined up' government, developing relationships and partnerships, an emphasis on outcomes, community responsiveness, and a focus on the child.

While this approach seeks stronger integration of policy and practice, and greater trust and collaboration between government and other sectors,

the legacy of the neoliberal era persists. This is reflected in ongoing fragmentation, a rigid focus on accountability and reporting and an aversion to risk. Local partnerships are viewed as a new form of social governance that seeks to present a signal of stability and inclusiveness to global markets, while gaining greater participation of local people in improving local wellbeing outcomes.

Local partnership building provokes questions surrounding which issues should be addressed at local, regional or national levels, and by whom. They also highlight the unclear role of central government in local community development and sustainability. The research project highlights a host of issues around central government devolution of decision making power and resourcing to regional and local areas, and how these affect local collaboration efforts.

There is potential for greater local collaboration around statutory planning processes as required by the Local Government Act 2002; however, central government agencies may need stronger imperatives to take part in these processes.

There is a danger that a focus on partnerships can mask the real drivers of social inequality and unsustainable development. Local partnership and collaboration should be seen as an appropriate way of working in some instances, rather than a panacea for deep rooted problems. Real change will result from a three pronged approach of improving service provision, involving local communities and influencing the basic determinants of wellbeing and sustainability (such as income, housing, education, employment and environmental health).

Internationally, there is a lack of clear, long term evidence that partnerships make a difference; however this way of working as it is currently constructed is very recent in New Zealand. Robust evaluation of the local partnerships phenomenon is required.

Key findings of interest to central government

There are wide and diverse meanings associated with the term 'partnership'. Narrow and fixed definitions should be avoided, and a shared language surrounding partnership should continue to be developed. A partnering continuum is suggested as a framework to be adapted and applied whenever a new relationship is being considered, or when groups wish to assess what type of relationship they currently have.

Māori perceptions of partnership are wholly different to those of non-Māori, and hinge around the concepts of *rangatiratanga* (autonomy) and *manaakitanga* (the obligation to be hospitable). Successful partnership with Māori also involves giving meaningful expression to *tikanga* or Māori cultural practices and values. A conceptual model for bicultural

model is presented, which begins with appropriate contact and mandate, moves to mutually agreed communications and into deeper negotiation and relationship building. A three tiered framework for considering the role of the Treaty of Waitangi in partnerships and relationship building is also provided.

Appropriate relationships should be developed that suit the goals sought. This means being goal focused, prioritising collaborative effort and using the partnering continuum to establish what type of relationship is needed in each case.

Local partnerships in New Zealand are highly differentiated, are often pilot programmes, and their success is highly dependent on the people involved. A group of 'strategic brokers' are emerging who facilitate and maintain collaborative efforts. While there is agreement that partnership overall is a 'Good Thing', collaboration fatigue is widespread and all parties are beginning to prioritise collaborative efforts more consciously. A summary of what is needed to build local collaboration is outlined.

Many Māori communities are suffering from consultation and collaboration fatigue and are preferring to put energy into practical projects and securing contracts. The rule of thumb for Māori engagement is 'kanohi ki te kanohi, rangatira ki te rangatira – face to face, chief to chief'. As with Māori, many Pacific people prefer to use the term 'partnering' or 'relationship' to 'partnership'. Adequate resourcing of the Ministry for Pacific Island Affairs is sought to mediate between government and local Pacific communities.

Success stories surrounding local partnership and collaboration in the social sector include:

- Increased central government visibility and engagement at the local level.
- A growing recognition and valuing of the skills required to collaborate.
- More flexible resourcing for collaboration and partnership.
- Increased community identity and empowerment.
- Positive changes to government culture.

The Waitakere experience shows that local collaboration can promote better outcomes across a broad range of areas such as community safety and Māori socio-economic development. It can also bring in external funding and resources, improve service planning and provision, influence national policy and identify local needs and gaps.

Actions for central government

While central government's current approach is generally welcomed and is producing incremental gains, improvements are needed to pull

partnering back from the margins and to gauge its impact over time. Potential government actions to catalyse these improvements include the following.

- Develop a strategic framework for partnering.
- Develop stronger imperatives for central government to engage locally.
- Develop a decentralisation and devolution framework.
- Experiment with locality based projects and sector based projects.
- Continue to develop relationships with Māori and fund further work on how Māori perspectives and approaches can influence mainstream approaches to relationship building.
- Build government staff skills and capacity.
- Increase/redirect resources for local collaboration.
- Develop the workforce supporting local collaboration.
- Develop an evidence base around partnership.
- Develop and share new forms of relational agreements.

Purpose of report

‘...the government expects that others will recognise the partnership approach as our normal way of doing business.’
— *Sustainable Development for New Zealand: Programme of Action*,
January 2003.

In recent years, the Labour led government has placed a partnership approach at the centre of its pursuit of a more sustainable New Zealand. This is especially so in the social service sector, where tackling complex social problems collaboratively at local and regional levels is becoming more common. Several years on from this very public commitment to working in partnership, what is happening now? What are the core issues and perceptions surrounding how local collaboration and partnerships work in practice? Are they making a difference? What is working and what can be improved?

The purpose of this report is to respond to these questions, by presenting key messages for central government from the FORST¹ funded ‘Strengthening Communities Through Local Partnerships Project’. This three year research project is the first major investigation into the theory and practice of contemporary local social sector partnerships in New Zealand. Given the broad scope of the project, this report distils key findings from it that are likely to be of interest to central government.² As the legislator, key policy maker, funder and provider of social services, central government actions profoundly influence the success or otherwise of local collaborative efforts designed to improve social outcomes. This report seeks to clarify how central government can best assist these efforts.

This report does not provide an evaluation of the research project, nor another ‘how-to guide’ for collaboration.³ It is only one small part of the significant body of literature⁴ spawned through the ‘Strengthening Communities Through Local Partnerships Project’, and is best read as a companion document to a report capturing detailed lessons for local

-
1. Foundation for Research in Science and Technology.
 2. Actions and issues for other sectors (local government, community and voluntary sectors, Māori, Pacific Islands and migrant peoples) are covered elsewhere in the research project’s literature.
 3. See for example the Ministry of Social Development’s ‘Mosaics’ Report (2003).
 4. This literature can be accessed via the project’s website: <http://www.lpg.org.nz>.

collaborative efforts from Waitakere City, entitled *Key Learnings and Ways Forward – The Potential of Partnerships, Based on Waitakere City Experiences* (August 2004).

There are four parts to this report. Part One begins with an overview of the aims and components of the ‘Strengthening Communities Through Local Partnerships Project’ (SCTLPP). Part Two sets out the project’s contextual analysis of the key issues surrounding social sector collaboration and partnerships in New Zealand. Part Three presents key findings from the project. Part Four sets out how central government can better support a collaborative environment in the social sector. All material was drawn from project related literature, and from interviews and commentary from 18 key people who were involved with the project.⁵

5. Appendix A lists the names of these people.

Part one

Research project overview

1.1: Project aims

The 'Strengthening Communities Through Local Partnerships Project' began in July 2001 with a period of relationship building. The project formally began in January 2002, and was launched with a national symposium in Auckland on local partnerships in April 2002.

The aim of the research was to identify the overall range, scope and effectiveness of local social sector partnerships. It produced academic and community focused literature that together:

- Contextualises local partnerships in broader discussions about changing forms of social governance.
- Describes what kinds of partnerships are occurring locally.
- Analyses what is and what is not working in terms of local collaborative effort.
- Develops some strategies to enhance the long term sustainability of local partnerships.

The project focused on 'headline' local partnerships in the social sector. These 'headline' local partnerships tend to involve central government agencies, intermediate bodies such as local councils, community and voluntary sector groups, iwi/Māori groups, and frequently Pacific Islands and migrants groups. Examples include community health plans; interagency wellbeing strategies; iwi-based and urban Māori service delivery; healthy cities partnerships; safer communities programmes; 'strengthening communities' and 'strengthening families' projects; information networks; area based employment and training projects; and 'one stop shops' for government services.

These headline local partnerships are often pilot programmes in which '...government departments are experimenting with alternative ways of addressing social problems' (Larner and Butler 2005 (a) p80). They aspire to a community driven 'bottom up' approach, on the premise that communities themselves have the best knowledge of their issues and needs, or could readily determine them if they had the resources to do so (ibid p80).

1.2 Project components

The project had six core components, as follows.

a: Academic investigation

Over twenty five research papers, technical reports, book chapters and journal articles have been produced to date on a wide range of topics relating to local collaboration and partnerships, including the Strengthening Families initiative, social capital, health, environmental sustainability initiatives, neoliberalism, headline local partnerships, gender and ethnicity in new forms of social governance, the Stronger Communities Action Fund and violence prevention. Five Masters and PhD Theses were also either fully or partially funded through the project, for example, one MA thesis looked at how partnership operated in the Auckland Regional Economic Development Strategy (AREDS), and another at the Strengthening Families programme.

The literature arising from the project can be accessed at <http://www.lpg.org.nz>. Also provided on the website is an annotated bibliography on international research relating to social policy and local partnership.

b: National and regional hui/forums

The project hosted or co-hosted four major national forums, as follows (all proceedings available from the website above).

- April 2002 – The *Strengthening Communities through Local Partnerships Symposium* which formally launched the project was held at the University of Auckland. It was promoted as ‘the first end-user event on partnerships’.
- February 2003 – A workshop was held at the Ministry of Social Development in Wellington, which brought together university researchers and representatives from central government, local government and the community sector, to review and assess the research project’s definitions, priorities and processes.
- April 2004 – A one day intensive forum on local and regional partnerships and governance was held in Auckland, co-hosted with Sustainable Auckland. Local, regional and central government representatives, community representatives and academic researchers’ workshopped issues such as multi party governance, funding and resourcing.
- December 2004 – The *After Neoliberalism? New Forms of Governance in Aotearoa New Zealand* conference brought together academics and researchers from diverse New Zealand research projects to explore the current political and governmental environment.

c: Two local case studies

Waitakere City and Christchurch City were the focus of two case studies

as to how local collaboration and partnerships are operating on the ground. The aims were to determine the range and scope of local partnerships; identify how they were operating and issues affecting their effectiveness and sustainability.

Different processes were undertaken within each locality. The Christchurch process involved a series of 'Shared Learning Groups' and other meetings where issues surrounding local partnerships were discussed. The university researcher was Auckland based.

The Waitakere process was more in-depth and involved a wider mix of people and organisations.⁶ It was undertaken within a partnership model, with a signed agreement between the Waitakere City Council and the University of Auckland guiding the relationship. Larner and Mayow document this process and the lessons learned from it in their December 2002 paper 'Strengthening Communities through Local Partnerships: Building a collaborative research project'. A part time Council employee was dedicated to the project, funded from the research budget. Having a 'local' work closely alongside the university researcher proved to be beneficial, as it allowed the project to be linked into existing collaborative projects and processes.

d: National and local mapping

The project website <http://www.lpg.org.nz> provides a national map of headline social sector local partnerships involving central government agencies in New Zealand's social sector.⁷ Interviews were subsequently carried out with key brokers in each of these 'headline' local partnerships. This is complemented by two locality based databases that give examples of the range and scope of partnerships in Waitakere and Christchurch. Slightly different definitions of local partnerships are used in each locality, reflecting their differing arrangements and the difficulties surrounding clearly defining partnership arrangements.⁸

e: Māori component

Māori experiences and perceptions of local collaboration and partnership were explored via three avenues. Tracy McIntosh drew on interviews

6. A detailed account of the Waitakere Case Study can be found in Courtney and Craig's 2004 report: 'Key Learnings and Ways Forward – The Potential of Partnership, Based on Waitakere City Experiences'. This report is referred to within this document by the abbreviation 'TPOP'. No equivalent write-up is available for the Christchurch process.

7. In their research paper "'Headline" Local Partnerships in Aotearoa/New Zealand' (July 2003), Larner and Butler discuss in detail the methodology used to identify and distinguish 'headline' local partnerships from other forms of partnership working.

8. See the research paper above for a discussion of these difficulties.

from previous research and responses from her own interviews to produce a research report entitled 'Kanohi ki te kanohi: Face to face, local government and Māori'. Stephanie Kelly considered the history and significance of collaboration with local government for South Island Māori, in her report called 'The significance of collaborative local relationships for Ngāi Tahu Whānui from 1990-2002 to the future'. Wayne Knox interviewed a range of Māori representatives from local partnerships in Waitakere, to produce the 'Waitakere City Māori Community Research Report'. A major community hui was held in July 2004 to present this report and Te Taumata Rānanga, Waitakere City Council's Standing Māori Committee, resolved in August 2004 to participate in ongoing local action planning to progress the exploration of:

- A Waitakere Treaty Partnership Framework.
- How to mutually build capacity between Māori and non-Māori organisations in Waitakere.

f: Pacific component

Two case studies were undertaken for the Pacific Islands component of the project. Associate Professor Cluny Macpherson investigated how the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs developed a web of partnerships with Pacific communities, social policy agencies and service providers, to '...overcome some of the challenges which a small Ministry faces in delivering appropriate services to a disparate community with limited resources' (Macpherson 2003 p2). His report is entitled 'National Government and Local Partnerships: An Apogalevele Model'. Karen Mangnall conducted interviews with Waitakere based Pacific individuals and organisations to identify key partnership issues; her report is forthcoming.⁹

1.3: Project qualifications

This project covered a lot of territory, at varying degrees of depth. A more intensive and documented process occurred in Waitakere City than Christchurch City, which is reflected in this report. While Waitakere and Christchurch experiences will resonate with many parts of New Zealand, and some lessons will apply generally, each community is different and local context will prevail.

The social sector focus means that while much of the material here will apply to other partnerships involving an economic and/or environmental focus, this project strongly reflects social sector experience.¹⁰ Finally,

9. A short summary of draft material from this report and an interview with Karen Mangnall contributed to this document.

10. Lerner and Butler note that government-community partnerships are much less developed in the economic and environmental arenas, and that people in these fields '...are looking to their social policy colleagues for advice in the area of government-community relationships' (2003, p7).

the in-depth local Māori and Pacific case studies were both based in Waitakere, where the existing local base was strong – so again, while much will apply more broadly, the project reflects that local, urban experience.

Part two

Contextual analysis

‘...it’s important that the partnerships phenomenon is seen as a part of a wider reform process and movement...a new approach to the wider business of governance and strategic alignment in government and social service delivery’

— *The Potential of Partnerships Report*, 2004 p25 (original emphasis).

A key aim of the Strengthening Communities Through Local Partnerships Project was to provide a coherent analysis of the theoretical, policy and practical environment surrounding local social sector partnerships in New Zealand. The following section outlines the main themes and contextual issues captured through this process.

2.1: Emergence of a ‘partnering state’

During the last two Labour led coalition terms, a new ‘social development’ approach has emerged. The aim of this approach is to ‘reconcile social justice with an energetic and competitive economy’ (Clark 2002). It is manifested in the government’s new emphasis on ‘joined up’ government, partnerships, community responsiveness, and a focus on the child (Larner 2005).

The government’s 2002 Review of the Centre, its Mosaics Report (Ministry of Social Development 2003) and key strategies such as the Sustainable Development Programme of Action (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet 2003), all promote a results oriented, partnership based, ‘whole of government’ way of working. The partnership approach is also part of government attempts to develop a ‘robust and respectful framework of relationships’ between government and local communities (Communities and Government: Potential for Partnership: Whakatapu Whakaaro, 2001, p13).

This has come in response to ‘the distrust and unhappiness generated by the more market approach of the 1980s and 1990s’ (Larner and Butler 2005 (a) p81). Referred to as the ‘neoliberal era’, these decades heralded an estrangement between government and local communities, a divided voluntary sector competing for narrowly specified contract funding, and an overt prioritising of economic concerns over those of environmental health and social wellbeing. Currently, significant barriers to cross-

sectoral, collaborative ways of working remain within the current public and fiscal management structure, which still bears the legacy of the neoliberal period of state sector reform (Walker 2004 (a)). This legacy includes fragmentation, departmental silos and a lack of trust within and between government and other sectors (ibid). Much of the current context surrounding partnerships and local collaboration reflects a rebuilding phase – of trust, of communication, of relationships, and of more integrated thinking, policy and practice.

It also reflects international trends, in which local government and community organisations are being asked to take up more responsibility in areas of service delivery, raising local accountability and planning services (Craig 2004 (a)), in both developed and developing countries.

2.2: Business as usual, social democracy, or a ‘Third Way’?

A key focus of the project’s academic investigation of partnering involved examining whether the partnering approach marks significant shifts in the modus operandi of the state. In particular, it looked at the relationship between a commitment to partnering and the neoliberal, ‘more market’ approach that gripped New Zealand in the 1980s and 1990s.

Larner and Craig (2002) note that the discourse of partnership in New Zealand is ‘...both ubiquitous and extremely diverse’ (p3). It can be used by those on the right to mask moves towards privatisation, and by those on the left seeking to devolve accountabilities into representative local community structures (p3). Despite political claims that neoliberalism is over (Clark 2002), legacies of the competitive contractualism era remain, including 1989 Public Finance Act¹¹ stipulations involving financial transparency, administrative efficiency, cost effectiveness and robust reporting requirements, all of which remain key criteria for local partnerships (Larner and Butler 2005 (a) p102). The language of the market has been normalised in public and community sector thinking.

The new emphasis on collaboration is understood as an explicit acknowledgement of the failures of the ‘more market’ approach (Larner 2004 p14). Larner and Craig conclude that in Aotearoa New Zealand local partnerships represent neither a return to social democracy, nor a simple continuation of market oriented forms of neoliberalism. Instead, they posit local partnership as a key part of a new form of social governance that seeks to present a signal of social stability and inclusivity to global

11. While some amendments have been made to this Act, and some are proposed, the Local and Regional Partnership and Governance Forum (April 2003) noted that the Act was still seen as a barrier to local collaboration and partnering.

markets, while seeking the participation of local people in local wellbeing outcomes (2005).

A cynical view would call this a more inclusive form of business as usual, which while having some positive effects continues to entrench the interests of capital and existing power dynamics (a basic criticism of Third Way approaches). A more positive view would highlight the potential for local empowerment and change through increased participation of local people. An indicator of the 'genuineness' of the approach can be seen in levels of local engagement, and in the actual level of resources and decision making power devolved to regional and local communities.

2.3: Treaty of Waitangi

An increased emphasis on the Treaty of Waitangi has strongly impacted on partnership rhetoric in New Zealand. As the document outlining the partnership between Māori and the Crown in New Zealand, the Treaty of Waitangi provides the backdrop for all discussion of partnership and collaboration in this country. As we shall see, how this plays out in practice is mixed and reflects confusion as to how to implement the intent of the Treaty in different contexts.

2.4: Devolution and decentralisation

'Throughout the local governance and decentralisation literature, the question of which level of government or community should take responsibility for which functions remains both pressing and fraught'
— Craig 2003.

Key framing questions for local collaboration and partnership are: 'Which issues should be addressed at neighbourhood, local authority, regional and national levels, and by whom?' This is closely aligned to the question 'What is central government's role in local community development?' National priorities do not always fit with diverse local needs, and the issue of how to align government resources with local need sits at the heart of this research project.

This involves what is referred to by Craig (2004 (b)) as 'the problem of slippery subsidiarity', where subsidiarity relates to the principle that accountability and decision making should rest as closely as possible to where the impact will be felt, i.e. generally at the local level. (For more on decentralisation and subsidiarity, see Craig 2004 (a).) It also tends to be easier to engage people around neighbourhood or local issues (i.e. on issues closest to them), than regional or national ones.

Previous and ongoing reform has left a tangle of jurisdictions, with differ-

ent functions allocated to different levels of governance (city or district, regional and national). Without a transparent approach to devolution and decentralisation, for Craig, 'Community agencies and local government bear the brunt of sorting out the mess, spending enormous energy running round trying to tie up loose ends, and trying to get people consistently to local negotiating tables' (2004 (b) p5).

One of the greatest dangers of decentralisation is the rapid growth of inequality arising from the differing ability of localities and communities to represent and respond to their own needs (Craig 2004 (b) pp17–18): '...decentralisation without such universal commitments [e.g. funding] can easily lead to the most vulnerable being made responsible for their own problems in ways that take no account of wider factors driving social inequality and injustice: a form of blaming the victim' (Craig 2004 (b) p18).

The generally low resourcing of coordination and collaboration creates reliance on key individuals, who are expected to negotiate multiple and sometimes contradictory accountabilities in a context where their efforts are often poorly understood and inadequately resourced (Larner and Butler 2004 (b)). According to Elizabeth and Larner (2003), much local collaboration depends on the feminised and racialised labour of highly motivated, but often over-worked, social entrepreneurs and community representatives. High transaction costs can be compounded by insufficient baseline funding for many core social services and community agencies nation wide (TPOP 2004 p11).

These are global problems, and Craig states that decentralisation and devolution issues are the 'flavour of the month' internationally in governance debates (2004 (b) p17). In New Zealand, health has been the major focus of the current round of decentralisation, with elected District Health Boards and population based mandates and funding. The international experience of decentralisation is uneven – local mandates can be sloppily defined, and mandates and functions devolved without requisite funding. This can cause frustration and disillusionment locally at limited resources and capacity to address fundamental issues such as poverty.

Different government agencies have different understandings or agendas, and can send different signals to local communities. For example, the Ministry of Social Development has significantly boosted its local staff contingent in Auckland, which is a welcome move, while the Ministry for the Environment has removed most of its Auckland staff. Even if there are local or regional government staff to liaise with, they may not have decision-making power, which can delay processes and action considerably. Also, the demise of the Community Employment Group is widely cited as an example of a risk averse government that is sending mixed signals regarding its wish to devolve power and resources to regional and local levels.

Within the current climate, where there is limited funding for local partnership and in some areas of the country, for addressing social needs locally, the 'Potential for Partnerships' Report (TPOP) identifies the following risks associated with decentralising:

- Shifting costs to localities.
- Shifting accountability and responsibility to communities and local government, without adequate resourcing ('unfunded mandates').
- Collaboration fatigue.
- Diseconomies of scale – it does not make sense financially to do some things at city or district level.
- Local capture.
- Uneven or low level capacity at the local level.
- Iwi and the wider community can be left out of local decision making process as mandating and representation issues can be seen as just too hard.
- Increase in inequality, where the rich and/or skilled are more politically active and use the local systems to achieve self-interested ends. Decentralisation can accentuate local resource and social differences.

Decentralisation is also a big issue for Māori – on the one hand, devolved funding and mandate to Māori can strengthen Māori tino rangatiratanga or autonomy. On the other, some Māori do not want things decentralised, preferring to deal directly with the Crown under a Treaty framework, rather than with decentralised bodies: 'Māori are risk takers, but they are currently focused on a centralised nation state' (TPOP 2004 p102).

These difficult issues are being explicitly addressed within the government's Review of the Centre programme and Sustainability Plans of Action. However, as Craig notes (2004 (b) p19), how these processes support sustainable, well funded local and regional lining up of mandates, resources and functions remains to be seen. Overall concerns regarding decentralisation include lack of central coordination, a confused national policy context and piecemeal developments without a wider national plan and vision.

2.5: Tension between trust/relationship building and accountability

The current context is marked by the ongoing need to negotiate tensions between the new focus on relationships and a continued emphasis on accountability and performance (Larner and Butler 2005 (a)). As Walker states: 'The current government is faced with a seemingly irresolvable paradox – the need to 'let go', that is reduce centralised control mechanisms in order to create an environment based on trust and collaboration, and thereby foster innovation and local responses to local problems, yet at the same time ensure accountability for publicly funded services whether provided directly or indirectly by government. If they get the

balance wrong, the consequences can be dire in political terms' (2004 (a) p8). This is exacerbated by media pressure and the uneasy combination of the government's desire for innovation and creativity while being highly risk averse and inclined to act punitively when things go wrong.

2.6: Local government reform

The Local Government Act 2002 clearly strengthened local government's mandate to promote wellbeing outcomes through statutory planning processes. As part of this, it places greater requirements on local government to engage with local communities and central government agencies, through the Long Term Council Community Plan and Community Outcomes processes. The opportunity exists for these core planning processes to become a key vehicle for local collaboration across New Zealand. Commentators within this research project refer wryly to the fact that no resourcing followed these new requirements, thereby leaving their financing to rate payers rather than tax payers. They also note that central government has no similar statutory requirements to collaborate when undertaking its strategic and service planning.

Similarly, there are expectations that community groups and organisations will participate in these local government processes on a voluntary basis, given that they tend to be funded only for direct service provision, rather than for networking and mandating.

2.7: Community sector support and community engagement

The concept of social capital¹² has had a major impact on the rhetoric surrounding partnership in New Zealand. Related to this, the community and voluntary sectors have re-emerged as vital 'partners' in social service delivery, policy and planning. The Report of the Community and Voluntary Sector Working Party (April 2001) and the process surrounding it was a key catalyst for rebuilding government and voluntary/community sector relations. However, historical antagonism between government and community and voluntary organisations is slow to abate and there continues to be scepticism around central government's motivation behind local partnerships.

At the same time, there has been some increase in capacity in recent years amongst community service providers, and a shift from voluntary to paid service provision, allowing them to 'reach up' more to central govern-

12. 'Social capital represents the fund of trust and goodwill in any social group that enables people within it to collaborate with each other' (Walker 2004 (a) p2). See Walker's 2004 (b) paper on the importance of trust for improved interagency collaborative working in New Zealand.

ment (Larner 2004). Overall, the issue of who is available and able to engage in partnering projects from the community is crucial and will differ from place to place.

Outside of these sectors, the general public is made up of multiple, shifting communities, and the involvement and 'say' of the wider community in what happens in their local area is an ongoing issue for local partnership and collaboration. There is a general tendency for 'community' to be conflated with identified community organisations, raising important questions about the role of informal organisations and community networks and about what happens to unorganised communities, or those with weak or nonexistent local community organisations. Both geographic and ethnic definitions of community are used in partnership initiatives; however, these are not always clearly distinguished from each other (Larner and Butler 2005 (a)).

2.8: Are local partnerships at the centre or the margins?

Significantly, while partnership approaches are increasingly common in delivering social services locally, they remain a minor component of government spending. So far it is clear that '...there is more sentiment than money on the ground' for local partnerships (Craig et al., forthcoming). People involved in this project routinely referred to feeling 'awash' with the words surrounding partnerships, yet actual partnerships were often seen as being at the margins, as part of pilot or one-off projects, and as such having little impact on core functions or the wider system of social service planning and delivery (Christchurch Shared Learning Group September 2003). At the same time, they are gradually beginning to change the institutions and culture of government. Larner and Butler's view (2005 (a)) is that the partnership approach is becoming increasingly normalised in the delivery of social services in New Zealand, and that this is '...reconstituting the state itself' (p99).¹³

2.9: A mask for the real causes of inequity?

'Income is widely acknowledged as the key determinant of health and wellbeing status and ultimately it is increasing household income levels that will have the most significant impact on individual, family and community wellbeing – not partnerships'
— TPOP 2004 p111.

13. See Larner and Butler's 'The Rise of a Partnering State in New Zealand' (2005 (a)), for an interesting analysis as to how the partnering approach is transforming the state.

The research project also poses the danger that partnerships can mask structural or systemic problems, which are bound up with global forces, cultural values and the entrenchment of the current economic system. Social reform in New Zealand, as elsewhere, tends to be incremental and piecemeal, with little political will as yet for radical reform affecting the key causes of inequity and unsustainable development.

These include uneven income distribution, extractive capitalism, unequal opportunity, an inequitable global trading environment, social exclusion, poverty, poor health and stressed ecosystems. Thus, many people are seen to be trying to manage for social outcomes they cannot properly influence. The government focus was seen by some to be on 'disciplining for outcomes', and of tweaking at the edges rather than addressing the real social change levers.

Instead, this project indicates that local partnership and collaboration should be seen more as **an appropriate way of working in some circumstances**, rather than as a panacea for all ills.

'The Potential of Partnership Report (TPOP) suggests that wellbeing outcomes should be addressed in a three pronged way (2004, p20):

1. By improving the type, availability and coordination of social services.
2. By involving local communities in service planning and decision making.
3. By influencing the basic determinants of wellbeing, including income (for example piloting new benefit regimes and tax levels), housing affordability and quality, access and quality of education and sustainable employment generation.

2.10: Lack of robust 'evidence' as to whether local partnerships make a difference

Internationally there is some evidence that collaboration and partnership can make positive changes, but there is a dearth of long term, well funded evaluation, especially in terms of outcome evidence. This partly reflects the fact that partnering and collaboration as it is currently constructed is still relatively new in New Zealand and overseas. In Waitakere City for example, the 'official' collaboration era has been just five years, but this was preceded by some 20 years of strong networking and collaborative activities. Elsewhere in the country, many communities are starting from low bases of collaboration and networks.

Larner and Butler express some anxiety as to the speed with which local partnerships have shifted from localised initiatives among like minded organisations or individuals, towards partnership working as a 'mandatory tool' in the broader social sector, especially given the sparse

empirical evidence as to the effectiveness or otherwise of the move to local partnerships (2005 (a) p87). This concern can only be assuaged by undertaking robust analysis and evaluation of the local partnerships phenomenon as it progresses. While the process of collaboration is easier to monitor, the outcomes are often longer term and subject to a wide set of forces.

Within this broad contextual framework, Part Three presents key findings from the Strengthening Communities Through Local Partnerships Project (SCTLPP). It begins by looking at what the research project has to say about how to conceptualise local 'partnership'.

Part three

Key findings of interest to central government

3.1: Conceptualising partnership

‘It is quite clear that the term ‘partnership’ – both in research and policy terms – is overburdened with meaning’
— Larner and Mayow 2003 p14.

One goal of the SCTLPP was to develop ‘an analytic framework within which local partnerships can be understood’ (Project Plan, www.lpg.org.nz). This is easier said than done. Partnering relationships come in a wide range of forms and can be conceived in a variety of ways, for example according to TPOP (2004 pp35-6):

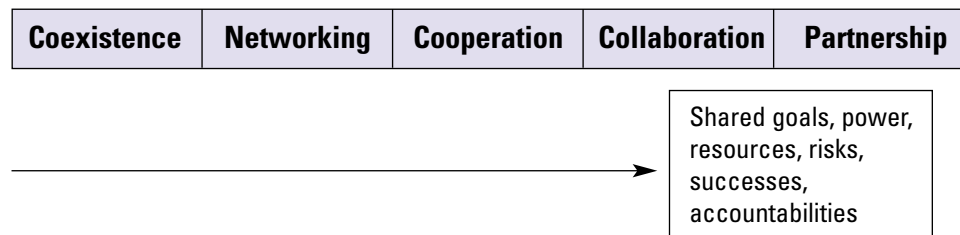
- Their purpose – they can be created for the purpose of information sharing, networking, strategic planning, service coordination, service or programme delivery, or capacity building.
- Their focus – for example a sector focus such as health or housing, or a theme such as strengthening families or safer communities, or an area based or locality focus.
- Their governance – from informal groupings to formal legal entities such as charitable trusts or incorporated societies.
- The range of participants.
- Their timeframes.
- Their funding arrangements.

A very early finding of the project was the wide and diverse meanings associated with the word ‘partnership’. Partnership is not one thing, it changes over time, nor is it document based – it is a process and a way of doing things. As a result, many people, including Māori and Pacific people, prefer the term ‘partnering’ or even ‘relationship’ to partnership.

Narrow and fixed definitions of partnership should be avoided, and instead a shared language around partnering should continue to be developed, and names given to different relationships in the interests of

clarity and shared understanding. From the Waitakere experience, a 'partnering continuum' as a framework for conceptualising different forms of working together is provided, as a basis for further discussion and analysis. This is replicated below, and the key ingredients of each element are set out in Appendix B.

3.1.1: The partnering continuum



This broad framework can be adapted and applied whenever a new relationship is being considered, or when groups wish to assess what type of relationship they currently have with another group. **Much of what is called partnership in fact sits elsewhere on the continuum above:** 'The term is applied to a large range of things where it is not always certain there is a partnership' (Christchurch Shared Learning Group www.lpg.org.nz).

The Waitakere experience emphasises that the partnership end of the spectrum is not 'nirvana', and indeed that it comes with significant responsibilities and expectations and should not be entered into lightly. A partnership is not appropriate for every kind of joint working arrangement. It is suggested that all parties (including central government) use the partnering continuum consciously, rather than use partnership as a catch all phrase. Through reference and use of the partnering continuum central government can be more accurate and upfront about describing how it views the diverse collaborative arrangements it enters into. In Waitakere for example, this continuum is being used as a way of establishing what level of consultation is required with external partners.

3.2: Māori concepts of partnering

Māori perceptions of partnership are wholly different to those of non-Māori. Key principles relating to partnership for Māori are *rangatiratanga* and *manaakitanga*. The principle of *rangatiratanga* involves independence, mana, self-direction and control, with '...Māori holistic wellbeing often associated with their ability to exercise rangatiratanga' (Knox 2004 p7). *Manaakitanga*, the cornerstone of relationship building, involves the obligation of Māori as *tangata whenua* (people of the land or local tribe), to look after those who enter their domain. This obligation to be hospitable places an onus on Māori to '...honour genuine attempts to build positive relationships' (ibid).

Giving meaningful expression to tikanga or Māori cultural practices and values is of key importance in the way Māori and non-Māori relate. At the very least, '...successful partnership with Māori must give consideration to the place of tikanga' (Knox 2004 p14). The Māori partner/s should have the opportunity to define this for themselves and provide guidance to the other parties.

As part of the Waitakere City Māori Community Research Report, a conceptual model for bicultural partnering was developed. Reproduced in Appendix C, this model begins with appropriate contact and mandate, then moves through mutually agreed communications and scoping processes, into deeper negotiation and relationship building.

3.3: The role of the Treaty of Waitangi

As an agreement between hapu and the Crown, responsibility for bearing Treaty requirements falls on those partners. As all Māori are genealogically connected to one or more hapu, the Treaty has ramifications at a personal level. This is not true for the Crown, and the Treaty is not generally perceived as having significant personal ramifications for non-Māori. For Knox, '...perhaps this is a basis for Māori frustration and non-Māori apathy in relation to the Treaty' (2004 p21). It also points to the need for wider understanding of the personal conflicts for many Māori staff working within central government, such as the need to balance the requirements of their position with their desire to be responsive to the Māori community.

Different government departments, legislation, policies and partnering agreements all refer to the Treaty in different ways. When considering the role of the Treaty in partnerships and relationship building, the Knox report provides a three tiered framework in which to do so. This framework can be used to identify what type of engagement exists or is appropriate, and to evaluate the success and progress of partnerships (see Knox's report for further details):

1. Treaty based partnership – mostly legislatively based, between Māori (hapū) and the Crown.
2. Treaty influenced partnership – no legislative backdrop but acknowledgement that the Treaty has a clear role.
3. Treaty referenced partnership – references made to the Treaty but little recognition in practice. This can be a starting point to move from.

A key function of this framework is to ensure that the Treaty and its relationship to any partnership is considered and discussed, as a minimum. The Treaty of Waitangi cannot be imposed on a partnership, but instead should be developed via whanaungatanga (acting as a family or collective), and a commitment to an enduring relationship. The Treaty can be a

foot in the door to whanaungatanga, and to deeper and more meaningful relationships between Māori and non-Māori.

3.4: Matching relationships with goals (means and ends)

A pivotal message from this project is that appropriate relationships should be developed to suit the goals sought. This involves:

- Prioritising collaborative effort.
- Focusing on addressing root causes and levers of change.
- Developing appropriate relationships for goals (using the partnering continuum).
- Being goal focused.
- Knowing where local leadership lies on particular issues.
- Knowing each other at the local level.

This may mean funding for specific goals within a collaborative framework, rather than formal partnerships. The partnering continuum provides a guide as to which type of relationship is most appropriate in specific cases. At all times, it is important to keep a focus on those most in need; '...experience shows that the wider 'inclusive' framework of collaboration does not necessarily lead to a focus on what happens to the bottom 20%' (Craig 2004 p13).

Collaboration and brokering are organic processes dependent upon needs, personalities and timing. Collaboration mania can prevail without a clear analysis of whether it's actually required – collaboration and partnerships should only be pursued where they will clearly add value.

Another strong message from this research project is that **collaboration and partnership is hard work and should not be taken on lightly**. Indeed there are times when it is not appropriate to partner.¹⁴ In particular, the time consuming nature of relationship building raises major dilemmas in contexts where there are pressing needs (Larner and Butler 2005 (a)).

3.5: Characteristics of local partnerships

'The rise of the 'partnering state' is not wide scale reform per se; it is highly localised and much further developed in some government departments than others, some local authorities rather than others'

— Larner and Butler 2005 (b) p5.

14. See 'Key Learnings and Ways Forward – The Potential of Partnerships Based on Waitakere Experiences' (2004 p40), at <http://www.lpg.org.nz>, for guidance on when and when not to go down a partnership route.

‘...experience on the ground to date of local collaboration is of great complexity, of multiple agencies at different levels planning, consulting and acting in different timeframes, and sometimes of simple mess and frustration’
— Craig 2004 (a).

Research shows that in New Zealand local partnerships tend to be organised thematically around local key concerns (for example health, safety, housing and crime), rather than taking locality or area based approaches. This is changing however, with the national policy context shifting towards more regional and locality based approaches. This is particularly in evidence in Auckland, with a new wave of regional managers of central government services, and a Minister for Auckland Issues.

Larner and Butler (2005 (a)) set out the following key characteristics of local headline partnerships in New Zealand.

- They are highly differentiated in character.
- Many are pilot programmes.
- The form of the partnership is highly variable, and dependent on the government department, intermediate institution and communities concerned.
- Both geographic and ethnic definitions of community are being used.
- There are conflicts between multiple roles, for example government agencies as funders and partners; local government as both community and government representative; and community organisations as service providers and community representatives.
- Each local partnership is highly specific, which is both a strength and a source of challenges.
- Each partnership structure and its success are highly dependent on the people involved (Larner and Butler 2005 (b)).

While there are diverse patterns of involvement at all levels, a key feature is that central government needs to deal with local organisations that:

- can demonstrate some local mandate;
- can demonstrably represent their local community; and
- can be held accountable through formal accountability and funding structures.

It is difficult for central government to engage directly with local communities, and engagement tends to be through intermediary bodies that have the characteristics above, such as local Councils, schools, iwi and pan tribal agencies, Pacific organisations and health services and a wide range of voluntary and community groups.

At the same time, Larner and Craig (2005) identify the increased visibility of relationship or partnership managers in central government agencies,

and 'social entrepreneurs' or 'strategic brokers' who are more likely to be based in territorial authorities or community organisations. '[T]hose who fill these positions are not only required to exercise new forms of leadership and management skills, they are also expected to introduce new cultures of working and learning into their institutions' (Larner and Butler 2005 (a) p88).

Roelvink and Craig (2005) emphasise the feminised nature of these new roles and positions, and argue that women are doing much of the 'emotional labour' associated with partnership working. This research also suggests that Māori and Pacific people are disproportionately represented in these new positions in government departments, reflecting the emphasis on the ability to work across diverse political and cultural contexts (ibid). Larner and Butler (2005 (b)) identify the skill base brought to these positions, showing that they tend to have experience of both government and community sectors. As the partnerships develop, so too do the roles of these brokers, giving rise to distinctive patterns of involvement in which the development of the partnership and the careers of the brokers evolve together.

The 'governmentalising' of partnership was a theme emerging from the research project. This involves techniques that will encourage people to act more 'relationally' – such as demonstrating a collaborative approach in funding applications, government provided 'good practice guides' for partnerships and moves to evaluate 'process outcomes'. Arguably, '...the rise of local partnerships represent a new tension between what we might call 'evidence based' (we'll do it because we know it works) and 'values based' (we'll do it because we think partnerships are a good thing) approaches to policy making and service provision' (Larner and Butler 2005 (a) p93).

Inevitably, local experience of central government agencies is uneven. Some key central government departments (for example the Ministry of Social Development and Department of Internal Affairs), Ministers and officials are very committed to a partnership approach, and others are less so. In Waitakere, experience was that some departments such as the Ministry of Social Development had some flexibility and decision making power at the local management level, while others appear to have less (TPOP 2004 p104). The Ministry of Education was frequently cited as one agency missing from collaborative tables in Auckland at least. The current restructuring of this department may go some way towards addressing this.¹⁵

15. For example, school network services planning in the Auckland area has been restructured to link to local authority boundaries.

This research project is clear that people generally agree that partnership and collaboration is a 'Good Thing', with reservations as indicated in this report. However, many people referred to 'collaboration fatigue' – a weariness surrounding partnership and collaboration. There are a plethora of agencies and groups to work with,¹⁶ sometimes unclear mandates, high transaction costs in terms of people's time and energy, and a partnership or collaborative process can be fragile enough to be potentially derailed by one or several people.

More recent anecdotal feedback from this project is that some government departments are pulling back from engaging in a broad range of local partnerships, as the transaction costs in terms of staff time are too great. Instead, two key trends are emerging:

1. Given resource constraints and accountability requirements, central government agencies are more likely to want to engage via larger intermediary bodies such as local councils. This points to a growing facilitation role for these bodies, and greater onus on them to ensure wider local participation and engagement.
2. Collaboration and partnership approaches are being applied more consciously and deliberately, and only in cases where such an approach will add value.

Some areas such as Waitakere and Christchurch have been 'doing' partnership for some years while other communities barely have the foundations to begin. Craig (2004) offers a list of elements needed to build common accountability and collaboration locally, as well as what is needed to sustain this and what is needed to gauge their impact. This list is summarised below.

3.5.1: What do you need to build collaboration locally?

Basic level requirements

- Shared forums at community, local government and interagency level.
- Appropriate representation from all these sectors.
- Well-resourced, skilled and supported coordination and facilitation.
- Shared goals and goal-related projects.
- Group work capacity and skills, and a shared understanding of meeting/group dynamics.
- Links to political decision makers.
- Time, trust and energy.

16. For example, there are eight local authorities in the Auckland region alone for central government staff to liaise with.

How to sustain and build on this basic level

- Consistent, mandated representation by appropriate, empowered representatives attending regular forums.
- A developing common language for talking about issues, processes, structures, roles.
- Shared information bases, including local statistics and indicators.
- Funding to develop processes and projects.
- Targets for projects.
- ‘Cross-pollination’ between planning processes, for example Council Long Term Council Community Plans, central government agency planning, community sector planning.
- Shared goals and indicators that reflect those goals.
- Leadership and requirement to collaborate from the highest levels.

How to gauge and deepen wider impact

- Conduct a wider debate about subsidiarity and devolution.
- Monitor locally, regionally and nationally.
- Realign statistical and funding boundaries between local authorities, District Health Boards and government services.
- Line up mandates, funding, and functions at local or regional levels, within wider devolution/decentralisation processes.

3.6: Māori experiences and issues

‘How can my world view transform yours in a way that strengthens us both?’
— Wayne Knox¹⁷

Like some local communities, many Māori are suffering from consultation and collaboration fatigue, partly as a result of saying the same things to various bodies for many years without seeing significant change. Consequently, some Māori groups are pulling back from taking part in more hui and consultation processes, preferring to put precious resources into practical projects and securing contracts, which have clear deliverables with resources attached. It will be no surprise that there is some cynicism at present regarding the effectiveness of consultation alone as a vehicle for positive change for Māori.

For some, results from partnership are not being seen, as partnership revolves around process and may be removed from decision making and

17. Personal communication, Wayne Knox. This section draws heavily on Māori experience in Waitakere City, as outlined in Knox’s ‘Waitakere City Māori Community Research Report’ (2004). It is recommended that readers refer to this, Kelly’s and McIntosh’s reports for more detail.

resource allocation, i.e. from where the real decision making power sits. Local partnership processes regularly function as vehicles for yielding advice to other bodies, who then make the decisions. A key message is that Māori want active involvement in decision-making, and will support policies and actions that will enhance Māori rangatiratanga and self determination.

Some key issues for Māori included the following.

- Relationship building is happening quite well at the worker level but is needed more at leadership level.
- Central government needs to develop its own capability to work with Māori. This includes building a critical mass of Māori staff in each agency who are in opinion shaping and influencing positions.
- Most people work in a low trust environment with high accountability requirements. This is intensified for Māori through their historical relationship with government. A regulatory environment inhibits trust and working together.
- The same individuals and groups of people are doing the mahi (work) – a small group of overburdened people. Knowledge still resides with a few people.
- The notion that ‘any Māori will do’ is still alive – in local partnerships and collaborations Māori are regularly being asked to do things above or below their mana.
- The ‘whole of government approach’ does not address the fact that funding is still allocated via individual government agencies. More integrated funding models are needed, such as the Waipareira Pilot Integration Model. Current integrated funding pilots are a good start but can only be accessed by large organisations for major projects.
- It is important that the right people approach Māori, at appropriate levels of seniority. The Māori ‘rule of thumb’ for engagement is ‘kanohi ki te kanohi, rangatira ki te rangatira’ – face to face, chief to chief.
- Currently an imbalance exists in power between Māori and non-Māori. An indicator of balance would be the seamless integration of Māori structures, processes and values into Pākehā organisations.
- More work is needed on Māori perspectives on partnership and how these may influence how partnership approaches develop in New Zealand.

3.7: Pacific Islands experiences and issues

Within the research project, two pieces of work focused on the issues and experiences of Pacific people: 1) a report entitled 'National Government and Local Partnerships: An Apogalevele¹⁸ Model' (McPherson 2003); and 2) the preliminary feedback from a consultation process with 13 Pacific Island agencies and groups in Waitakere City in 2004 (Conducted by Karen Mangnall).

Based on the limited material available, key messages are as follows.

- Macpherson's report describes the model of cooperative relationships used by the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs (MPIA) from around 2000 to nurture local partnerships with key Pacific communities and the various Ministries which deliver local programmes. The MPIA prefers to use the term relationships rather than partnerships, in recognition that not all 'partners' are equal when collaborating.
- The MPIA and its capacity building strategy has low visibility at the local level, at least in West Auckland. In order to take local information and issues back to central government and influence policy and decision making, the MPIA needs a more visible local presence through greater staff resource. It needs to be properly resourced to mediate between diverse Pacific communities and central government agencies.
- More central government staff are wanted regionally and locally, to engage with local Pacific communities.
- Pacific organisations seek funding that allows Pacific people to have greater autonomy and to be accepted as a culturally competent partner. Upon merit being proven, funding provided should become core rather than project based.
- A 'one stop shop' information centre that provides advice and information on funding, governance, administration, legal and financial issues is desired to support Pacific community organisations.
- Funding often does not match community boundaries and how local groups work. For example, Pacific organisations often begin work in one area (such as education), then quickly move into others (housing, health) as the issues are so interconnected. More flexible funding models and funding for capacity building is needed to support this.
- A 'pilot economy' currently exists where one-off or trial projects are

18 Apogalevele refers to a 'spider web' model, 'in which the web is a series of defined relationships created and maintained by the centre [in this case, the Ministry for Pacific Island Affairs] for a specific purpose: obtaining the best possible outcomes for constituent communities. Each of the operative relationships is connected via the centre, and mediated by the centre, which also monitors the performance of the system as a whole and moves to repair damage anywhere it occurs to ensure the web as a whole continues to deliver outcomes' (Macpherson 2003 p17).

funded. In these cases, Ministries sometimes extract value then leave the group concerned to fend for themselves. This can be experienced as an exploitative relationship by the organisation concerned.

- The approach of devolving funding to local government is working – Pacific organisations see this as heading in the right direction and support devolving funding to the appropriate level.
- Migrant populations can see themselves as being in competition with Māori, and can be frustrated at what they see as preferential treatment for Māori.
- A risk management approach is anti-intuitive for Pacific people – in the Islands trust is implicit. In this context, some Pacific people are intimidated by heavy legal and financial requirements, while recognising the need for accountability.

3.8: Success stories

The Waitakere and Christchurch case studies reflected clear support for the government's commitment to collaboration and local partnerships in the social sector. The general direction is viewed as positive, and there is broad understanding that while this way of working takes time to yield clear results, it should continue to be actively pursued. This section presents success stories to date from various aspects of the research project.

3.8.1: Increased central government visibility and engagement at the local level

Some key Ministries (certainly not all) are seen to be taking a lead in developing stronger relationships and partnerships locally, particularly the Ministry of Social Development and the Department of Internal Affairs. This is reflected in increased visibility and engagement with representatives from these departments (at least in Auckland and Christchurch), and more departmental staff positions specifically focused on relationship development, local and regional policy development and strengthened regional management. These initiatives are strongly supported – collaboration is impossible if there is no-one to collaborate with, who are empowered to make decisions.

Large cross-sectoral projects such as the Sustainable Cities project in Auckland are providing key vehicles for combining sustainable development and joined up approaches to complex issues. There is also greater movement between staff in different sectors, another positive trend. Providing central government staff locally (decentralisation of staff) is possibly the best and most visible way to demonstrate government commitment to local collaboration and partnership approaches. Many people involved in this project commented on the high quality of staff across sectors, and of generally high individual levels of commitment to working together.

3.8.2: Growing recognition and valuing of skills required to collaborate

The Waitakere documentation makes much of the growth of ‘the people that glue’, or ‘strategic brokers’. Strategic brokers are people who bring partners together and maintain the relationship. They tend to have superb people and strategic skills, and be tactical yet practical. The people undertaking these roles cut across sectors and can be paid or unpaid. From a Māori perspective, brokering and coordination roles are even more complex than for non-Māori, involving balancing work commitments with a personal obligation to be responsive to the Māori community (see the Knox report for more detailed discussion on Māori brokering).

Larner and Butler (2005 (b)) interviewed 22 New Zealand ‘strategic brokers’. These people were disproportionately women, and Māori and Pacific people – ‘hybrid beings’ who can relate to both the culture and requirements of government departments and be comfortable in community based settings (p13). Larner and Butler argue that while often occupying tough marginal positions,¹⁹ strategic brokers can and are changing the institutions and culture of government for the better. Supporting existing brokers and developing these skills across sectors is a key requirement for the growth and enhancement of local partnering in New Zealand.

3.8.3: Increased understanding and sharing of knowledge and skills

‘Fantastic things come out of local and central government dialogue’
— Central government worker.

A key strength of local collaboration is raising levels of understanding and cooperation among sectors. This includes getting clearer on what various sectors can and cannot influence. Greater interaction and communication also leads to developing a shared language around partnership, and greater awareness of both the bigger national picture and detailed local issues. Willingness to share professional knowledge, information and skills is increasing. Also, taking part in collaborative processes can lead to changes in the strategic goals of those involved.

19. See their article for an analysis of the demographics, skills, experiences and issues currently facing strategic brokers in New Zealand.

3.8.4: More flexible resourcing for collaboration and partnership

A greater perceived government willingness to entertain collaborative funding models is strongly supported, for example the Stronger Communities Action Fund. Significant opportunities lie in building on this foundation.

3.8.5: Better processes, increased community identity and empowerment

Significant gains from collaboration are being made in the 'process' area – people knowing who each other are, what they are doing, who to get help or funding from, and setting up processes to deal with issues arising early rather than after the fact. A clear message from the research project is that partnerships definitely enhance a sense of identity and community for local people. These gains were borne out in a review of the Waitakere Community Wellbeing Network, '...where many participants talked positively about feeling more included, empowered, and knowledgeable about what was happening locally than before' (Clarkson 2004). This in turn leads to greater local ownership of issues and outcomes at all levels.

3.8.6: Changing government culture

Larner and Butler note that '...in many respects the most important work that the local partnership programmes are doing is changing the culture of government departments' (2005 (a) p97). For example, collaboration challenges the culture of secrecy within government departments, and partnership programmes are being used to justify new forms of expenditure and push out timeframes for community development projects. Also, partnering and relational agreements are replacing rigid contracts, and process and formative evaluation allows evaluators to mentor as well as evaluate. As such, the '...expertise and techniques being developed through pilot partnership programmes are having implications far beyond the actual programmes themselves' (ibid p95).

3.8.7: Waitakere experience

The Waitakere experience demonstrates that local coordination can promote better outcomes in community safety, Māori socio-economic development (through the work of Te Whānau O Waipareira Trust and Hoani Waititi Marae), and child and family case work through the Effective Practice initiative, which developed into the Strengthening Families programme (see Craig 2004). Evaluation of collaboration is also getting more sophisticated – for example monitoring of the Waitakere Health Plan has been carried out by an interagency health forum called Waitakere Health Link. Other clear successes from the Waitakere City experience from local social sector collaboration and partnerships include the following.

- Directing and attracting government funding and resources.
- Influencing location of services.
- Aligning priorities.
- Influencing national policy.
- Developing a shared picture of what is going on, e.g. via Community Wellbeing reports.
- Lessening impact on communities of uncoordinated consultation, through gathering what is already known.
- Improvements in delivery of services.
- Knowledge of communities/places increased.
- Making connections.
- Identifying areas of service failure.
- Looking innovatively at how government can deliver services better.
- Identifying co-location opportunities, e.g. UNITEC and Henderson Library.
- Joint service planning and future planning.
- Identifying research needs and information gaps.

Part four

Actions for central government

A key message from this project is that while central government's current approach is generally welcomed and is producing incremental gains, there is significant room for improvement. These improvements are needed to pull partnering and local collaboration back from the margins of social service delivery and to more robustly gauge their impact over time. Potential actions for central government to catalyse these improvements are set out below. For some of these, government initiatives may be in place or planned.

4.1: Develop a strategic framework for partnering

The Waitakere findings suggested that the local council develop a strategic framework for partnering – this is also a possibility for central government agencies. Such a framework would set out their approach to partnering, and how various principles and practices should be applied. While it is not desirable to be too prescriptive, a clearer vision, set of principles and broad approach to partnering and collaboration at central government level would clarify what is expected across agencies and provide an even stronger mandate and impetus for agencies and staff to engage appropriately.

4.2: Develop stronger imperatives for central government to engage locally

Local government now has a statutory responsibility to engage with central government agencies and local communities around local planning and outcomes. Local community organisations have strong incentives to take part in these efforts, in order to present community views and influence what happens in their local area. However, there is a lack of statutory or chief executive driven obligation for central government agencies to participate in local collaboration efforts. Instead, '...participation is largely voluntary and up to the goodwill and discretion of local or regional government agency managers' (TPOP 2004 p60).

Both the Waitakere and Christchurch case studies provide strong evidence that a proactive and engaged local authority can play a pivotal and crucial role in developing and sustaining local partnerships. A clear strategy from central government to proactively engage with local councils in the development of local partnerships, backed by the staff resource to do so, is likely to move the partnerships agenda forward significantly. This could involve giving regional managers the mandate, imperative and resources to engage around Long Term Council Community Plan's and/or Community Outcomes processes. Other potential actions are as follows.

- Place commitments to collaboration, partnering and developing strategic brokering²⁰ within Statements of Intent between Cabinet Ministers and Departmental Chief Executives, in Strategic/Business Plans of Departments, and in relevant staff job descriptions and performance reviews.
- Provide stronger incentives and requirements to link strategic planning between agencies.
- Remove current legislative non-alignment of strategic planning timeframes between District Health Boards and local authorities.²¹
- Reform the Public Finance Act to facilitate greater cross-agency and government-community action.

4.3: Develop a decentralisation and devolution framework

A clearer vision and more centrally coordinated approach to decentralisation and devolution across government agencies is sought from central government. Transparent debate and dialogue with regions as a minimum on the issues surrounding decentralisation and devolution is suggested. Clearer signals of government intention in this area would go a long way to clarifying where local collaborative efforts should best be directed, and what expectations of central government are appropriate.

4.4: Experiment with locality based projects

Building on lessons from Stronger Communities Action Fund projects (see section 4.8), continue to work with selected communities to try new joined up ways of working at the neighbourhood or local level. The focus would be three pronged – improving local service delivery, building community capacity and engagement, and influencing the basic determinants of wellbeing in the area (housing, education opportunities, family support etc).

20. A draft Job Description for a Strategic Broker is provided in Appendix Four of TPOP report.

21. At present, Council 'Long Term Council Community Plans' must be in place by 2006 and District Strategic Plans by 2005.

4.5: Continue to develop relationships with Māori

- Continue to implement Treaty and tikanga training.
- Continue to refine Treaty and tikanga policies and work on their implementation.
- Employ Māori in senior positions.
- Develop and implement a strategy for consulting with Māori.
- Develop relationships and networks with the Māori community.
- Openly discuss the issue of power distribution within appropriate frameworks.
- When funding is unable to be committed to developing a Treaty partnership, demonstrate alternative forms of reciprocity.
- Fund further work on how Māori perspectives on partnering can influence mainstream approaches.

4.6: Experiment with sectorally aligned partnerships

This involves concentrating on alignment and catalysing change in one strategic sector (for example in Waitakere, the suggested sector was housing). Focusing on one strategic area could catalyse a lot of coordinated activity across all those contributing funding, resources, time and energy to it. This makes sense given the interrelatedness of many social problems and the level of change possible when focusing in depth, rather than trying to align plans across sectors to improve city or district wellbeing overall. Also, improvements in one key area (such as housing) can unlock change in others (health, education, mental health, domestic violence).

4.7: Build government staff skills and capacity

Provide more secondment and exchange opportunities, both for current government workers to work in local contexts and for those in other sectors to work inside government. This could include a mentoring programme. This is an extremely fruitful way of enhancing understanding and skills across sectors. It requires more flexible staffing arrangements, possibly including collaborative management and sharing accommodation, which naturally leads to information sharing.

4.8: Increase/redirect resources for local collaboration

International experience suggests that until adequate funding is available, local collaboration can only rely on local people to scramble together bits of funding for pilot and ad hoc projects. In other words, local partnerships will remain on the margins, dependent on local resource levels and initiative.

Some centrally devolved funds are available but tend to be relatively small, for example the Stronger Communities Action Fund (SCAF)²² involved \$1.597 million annually targeted to nine communities over three years (this has recently been extended by two years). New Zealand resourcing of local partnership and collaboration is low compared to other Commonwealth countries. The 'Potential of Partnerships Report' states that major new funding is required to enable wider national take up of partnering processes and more effective outcomes from local partnerships. Options for increasing and redirecting resources for local collaboration and partnership are as follows.

- Fund community sector participation in local collaborative efforts. This could be achieved through pooling central government, local government, charitable and even private sector funds in local areas, either through creating a pool of money that local organisations can bid for, or to purchase expertise to engage and facilitate local community input. This fund could also be used to buy specialist skills to assist and pass on to the local community sector, including financial planning, governance, strategic planning, Treaty of Waitangi training, peer mentoring and supervision. Applications could be made to the fund by community sector organisations to participate in collaborative processes, develop skills or purchase specialist skills and training for their organisation or group.
- Centrally fund a National Community Outcomes pool (of say \$3-5 million annually), designed to promote innovative approaches to intersectoral planning and project implementation at the local level. This funding could be targeted at resource poor councils and communities, for innovative approaches to the community outcomes process, and/or for projects and programmes to improve local social outcomes.
- Provide a national or population based pool of funding for collaborative effort, to fund strategic broker skills, workforce development, local partnership projects and the development of networks and forums.
- Allocate annual resources (as part of core Vote: Funding) to agreed structures or strategic forums in local areas (the Waitakere Wellbeing Collaboration Forum is one current example).
- Continue to increase or redirect staff resource at regional and local levels, to engage cross sectorally with local communities. This could

22. A pilot project, SCAF is based on the United Kingdom's New Deal for Communities initiative which attempts to address problems associated with poor neighbourhoods. Refer to Larner's (2004) paper 'Neoliberalism in (Regional) Theory and Practice: The Stronger Communities Action Fund in New Zealand'.

include creating positions where staff members participate on behalf of several agencies (for example the Ministries of Social Development and Economic Development), to facilitate cross sector coordination. Without appropriate central government staff to communicate and liaise with, collaborative efforts are compromised.

- Departmental annual budget planning should also explicitly build costs of collaboration into core funds and project budgets.
- It is not just a matter of the level of funding and resource available, it is how this is available. Partnerships and the key brokers within them need to be resourced in assured, long-term and flexible ways. More discretion to fund at the regional level than is currently available is also needed.

4.9: Workforce development

A major finding of the Waitakere research was that local strategic brokers play key roles in facilitating local collaboration. Funding for these facilitative roles is not routinely allocated within central government agencies or their regional programme budgets – typically coordination roles have evolved from other funding sources. ‘There is considerable scope for defining and elaborating what these local coordination roles are: for considering, for example, how to build capacity, gain recognition, develop research skills and programmes for them to be able to more effectively represent and reflect on issues’ (Craig 2004 (a) p11). Sustainably funding, managing and developing local coordination expertise is a key means of furthering central government’s commitment to local partnering and collaboration.

The Potential of Partnership Report also suggests funding ‘information brokers’ who translate national policies, context, opportunities and research in ways that are useful locally and pass this on across sectors (2004 pp121-2).

4.10: Develop an evidence base around partnership

‘In social justice terms, and in the wider need to maintain a focus on what happens to the poor, maintaining links between local level collaborative action and outcomes and central level social reporting and policy will remain crucial’
— Craig 2004 (a) p19.

- The need for better social statistics and social analysis has long been an issue, highlighted again in 1999 in the ‘Mahi Tahī: Working Together: Civil Society in Aotearoa/New Zealand’ report. Another

well known barrier to progress is the widely divergent boundaries used by various government departments and local authorities, let alone how these to connect to fast changing geographical communities.

- Real time monitoring of government social policy that feeds back quickly to central government and local people would assist, as well as joint or common data collection and analysis in local areas.
- Research points to the potential of developing consistent local information to assist comparative intervention evaluation. In Europe for example, national territorial authorities are using a method of collaborative comparative benchmarking in core areas of public policy. This is called the Open Method of Coordination (Hemerjick 2001, Overdevest 2002), which encourages but does not force comparability and consistency (Craig 2004). EU countries have developed national action plans against poverty and social exclusion, adopting common objectives, and after two years the EU reports on the member states initiatives and identifies best practice. Such a process could readily be adapted and applied to New Zealand processes such as the Big Cities Indicators project, around aspects of the Ministry of Social Development's Social Report, or around District Health Board or Council wellbeing strategies (ibid).
- The Waitakere project highlighted a need for social inequalities research that focuses on the drivers of socio-economic change and deprivation, at national regional and local levels, and on how these levels interact with and influence each other.
- A national clearing house for government consultation and research across departments would be of benefit.
- More robust monitoring and evaluation of local partnerships and collaboration nation wide is also critical. There is considerable scope for official information to get a lot closer to local programmes, and to start to contextualise social and wellbeing reporting numbers in actual programmes and change processes (Craig 2004 (a) p13).
- There is also scope for spreading information and lessons from those who are further down the collaboration path with other local communities. The issue of how to support communities to participate in local collaborative processes needs more analysis.
- Also, at present there is little sustainable and consistent use of community targets and indicators such as those long advocated in New Zealand by Marilyn Waring and others. Statistics New Zealand could develop a national strategy for supporting community identification of outcomes.

All of this points to the need for a larger and/or more focused research and development capacity within central government departments.

4.11: Develop and share new forms of relational agreements

Develop new agreement frameworks that better reflect partnering principles and processes.²³ These can range from a one page, simple set of 'team rules' that set out processes for working together, to formal documents which specify mandates, accountability and resourcing and are legally enforceable. Relational agreements should be developed collectively by the partners involved. Sharing existing relational agreements that have already been developed is one place to start. See Appendix D for an outline of some of the key differences between partnership agreements and traditional contracts.

23. The Potential of Partnership Report provides an example of a partnership agreement template (Appendix Three).

Conclusion

The story of local social sector partnership and collaboration in New Zealand has barely begun. The potential of the community outcomes and LTCCP processes to support local collaboration is in its infancy, most partnership projects are pilot or one-off programmes, and government spending on local social sector collaboration remains small scale.

An emphasis on local partnerships in New Zealand, as overseas, is here for the foreseeable future, and '...the 'mess'...doesn't look like going away any time soon' (Craig (2004 (a) p18). At the same time, '...clearly no-one wants to go back to the silos, competition, walls and us and them environment' (TPOP 2004 p31). There is a great deal of flux and difference between sectors and localities, and piecemeal moves towards greater engagement. A September 2004 report to Waitakere City Council's City Development Committee on the key findings from the partnership research, stated that:

'...it is...clear that much can, and has been, achieved from working in a partnering way. The fact that many of the City's social, economic, environmental and cultural challenges are interconnected, complex and unable to be solved by single agencies working in isolation, also suggests that despite some shortcomings, continuing to work in a partnering way is the Council's best option for achieving a sustainable City'.

This statement could be echoed nationally, with the caveat that collaboration and partnership approaches operate on a broad spectrum and are not always appropriate. At the same time:

'...although more trust and better collaboration may hold the key to improving outcomes, if there are inherent problems or weaknesses in the policy design and/or implementation then the likelihood of policy failure increases irrespective of the collaborative efforts of the agencies involved'
— Walker 2004 (a) p12.

Ultimately, social outcomes will depend on the extent to which the key drivers of inequality and change are addressed, as well as how well people can work together within and across all sectors. In every case, the means should suit the ends sought.

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Appendix A

The following people contributed to this report.

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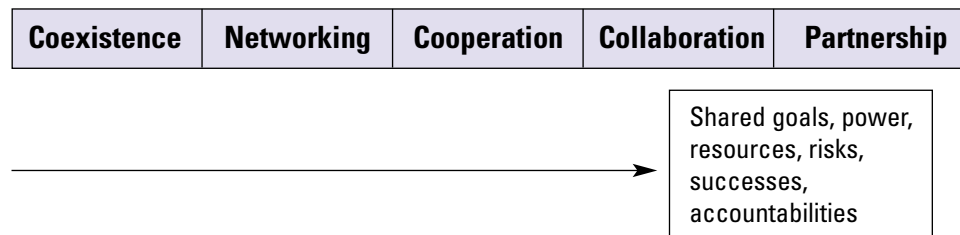
Karen Mangnall (Independent consultant hired to complete a report on the Pacific component of the project)

Māori component

Wayne Knox, Independent consultant hired to produce the 'Waitakere City Māori Community Research Report' as part of the project. Wayne is now based at Te Puni Kokiri in Auckland.

Appendix B

The partnering continuum



Key ingredients of each element on the continuum

Coexistence

- You know about each other but don't need to come together.
- No direct relationships with other agencies.
- No dependency or need to collaborate.

Networking

- Informal discussions.
- Information sharing is the basis.
- No formal collective agreement on visions or tasks.
- Lower level of cooperation.
- Does not involve shared decision making.
- Establishing and maintaining relationships.
- About knowing and understanding who is doing what.

Cooperation

- A lower level of collaboration.
- No fixed or long term relationship implied.
- Acknowledgement of common issues, interests and agendas.
- May involve helping another organisation to achieve its project or task – this may involve a written agreement such as a Memorandum of Understanding to document this.
- No ongoing or formal commitment to each other.

Collaboration

- Involves trust.
- Is based on negotiated and agreed actions.
- Don't have to share same base values but have an agreed set of principles for working together.

- Has shared decision making.
- Means giving up some things, including power and control.
- May involve documentation.

Partnership

- Involves emotional and spiritual awareness of each other – hearts, minds and passion.
- Works from an agreed base of shared values, such as trust, honesty, openness.
- Shares risks and rewards, resources, accountability, visions and ideas and decision making.
- Has a degree of formality and contractual and relational obligations.
- Processes, systems and mechanisms are developed to support the partnership, e.g. structures, contracts, principles and visions, plans, conflict resolution.
- Is about shared power but not a 50/50 notion of equality.²⁴
- Is about the way things are done rather than the evenness of power, control and resources.
- Resourcing and contributions involve equitable rather than equal contributions – they may be in kind as well as monetary.

24. The commonly held idea that a partnership should involve equal partners is a red herring and rarely reflects reality. What is more important is that power dynamics are discussed and acknowledged.

Appendix C

A conceptual bicultural model for partnering		
Māori	Stages	Non-Māori
<p>Structures/Categories Whānau, Hapū, Iwi Rūnanga Trust Incorporated Society Limited Liability Company Marae Whare Wānanga Kōhanga Reo Kura Kaupapa</p> <p>Challenges Insufficient resourcing Volunteer fatigue Silo mentality Lack of understanding about non-Māori processes</p> <p>Opportunities Provision of support to non-Māori in the area of Treaty and tikanga Improved social outcomes, health and wellbeing Autonomy and self- direction Increased role in decision making</p>	<p>1. Approach – Ensure contact is made with appropriate level of organisation – Ensure mandate is secured by both parties – Consider what consultation with stakeholders is needed</p> <p>2. Discuss – Mutually design and agree on communica- tion processes – Consultation with stakeholders – Scoping of potential partnership</p> <p>3. Negotiate – Valuing of non- monetary contributions – Commitment to fairness and equal compromise – Consideration of power relationships – Integrated, holistic approach – Develop terms of reference for partnership in consultation with stakeholders</p> <p>4. Engage – Enter into partnership agreement – Platform for a further contractual relationship – Develop and implement Treaty and tikanga approaches</p> <p>5. Relationship – Maintain and build an ongoing, positive working relationship</p>	<p>Structures/Categories Pākehā Tauīwi/Migrant communities Crown Central government agencies Local government Community organisations Businesses Families and individuals Residents and ratepayers Ethnic boards and societies</p> <p>Challenges Lack of understanding and appreciation of Māori values and practices Restrictive bureaucracies</p> <p>Opportunities Development of meaningful relationships and policies Strong local networks Increased efficiency of service provision Strengthened local and national identity Consistency of approach Improved democratic process</p>

Appendix D

Key differences between traditional contracts and partnership agreements

Traditional contracts	Partnership agreements
Top down – power with the funder	Prepared by all parties – power shared
Standardised legal framework	Flexible framework, based on what parties want to include and how
Accountabilities one way – back to funder	Accountabilities two or more ways
Risk minimisation	More risk – rely on trust, respect and process rather than legalistic clauses
Compliance focus	Flexible, faith in relationships and agreed processes
‘Principal-agent’ arm’s length relationship	Interactive, ongoing relationships
Short term, fixed upon completion of outputs	Relationships longer term, schedule of tasks likely to change over time

Source: ‘Key Learnings and Ways Forward – The Potential of Partnerships, Based on Waitakere City Experiences’, 2004 pp80–81.

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Published by the Local Partnerships and Governance Research Group

Funded by a grant from the Foundation for Research Science and Technology.



LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS & GOVERNANCE

ISBN 0-473-10101-7