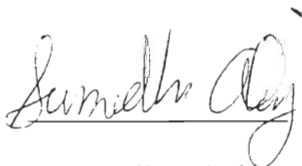


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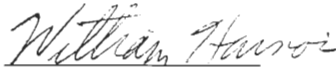
AN EXPLORATION OF REGENERATION AND PARTNERSHIP WORKINGS IN  
THE LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON

An Interactive Qualifying Project Report  
submitted to the Faculty of  
WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Degree of Bachelor of Science

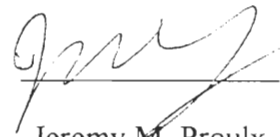


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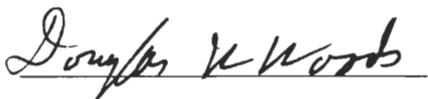


William J. Harnois



Jeremy M. Proulx

Date: May 3, 1999



Professor Douglas Woods,  
Primary Advisor

Approved:



Professor Robert Thompson,  
Secondary Advisor

## **Abstract**

This project examined how organizations working together to regenerate Merton view regeneration and the requirements for successful partnerships. Twenty-two, semi-standardized interviews were conducted with representatives from a variety of organizations in Merton. Using qualitative analysis, similarities and differences in responses were explored. This information along with background research was used to draw conclusions on whether these organizations have a mutually consistent understanding of regeneration and partnership work. Conclusions also discuss the implications of these findings.

## **Executive Summary**

The council and the officers of the London Borough of Merton, along with many other agencies such as the local health authority, voluntary groups, training and enterprise organizations, ethnic and community groups, religious organizations, police, and educational organizations often work together in partnership towards improving or “regenerating” the London Borough of Merton. Two objectives of this project follow from this regeneration partnership work. The first objective was to ask various representatives of the types of agencies previously mentioned to explain their understanding of regeneration. The second objective consisted of questioning these same representatives on what they felt contributed to a successful partnership.

Before conducting interviews and analyzing notes, it was important to have a clear understanding of the elements of regeneration. It was also necessary to have knowledge of characteristics that make successful partnerships. Researching the literature on these questions was beneficial to both our knowledge and credibility during the interviews and in analyzing our findings. Finally, some conclusions were based on the similarities between the data collected and the background research.

The ultimate goal was to establish whether or not different agencies have a mutually consistent understanding of regeneration and of characteristics which contribute to successful partnership work. Two hypotheses were investigated: first, that partners do not have a mutually consistent understanding of regeneration, and second that they do not have a mutually consistent approach towards successful partnership work. To test these hypotheses, interviews were conducted with twenty-two out of the thirty-two representatives who were requested for interviews. These interviews were semi-

standardized in structure, including a scripted introduction and conclusion, as well as, scripted prompts and transitions. These interviews were recorded for later analysis on micro-cassette, in addition to, field notes.

Transcripts were created for the first five interviews, including the pretest. The remaining interviews were summarized on analysis note sheets. This data was analyzed qualitatively by searching for similarities and disparities within representative responses. Additionally, representative responses were compared to the background research.

Through analysis, it was discovered that the representatives that were interviewed do not have a mutually consistent understanding of regeneration. A wide range of descriptions of regeneration were given. These focused on: different types of improvements, community involvement, varied improvements and community involvement and a very limited range of projects requiring very specific types of expertise. While most respondents gave a mixed definition of regeneration, focusing on both different types of improvements and community involvement, the variation in responses is significant, large enough to force us to conclude that the representatives did not have a mutually consistent definition of regeneration.

Other emergent themes relating to regeneration include disagreement over the term “quality of life” and a tendency for “core partners” to give more comprehensive definitions of regeneration. Approximately half of the representatives stated that improving “the quality of life” was the ultimate goal of regeneration, while the other representatives made no mention of a ultimate goal with regard to regeneration efforts. Additionally, it was discovered that representatives of the Council, officers for the London Borough of Merton, local health authority, voluntary and community groups and

skills training groups who were frequently involved with the regeneration projects had the most comprehensive definitions of regeneration.

On the subject of successful partnerships, more frequent responses from the interviewees included having openness with respect to communication, common goals, mutual trust, clear objectives, equality, and strong partner commitment. Additionally, there were a number of characteristics for successful partnerships mentioned only once or twice. There was also a difference in the number of characteristics each partner listed. Some representatives mentioned a number of characteristics, while others listed only a few.

In regard to less successful partnership characteristics, the more common responses included: domination by certain partners, a lack of proper skills, a lack of understanding of project requirements, and management structure problems within the partnerships. As with the characteristics for success, there were a number of characteristics of less successful partnerships that were mentioned only once or twice. Finally, none of the characteristics for success or lack of success can be associated with any specific agency types.

One of the most common themes in the responses to questions on partnership workings was the issue of equality and leadership. Many agency representatives indicated that inequality was present in many partnerships and needed to be rectified for partnerships to succeed. Meanwhile, other agencies stated that strong leadership was required for a partnership to succeed. There is apparently disagreement about the nature of partnership leadership.

These conclusions were drawn based on the qualitative analysis. In the end, both hypotheses were proven true, with some qualification required, especially with regard to the hypothesis concerning successful partnership work. These conclusions were presented to the sponsor in a verbal presentation on May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1999. In addition, a pamphlet (Section 6.0) was created to present the data collected in a constructive format which may be beneficial to future partnership work.

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The London Borough of Merton works with many agencies towards the regeneration of Merton. Agencies in Merton often cooperate as partners on major regeneration (urban renewal) projects. These agencies come from many different sectors within the Merton community such as: education, public transportation, housing, skills training, religious, health, police, ethnic minorities, political leaders, and local government administrators. Changes in the structure of local government have decreased the funding for some of these community services, and as a result they are not directly the responsibility of the local government, the Merton Council. In order to best provide these services to members of the community, it is often necessary for private and public organizations within Merton to work together and bid for national grant money for funding. Because these agencies frequently need to work with one another, it is important for them to understand each other's point of view. The objectives of this project are derived from this need.

This project consisted of two main objectives. The first objective was to question various agencies working within the London Borough of Merton about their understanding of regeneration, pinpointing components which they deemed relevant to regeneration. The second objective was to identify characteristics that agencies felt lead to successful partnership work with respect to regeneration. The ultimate goal in this project was to provide applicable input for the future success of these agency partnership activities in Merton.

In order to complete these objectives, interview sessions were conducted with members of agencies who have worked in regeneration partnerships in Merton. During



these sessions, the agency representatives were asked questions which drew out their views about regeneration and partnerships. Common responses and variations in views were reported. Interpretation of these data were provided in an executive summary for use at the Merton Partnership Conference in late May, 1999.

The regeneration partnership work of many agencies was the focus of this project, and we intend that these organizations and the residents of Merton will benefit from our work. Project results and analysis were provided to the London Borough of Merton, assuming they will use this information to better their organization as well as to improve the quality of life for Merton residents through their future regeneration projects. The information provided by this project was intended to be unbiased and non-judgmental. The issue at hand was not to analyze the past but to take steps to ensure a successful future.

## **2.0 BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE: REGENERATION AND PARTNERSHIPS**

This project focused on the operation of regeneration partnerships located in the London Borough of Merton. A number of agencies work together as partners towards the regeneration of the Borough of Merton. This project consisted of two main objectives. The first objective was to explore each agency's definition and understanding of regeneration. The second objective of this project was to identify characteristics which partner agencies feel lead to successful partnerships in the context of regeneration. Both of these objectives are strongly influenced by the other. If an organization does not function successfully as a group, it is unlikely that it will perform any future regeneration projects in a successful manner. The following pages summarize the literature on regeneration and partnerships.

The second section, which appears immediately after this introduction, deals with the first objective and focuses on partnerships. This section is immediately followed by group development theory as well as group evaluation techniques. These sections were needed to be able to ask questions and understand the responses associated with partnerships and group work.

The material in sections four and five relate to the study of the agencies' definition and understanding of regeneration. Section four consists of a brief history of Merton, and possible regeneration concerns for the Borough of Merton. A general discussion of regeneration is presented in section five, which includes a description of regenerative activities and policy. In order to ask pertinent questions, it is necessary to understand regeneration, before studying the partners' conceptions of this issue.

The final section of this literature review presents an overview of effective interviewing techniques. Both objectives will require that partner agencies be interviewed. It is important that this is done correctly to get reliable data.

## **2.1 Community Partnerships**

“Collaborative partnerships offer a mechanism for individuals to change community conditions”(Harris, 1997, p.189). These partnerships engage diverse groups in the community, use multiple strategies, and work together to achieve a common purpose. Community partnerships of this nature are useful, because pooled resources, diverse expertise and different perspectives can be tremendously useful in designing and implementing regenerative efforts (Harris, 1997). The regeneration partners in Merton fit into this notion of a collaborative partnership between public and private agencies. These agencies, like all others that fit the above description, share risks, responsibilities, resources, and rewards (Harris, 1997). It is because of this sharing that a number of issues surface that are potentially problematic. These issues must be considered when working together to avoid problems which may prevent a partnership from reaching its goals.

### **2.1.1 The Partnership Pyramid**

The Royal Town Planning Institute believes (RTPI, 1998) that in order for a partnership to be effective, it must satisfy four criteria which can be illustrated by a pyramid. Credibility is situated at the summit of this pyramid, resting upon the foundation of legitimacy, accountability, and delivery. For an organization to maintain

credibility, the RTPI feels that it must be held accountable for all decisions made by the agencies within the partnership. They feel that all member agencies making decisions on projects should be available for contact (RTPI, 1998). Accountability can also be looked upon as a legal issue. The RTPI argues that it is necessary for community partnerships to be held accountable for the public funding they receive.

Another part of the foundation on which the partnership pyramid rests is legitimacy. In the opinion of the RTPI, legitimacy is achieved through the representation of interest groups working with the partnership (RTPI, 1998). They believe that partnerships will lose their legitimacy if all pertinent community interests are not represented.

The final step towards credibility is delivery. The RTPI explains that partnerships need to have practical short term processes during the long term projects. Without short term achievements, a partnership's credibility may diminish and partners may decide to leave. Partners need to know that they are making accomplishments as they work toward long term goals (RTPI, 1998). The RTPI believes that a good delivery of accomplishments can promote good publicity, resulting in credibility.

### **2.1.2 Perceived Need, Willingness and Ability**

Alter and Hage argue (Bazzoli, 1997) that collaborative actions of an agency depend on three factors: perceived need, willingness and ability. Perceived need focuses on the dependencies that concern agencies in their collaborative efforts. These dependencies can include the need for financial or human resources, the need for working

capital, the need to manage business risks, or flexibility to allow for adaptation.

Willingness is directly related to perceived need (Bazzoli, 1997).

Willingness is the tendency to collaborate, or the desire to engage in collaborative activities by contributing resources. Willingness is affected by perceived need, such that when the needs of the partnership as perceived by the agency are more than the agency is willing to give, then willingness declines (Bazzoli, 1997). In other words, an agency will not participate in a partnership when it believes that such participation will require more than it desires to give. This issue should not be confused with the issue of ability.

Ability refers to the resources that a particular partner can willingly give. This cannot be changed, i.e., an agency can never allocate more resources than it has at its disposal. To summarize, the needs of the partnership as perceived by the agency impacts the agency's willingness to collaborate, and collaborative efforts will always be within the bounds of an agency's ability (Bazzoli, 1997).

The agencies working together to regenerate Merton must recognize this fact. They must have a good understanding of what each other agency has the ability to give, because an agency's willingness to work towards a partnership's goals is always with respect to this ability. Additionally, agencies must be informed within reason of the legitimate needs of each other to reach their goals. If an agency does not think that its resources are needed, it will not collaborate; inversely, if an agency thinks that collaborate asks too much of its resources, it will not collaborate.

### **2.1.3 Rules for Partnership Success**

In discussing community partnerships, Drnevich (Drnevich, 1995) establishes some basic ground rules that are described as “prerequisites” (Drnevich, 1995, p.12). The first rule centers on the topic of involvement. Drnevich states that the only way to regenerate the community is to involve community members. Having community members involved in regenerative partnerships ensures that partnership goals will be influenced by legitimate community problems. Also, community members are more likely to give or lend resources, because they will directly experience the rewards of regeneration.

Community involvement can be achieved by actively recruiting pre-existing local community groups, or by creating these groups as part of the initial regenerative activities. Also, recruiting private organizations whose operators are members of the local community can be effective in getting community involvement, as well as obtaining resources.

Understanding is the focus of the second rule. Drnevich describes this as, “Common understanding and common goals for the common good” (Drnevich, 1995, p. 12). The goals of the partnership, its purpose and the solutions it is trying to achieve should be firmly established. Also, each agency should clearly understand the proposed end results and understand the associated benefits to the general community.

Honestly is obviously an essential component of an effective partnership. Rule three discusses this component by building upon understanding. “Understanding the cause of the problems, the ramifications and costs of the alternative solutions, political realities, and the time and effort required for implementation is paramount for success” (Drnevich, 1995, p.12). The partnership can easily be eroded when the partner agencies

are not forthcoming with their true perceptions of partnership efforts and about the changes that need to take place. Honesty is the only way that true problems and concerns can be addressed so that partners do not become discouraged. Additionally, honesty builds trust, and when trust is present the ability to implement real solutions begins to surface.

Rule four continues with the issue of honesty and singles out hidden agendas. Hidden agendas produce disruption to regenerative efforts, mistrust and a reduction in credibility. The partnership must decide on appropriate ground rules that do not tolerate personal and political gain at the expense of the common good. Partnerships must make sure that partner agencies know the consequences of such actions, while at the same time not discouraging membership.

Role definition is the focus of rule five. Each partner agency should be assigned roles that utilize its experience or expertise. These roles should be clearly defined, so that “turf wars” (Drnevich, 1995, p. 12) or conflicts over duties and responsibilities are minimized. If there is ambiguity as to who is doing what, then valuable resources like time will be wasted. Also, when given roles agencies will be closely related to the results of their actions, and this will continue to motivate the agency and validate working together in the partnership.

When developing problem definitions, alternatives and solutions, all partner agencies should be involved. This is rule six. Diverse partners see problems from different perspectives, and this is useful in determining the actual problem and brainstorming solutions. Naturally, partner agencies will commit more to plans, which

they helped to develop. When a partner agency commits to the regeneration projects, its resources and expertise also become available.

Next, all plans should be flexible. Partnerships cannot assume that member agencies and problem circumstances will be constant between the design and implementation stages of regenerative efforts. Without flexibility, plans will often not reach the implementation stage, and this will be frustrating to all parties involved. Flexibility and backup plans can ensure that steady progress towards regenerative goals can be achieved.

Additionally, Michael Leons, Chief Executive of Birmingham City Council states that for a partnership to be successful, everyone who is involved should feel they will benefit, risks should be equally shared, and all participants should get equal credit for the work done (O'Reilly, 1997). Therefore, equality in all aspects of the partnership is extremely important, whether it be in the positive context such as financial gain and credit for work done, or in the negative context such as risk involved or financial loss (O'Reilly, 1997).

All these rules pertain to community partnerships, including the regeneration partnerships in Merton. The agencies in these partnerships should use these rules as a guide to interaction and planning of regenerative activities.

#### **2.1.4 Potential Problems**

When partnership agencies work together, it is obviously not always going to work well. The next best thing is to know some of the problems that may arise, and how to deal with them. No strategy can completely align the interests of the individual partner



agencies to those of the partnership.

“Inevitably, conflict arises from diverging interests or from ambiguous responsibilities and jurisdiction” (Weiner, 1998, p.45). These conflicts are disruptive problems which must be addressed. Often, the governing body of the partnership does not have the authority to mediate conflict. In this case, it is necessary to use the informal structures based on interpersonal relationships, e.g. friendship networks, informal status hierarchies, and grapevines to resolve conflicts. “Entangling strings of reputation, friendship, interdependence, and altruism seem to be integral structural elements of partnership governance” (Weiner, 1998, p. 46)

In addition to conflicts, another problem often experienced by partnerships is that of promoting direct, grassroots community participation in partnership governance. Traditional models of partnerships do not seem to accommodate this type of participation. Also, there is an underlying fundamental assumption that the community’s social, financial and professional elite can identify and respond to the regenerative needs of the whole community (Weiner, 1998). Often, community members living in economically stressed areas are wary and suspicious of the intentions of more prosperous members of the regenerative effort. These obstacles can be addressed in a number of ways (Weiner, 1998).

Partnerships can use three strategies to overcome the previously stated obstacles. First, local community institutions, e.g. churches, schools, neighborhood associations, can be particularly effective when crossing socioeconomic and cultural barriers (Weiner, 1998). Leaders of these local organizations can be very helpful in pointing out problems and key influences in the community. Second, it is necessary to create multiple

opportunities for involvement. This can include having local community members sit on panels or committees, as well as holding open forum town meetings (Weiner, 1998). Finally, the partnership should work to develop a sense of community ownership within the partnership. Rotating the meeting sites into different host communities can do this. Such rotation tends to foster a sense of ownership and pride in the partnership (Weiner, 1998).

Additionally, research carried out by GFA Consulting and the European Institute for Urban Affairs says that one key obstacle partnerships face is having “stratospheric” or unrealistic expectations (Dept. of Environmental Transport and the Regions, 1998). If goals are set too high, the partnership may not be able to meet them. This may in turn, injure the credibility of that partnership and may discourage members of the partnership.

To avoid this situation, it is important to set realistic or “short term” goals or expectations (Dept. of Environmental Transport and the Regions, 1998). In this way, the credibility of the partnership can be established. These short term goals should; however, be placed or “nested” within a series of medium and long term goals and ambitions. When the short term goals are met, this encourages partnership members towards the medium and long term goals. This method should incrementally approach the final goal with success (Dept. of Environmental Transport and the Regions, 1998).

It is likely that the partnerships in Merton may face some of these problems, and it is helpful if partners know some of the strategies commonly used to overcome such problems.

### **2.1.5 Summary**

The regeneration partnership workings in Merton are complicated by a number of things. First, perceived needs, willingness and ability for each agency must be considered when planning regenerative activity. Additionally, successful partnerships must follow rules to work well together. Finally, there are potential problems which can arise and block regenerative efforts. Thus, these partnerships needed to know how to remedy these problems.

### **2.2.0 Group Development**

In order to understand some of the responses from interviewees with respect to agencies working as a group, it was necessary to establish a baseline understanding of the modern theories of group development and group evaluation. Understanding group development and evaluation was critical to successfully completing this objective.

Most of the literature agrees that comprehension regarding group development is useful in understanding group performance because the development of a group is tied directly to performance. Following this idea, differences in the literature are encountered in the way that group development is modeled.

One popular theory created by B.W. Tuckman separates group development into four stages: forming, storming, norming and performing. The forming stage is the initial stage of getting acquainted. The forming stage is followed by the storming stage, which is the period when members' influence and status is battled out. Next, in the norming stage, ground rules are laid (usually in order to resolve stage two conflicts). Performing is when members appreciate each other and work interdependently to accomplish goals (Cohen, Fink, Gadon, Willits, 1995).

A similar theory developed by Steven Obert divides group development into five phases. The membership phase is the first. It is marked by cautious behavior as group members question the goals and perspectives of fellow group members. The second stage, known as subgrouping, is characterized by the group at large breaking down into several smaller groups of like-minded people. Third is the confrontation stage where listening declines and struggles for individual and subgroup power come to the foreground. Phase four is individual differentiation where people become more accepting of differences and issues of division of labor become dominant. Finally, collaboration is sometimes reached. At this stage, members complement each other's strengths and weaknesses; at this point, members can be honest without penalty (Cohen, Fink, Gadon, Willits, 1995).

In the above model, performance starts at phase one at an acceptable level, then declines throughout stages two and three. Stage three is so riddled with conflict that the worst performance is exhibited. Stage four's beginning of acceptance coincides with performance recovery. The fifth stage of development coincides with the best performance; performance here is superior to any other stage's performance (Cohen, Fink, Gadon, Willits, 1995).

Other group development theories do exist that are markedly different from the previous two. One theory illustrates group development as a continuous six-phase cycle. Phase one is the discontent phase. This is the forming phase characterized by the common feeling that the group is not meeting individual needs (Worchel, Wood, Simpson, 1992). Phase two, which is known as the precipitating event phase, involves some event which reaffirms the group's existence, brings unity, and separates the disloyal

(Worchel, Wood, Simpson, 1992). Phase three is the group identification phase. This phase is the entry point into this cycle for new groups. Phase three groups are rigid, concerned with boundaries and place great importance on clean-cut ideological positions (Worchel, Wood, Simpson, 1992). Next is group productivity where conservative group goals are established (and met) and distinctions are made among members based on ability to achieve goals (Worchel, Wood, Simpson, 1992). Phase five is called individuation. Individuals now begin to negotiate with the group to achieve personal goals and receive recognition (Worchel, Wood, Simpson, 1992). Phase six is decay where the focus on individual needs dissolves group identity; members begin to question the value of the group (Worchel, Wood, Simpson, 1992).

In the previous model, phases three and four correlate with high group performance. Phases two and five demonstrate waxing and waning of group identity, and therefore are characterized by mediocre performance. Phases one and six correlate with below average performance, because working as a group is at its lowest (Worchel, Wood, Simpson, 1992).

The first two models show group development as a one-time process where good groups reach the productive later phases and stay there. The last model shows group development as a cyclical process that groups continually experience. In the cyclical model, groups must constantly strive to overcome the periods when group cohesion is low and productivity is down. Both models are widely accepted, but the cyclical model is generally applied more often to long-term groupings, where the group will be in existence for a long period of time.

The models analyze group dynamics and the related impact on performance (see the following definition of performance). These models were useful in determining where the partnerships were working with respect to group development. A good comprehension of group development helped us to understand the setting for obstacles or conflicts which impeded partnership success.

### **2.3.0 The Borough of Merton**

The following section will cover a brief description of the Borough of Merton and the various possible regeneration issues of the city for additional background knowledge. Also, if agency members mentioned particular regeneration issues during the interviews, it was important to have some familiarity with them. The next sections discuss the various regeneration issues which have been addressed in the past in the Borough of Merton.

#### **2.3.1 Brief Description of Merton**

Merton is one of the thirty-two major boroughs which comprise Greater London, England. It is located in Surrey, which is south of the Thames River. Merton is bordered by Croydon on the east, Sutton on the south, by Wandsworth and Lambeth on the north, and by Kingston-On-Thames on the west. It was constituted in 1965 by the unification of the previous boroughs of Mitcham and Wimbledon and also the urban districts of Morden and Merton. A great deal of residential development occurred between World Wars I and II. Primarily, it is a residential suburb with manufacturing of fabrics, toys and paints. In addition, the world wide popular Championship tennis tournaments take place annually in

Wimbledon. Merton's government consists of a mayor and council. Finally, the population as noted in 1991 was 168,470 ( Schairer, Watanabe, 1996, p.5).

### **2.3.2 Possible Regeneration Concerns for Merton**

The following possible types of regeneration have been researched in specific connection with the Borough of Merton to assist us in gaining background knowledge regarding the city. It was necessary to understand these issues to in order to comprehend what sort of topics regeneration involves. This provided us with familiarity of the types of projects the regeneration partnerships may have worked on in the past, or may work on in the future.

#### **2.3.2.1 Residential Conditions**

There exist many construction standards, which must be met in order to assure the quality of new homes. Regardless of these standards, the construction of the residential developments remains unsatisfactory and fulfills only minimum requirements (Schairer, Watanabe 1996). Many observers feel that this also displays negligence on the part of home inspectors, who tend to over look many flaws in the homes that they inspect. An important question, many feel, is whether people purchase their homes out of liking and satisfaction with them, or because they are forced to purchase them due to the scarcity of high quality housing meeting adequate housing standards (Schairer, Watanabe 1996).

According to recent surveys in the city of Merton, the following housing related deficiencies present the most problems to residents; lack of storage and living space, high noise levels, uncleanliness of streets, and small and low quality gardens (Schairer,

Watanabe 1996).

Certain guidelines must be observed to ensure high quality home building. The first guideline deals with consumer protection. This issue involves a satisfactory relationship between the consumer and the developer. The consumer should be able to feel that he can trust the developer. According to surveys previously performed, consumers tend to feel deceived if the developer has a previous record of wrongful dealings (Schairer, Watanabe 1996).

The second issue focuses on housing adequacy. When observing the adequacy of a living environment, conditions such as room size, layout, and closet space along with many other issues must be assessed. Occupants must be asked about their personal satisfaction with living conditions in the dwelling. Developers build inadequate structures due to the money that they save by utilizing cheaper materials. This in turn, reduces the quality of the home (Schairer, Watanabe 1996).

The third guideline concerns access for the disabled. Merton Council currently requires that ten percent of units be usable by disabled people. Also, it is of primary importance to ensure that adaptations for disabled people do not cause able-bodied persons any form of inconvenience (Schairer, Watanabe 1996).

The fourth guideline deals with structural design. It is extremely important to ensure that the structure of the building in question be safe in regard to the materials, building design, and suitability of the soil on which the foundation rests. Correspondingly, the building materials should be of sound quality for the purpose of soundproofing, insulating, and avoiding damage (Schairer, Watanabe, 1996).

Additional issues deal with storm drainage and fire protection. Deficient storm



drainage could produce the consequence of a flood in the area in question. Also, developers should take into strong consideration, the possibility of fire hazards due to flammable materials in the complex (Schairer, Watanabe, 1996). Buildings should be adequately equipped with proper protection (heat detectors, sprinkler systems, etc.), as well as safe evacuation routes. Evacuation routes should be present which are suitable for the disabled as well as the able bodied.

### **2.3.2.2 Open Space**

The London Borough Association (LBA) is one of many organizations which has been very concerned with the utilization and actual interpretation of the term “open space”. The majority of planners interpret the term open space as an open plot of land on which there are no buildings (Hamilton, Matin, & Marcello, 1998). A large number of boroughs utilize these open spaces for recreation purposes (Hamilton, Matin, & Marcello, 1998). Town planners frequently feel there are not enough open spaces to be wasted on simply recreation. They believe that the specific issue of what should be done with these open spaces, should be addressed. Business owners feel that it would benefit them if their further growth was not restricted by open space in the center of the city. This open space, if not used for recreation, could be utilized by them in building and expanding their businesses (Hamilton, Matin, & Marcello, 1998).

### **2.3.2.3 Transportation**

Transportation is a very important problem relative to environmental and town planning issues. If the money invested in developing roads and highways was utilized for

production of public transportation, car emissions and air pollution would be reduced significantly (Hamilton, Martin, & Marcello, 1996). Further action to reduce personal vehicle utilization would be for neighborhood shops and small businesses to resettle in areas within walking distance of residential neighborhoods. Though this relocation would decrease the use of personal vehicles, it may correspondingly cause unhappiness among occupants by shifting businesses into residential neighborhoods. Also, with further business development, residents fear additional crime, violence, and perhaps noise pollution (Hamilton, Martin, & Marcello, 1996).

#### **2.3.2.4 Environment and Waste Removal**

In the opinion of many experts, one of the most prominent issues concerning town planning is the improvement of the environment. A variety of polls suggest that the American consensus regarding the environment is slowly decreasing (Hamilton, Martin, & Marcello, 1996). Since environmental groups in the United States have had a fair amount of success with issues such as recycling, land protection, and waste removal programs, attention has currently turned elsewhere. Now public attention has turned toward crime, education, and the quality of life. Environmental concerns therefore, have taken a backseat. These poll results may also be applied to the United Kingdom, since they are in a similar situation as the United States regarding the environment.

Environmental experts claim that the environment and waste removal are intimately connected. Several issues connect both of these subjects, some of which include removal of large landfills, mandatory recycling programs, clean air, and restrictions on personal vehicle use (Hamilton, Martin, & Marcello, 1996). These issues deal with the removal of

waste and have a direct impact on the improvement of the environment. By removing large landfills, removing every day waste by recycling, or reducing personal vehicle use, a healthier and cleaner environment for Merton residents will result. Therefore, experts claim that it is extremely important that two factors, environmental protection and waste removal, be observed in correlation with one another in urban planning (Hamilton, Martin, & Marcello, 1996).

### **2.3.2.5 Environmental Awareness of Businesses**

In 1995, a Gallop survey was distributed by the *Groundwork Foundation*. The purpose of this survey was to evaluate the environmental awareness of businesses in the United Kingdom. *Groundwork* is an environmental organization concerned with improving economic and environmental attitudes of businesses within the United Kingdom (Feigin, Gigliello, & Snow, 1996). The survey showed that the majority of companies display very little interest in environmental issues (Feigin, Gigliello, Snow, 1996). The results of this poll suggest that this is an important regeneration issue which needs to be addressed, since many businesses have such a negative impact on the environment due to the pollution they cause during production. Environmental experts state that it is necessary that businesses be made aware of the pollution they cause, so they can alter their methods of production. Their methods of production, such as the type of materials they use, the amount of smoke they emit, and the amount of waste produced, will have a major effect on the environment (Feigin, Gigliello, & Snow, 1996).

### **2.3.3 Summary: Borough of Merton**

The previous section laid out various regeneration concerns such as residential conditions, open space, transportation, and environmental concerns in the Borough of Merton. These concerns provided us with knowledge regarding the key regeneration issues in Merton.

#### **2.4.0 Regeneration**

Regeneration of a community occurs when a certain group or partnership funded by local or central government, invests both time and energy into implementing strategies towards dealing with urban city problems of all types. Regeneration programs are created when communities are unable to function effectively in a specific area or in all community aspects in general. Whether broad or local, cities with these community problems create partnerships to focus on first finding the cause of the problems, and then implementing a strategic solution. Moreover, in order to have a functional community cities need to focus on social, economical, ecological, housing and many other concerns. The following sections helped us understand the Merton agencies' responses and to determine whether or not the agencies' were working with a common definition of regeneration..

#### **2.4.1 Community**

In order to evaluate regeneration in a community it is important to define communities and how they work. A community can be a group of people who have no physical location that they own or inhabit, but that are bound together by a number of elements. Pantoja states that historical and contemporary circumstances can be an initial

characteristic of community formation. In addition to this, other aspects like race, religion, national origin, sharing a common set of values, mutual expectations, and aspirations are other ways of people coming together as a community (Pantoja, 1992).

Community work in the United States is divided into economic and community development (Pantoja, 1992). Policy makers, government agencies, and funding sources treat them as distinct professions and disciplines. Moreover, different professions and disciplines are involved with each type of development. Human service and the social work professions are unrelated to economic development activities. Economic development deals primarily with businesses and housing, while community development deals with biological, social, cultural, historical, and political issues (Pantoja, 1992).

Pantoja points out that cities must recognize when they have dysfunctional communities. He believes that cities become dysfunctional when people become powerless to correct the problems. At this point, he feels that the city needs to become introspective and expose the factors which destroyed its community (Pantoja, 1992). Merton is looking to improve many aspects of their community. Evaluating the agencies' ability to recognize these issues will play an important role in their regeneration.

#### **2.4.2 Economic Issues**

Certain debates have challenged whether partnerships, that are looking to improve economic conditions can actually do anything worthwhile. One point of view claims that it is unwise or impossible to reverse the market forces creating decline. Another states that the abandonment of urban policy is a form of Social Darwinism with devastating social impact on local communities (Varady, 1995). Further debates continue regarding

whether it is advisable for central and local government to serve the disadvantaged and lower income groups. Economic regeneration groups must be careful in making their decisions, for incorrect decisions could result in a wasted effort (Bingham, 1997).

### **2.4.3 Ecological Issues**

It is the opinion of Girardet, that in addition to social and economic wellbeing, cities must become environmentally sustainable. He feels as though regeneration groups must give the environment high priority for economic reasons as well (Girardet, 1993). In addition to this, Girardet states that cities as well as individual business are better off economically in the long run if they deal with environmental issues now, rather than waiting until the problems become worse. Moreover, with active participation from a variety of people, cities must provide a healthy environment in order to function correctly. Overall, the three principal areas of concern are vegetation, air pollution and waste management.

#### **2.4.3.1 Inner-city Vegetation and Pollution**

Inner-city vegetation has other advantages in addition to a beautiful appearance. In the opinion of one expert, the increase of vegetation of cities absorbs rainfall and prevents flooding, reduces noise levels, acts as “used air” filters, helps reduce pollution, and provides recreational sites for people, reducing urban stress. With toxins in the air, humans can experience bad health and lower life expectancy. However, Girardet feels that with this inner-city vegetation, people can expect to have cleaner air with a reduced amount of toxins (Girardet, 1993). The problem of auto emissions forces a search for

better alternatives such as solar powered cars and public transportation. While solar powered cars are still too expensive, people will keep buying gasoline powered cars. However, Girardet further believes that using public transportation would save the individual money (Girardet, 1993). When interviewing agencies dealing primarily with environmental concerns, it was helpful understanding these techniques on dealing with pollution.

#### **2.4.3.2 Waste Management**

In addition to environmental benefits, recycling appears to have a money saving effect. Due to the growing shortage of waste disposal space for cities, businesses are forced to use other techniques of disposal, such as recycling and reusing. Girardet believes that recycling waste can enhance the resource efficiency of cities, bringing them economic as well as environmental benefits. Moreover, in the long term, he feels as though resource-efficient cities have the competitive edge over those that continue to discard waste (Girardet, 1993).

#### **2.4.4 Urban Housing Strategies**

Housing development can be a crucial task for a partnership. Agencies sometimes need to reach a certain percentage target for housing development in a certain area. While focusing on constructing housing for numbers in an area may boost this percentage, a different approach is recommended. One strategy is essentially a top down approach. Government would set an aspirational target defining the proportion of new homes to be built on previously developed land and then use various statutory planning

procedures to carry out actions to achieve the target (Shostak, 1997). Building a target percentage of new homes in urban areas, has a few drawbacks as far as choices go for the resident's living standards. Constructing these new homes into the inner city limits the residents from getting all the benefits of living in suburban areas, such as good homes, schools, and neighborhoods. Constructing housing in a certain urban areas does not automatically promote good living conditions (Shostak, 1997). Therefore, just merely trying to get an ideal percentage of new urban housing in a certain area may only create that percentage, instead of quality living in that area. Moreover, partnerships are encouraged to take a different approach in a bottom up design. This bottom up approach would focus on urban regeneration and the provision of better environmental living conditions in the housing development area. Cities would be accorded the highest priority by central government for public investments such as increasing employment, improving existing housing, building new housing and improving schools (Shostak, 1997). Once the improved living standards in the desired areas are recognized, the public may choose to live in these urban areas. It was extremely helpful having a knowledge of these approaches prior to interviewing agencies dealing with living standards.

#### **2.4.5 Community Restoration**

People have the ability to evaluate the destiny of their communities. In all kinds of communities, it is necessary to have groups focusing change in beneficial directions. Perry feels that in community restoration members of an economically dependent and political disenfranchised community decide to work together for certain purposes. He finds it important to understand the forces and processes that have made them and keep



them in their state of poverty and dependency. Perry believes that it is crucial for a community to mobilize and organize their internal strength to create a methodology based on information, knowledge, skills, and financial resources. Finally, he feels it is important to maintain and develop new functions that a community performs for the benefits of its own members (Perry, 1992). Regeneration partnerships will be useful, because new communities are constantly created, and old communities always require adaptation to the fast changes that occur in the world. Understanding these concepts helped in researching the different agency's perception of the term regeneration in the Borough of Merton.

#### **2.4.6 New Regeneration Policies**

New regeneration policies concentrate on the balance between central and local government efforts. Reoccurring problems are the result of too much concentration in one of the two areas. For example, local regeneration partnerships can put their main focus on a certain troubled area by spending large amounts of public money on creating new office space to attract businesses. Although this investment may be successful, it may leave behind unwanted office space from where the businesses deserted. Then, a need for a similar regeneration investment may be necessary in these deserted areas. Therefore, one point of view believes central government should get involved with the planning in order to promote communication between agencies (Robinson, 1997). To avoid displacement and competition between different regeneration agencies and initiatives, there has to be a wider strategy for the entire region (Robinson, 1997).

The need for an established relationship between central and local governments is important in other aspects as well. There is a need for local residents in the community to be involved in decision making. In the most successful community development efforts residents create the vision for the neighborhood revitalization, establish goals and priorities, and provide continuing leadership, support and oversight as the revitalization plan is implemented (Lansberry, 1997). Because residents are the ones who live in the community, they are the ones who know what is wrong with their neighborhoods, schools and lifestyles.

#### **2.4.7 Summary of Regeneration**

As broad as the subject of urban regeneration is, it is crucial that all aspects be given appropriate priority. Before analyzing subjects like economic and community regeneration, it is important to first understand communities. Because new ideals of urban regeneration are changing, the need for regeneration partnerships to adapt is significant. New regeneration partnerships need to be aware of the potential areas in which regeneration is needed. Nonetheless, information on theories and approaches of attack towards regeneration will be beneficial to the Borough of Merton and its desire to improve its community.

#### **2.5.0 Interviewing**

Interviews are going to be this project's primary means of obtaining information from regeneration partnership agencies. Therefore, it is necessary to have some sufficient background information on interviewing. Phrasing the proper questions, conducting the

interview and analyzing the data are all fundamental topics, which are core to successful interviews.

### **2.5.1 Interview Questions**

There are essentially four types of questions used in interviews. They are essential questions, extra questions, throw-away questions and probing questions (Berg, 1998). Essential questions are concerned with the central focus of the study. They gather most of the data, and they may be placed sporadically or in succession throughout the interview. Extra questions complement essential questions. These questions simply ask in different words an essential question. The purpose of an extra question is to validate the response given to a previous essential question. Throw-away questions are not concerned directly with gathering data. A throw-away question is used to build rapport or put the respondent at ease. Placement of throw-away questions can vary. Often, throw-away questions are asked at the beginning of the interview or after an emotional intense period in the interview. Finally, probing questions are used to get to the respondent to elaborate more on a particular topic or response. Probing questions should be emotionally neutral (Berg, 1998).

In addition to question types, it is necessary to consider question phrasing. Phrasing questions incorrectly can lead to curt responses and negative feelings toward the interviewer. Accordingly, emotionally provoking questions, two part questions, and complex questions should all be avoided (Berg, 1998).

Affective words can cause a negative emotional response. The most notorious of these words is “Why.” Words which do not affect people emotionally, should be used.

For example, in the United States, “How come?” is more neutral than “Why?” and is therefore more likely to get an unbiased response (Berg, 1998).

When interviewing, it is important to ask one simple question. If a question has multiple components, often one of these parts will be forgotten or dismissed by the respondent. Similarly, if a question is complex, often some of the nuances of the question may be lost on the respondent. To accommodate these shortcomings, it is necessary to ask single, simple questions (Berg, 1998).

Following these rules regarding interview questioning, it will be possible to conduct interviews, which will be informative and as positive an experience as possible for all parties concerned.

### **2.5.2 Sampling Design**

For a study to be scientifically valid, the interviewer must employ an acceptable sampling strategy. By using a valid sampling strategy, the interviewer can be certain that conclusions drawn from the obtained data will be applicable to the demographic or group being studied. There are a number of acceptable sampling strategies. The best sampling strategy varies from study to study (Berg, 1998).

A simple random sample is a type of sampling strategy. In this strategy, a representative sample is drawn. This is done by randomly selecting subjects out of a known set. In this case, each subject has equal probability of being selected (Berg, 1998).

Similarly, systematic sampling also selects subjects out of a known set. In systematic sampling, subjects are selected based on a predetermined interval. For example, if every 20<sup>th</sup> name were selected from a list, that would be systematic sampling.

When a researcher has to be certain that a specific segment of the group being studied is represented, it is best to use stratified sampling. Stratified sampling requires that the sample be drawn from a known set. In this case, the group being studied is separated into multiple subgroups. Independent samples are drawn from each subgroup using a predetermined number called the sampling fraction. The sampling fraction dictates what percent of a subgroup will be used for the study. Sampling fractions can differ from subgroup to subgroup (Berg, 1998).

Researchers also use purposive sampling. In this type of sampling, subjects are selected only if they possess or exhibit certain characteristics. A study of delinquent youths would require a purposive sample, because it necessary for the subject to be young and delinquent (Berg, 1998).

Finally, reference sampling or “snowballing” (Berg, 1998, p. 132) may be used for groups of undetermined size. In this, an initial subject is selected purposively. During the course of the interview, this subject is asked for references who might know more about the topics in question. These references are contacted using the initial subject as an introduction to get permission to interview. This process is repeated with each interview. The researcher stops interviewing when the unique responses are no longer given by subjects (Berg, 1998).

These techniques demonstrate a range in the manner by which groups may be sampled. Again, valid conclusions can only be drawn from data that is obtained through properly sampled studies.

### **2.5.3 Conducting the Interview**

According to Berg, there are ten rules, which should be followed to achieve satisfactory results when interviewing. However, Berg believes that really informative interviews are a product of practice (Berg, 1998).

When conducting an interview it is important to spend some time making small talk with the respondent. This can include asking questions about the surroundings in the interview room, or anything else that seems to be a comfortable topic for small talk. The aim of small talk is to establish a friendly atmosphere for and friendly rapport with the respondent (Berg, 1998).

The point of an interview is to get information and it is important to maintain focus on gathering the correct information. Questions should be memorized and if available, an interview schedule should be kept in front of the interviewer. This schedule should detail questions or main points to address during questioning. The interviewer should use this schedule to keep the respondent from getting off track. (Berg, 1998).

Continuing with the idea of a comfortable rapport, the interviewer should try to make sure that the interview does not feel contrived. Questions, which are memorized beforehand, should seem natural and impromptu when asked. Also, the interviewer should try to appear relaxed but professional (Berg, 1998).

Interviewers should demonstrate that they are listening with non-verbal responses. This means that if the respondent says something humorous that the interviewer should smile, and if the respondent is upset, the interviewer should attempt to show empathy. Interviewers should never appear bored or uninvolved (Berg, 1998).

Appearance is important. Proper dress is mandatory. Proper dress is, of course, relative to the respondent and setting of the interview. With adults, business dress is usually appropriate, but children should usually be approached in more casual attire (Berg, 1998).

Choosing the correct location is important to the success of the interview. The respondent should be comfortable in the setting. In this way, adjustments should be made to protect the respondent from unwanted recognition and to maintain anonymity, if desired. The respondent should not constantly be worried about being overheard or seen. If the respondent is uncomfortable, they will not be as forthcoming (if at all) with information (Berg, 1998).

The interviewer should not just accept monosyllabic answers. If more information is desired, the interviewer should prompt the respondent: "Can you tell me a little bit more about that?" or "What else happened" (Berg, 1998, p.88). Often, an uncomfortable silence may be useful in drawing more information from the respondent (Berg, 1998).

It is important to make the respondent feel respected and valuable, because the respondent is a valuable source of data. The interviewer should make an effort to relate the importance of the interview to the respondent. Also, respondents should be given

assurances that their opinion is important with regard to desired respondent matter, even if the respondent does not feel it is important (Berg, 1998).

A successful interview requires that the interviewer practice. Interviewers should practice to develop their own personal style in conducting interviews. The best practice is to actually go out and do interviews (Berg, 1998).

Ending the interview with appreciation and cordiality is necessary. This includes answering any questions that the respondent may have about the interview or the research project in general. Future researchers may want to interview this respondent, and the respondent may not be willing if they are discouraged with the interview experience (Berg, 1998).

#### **2.5.4 Content Analysis**

Once data are collected, it is necessary to perform some sort of analysis on these data. This is called content analysis. There are two major types of content analysis: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative analysis uses counts and summary statistics to establish patterns of behavior, while qualitative analysis focuses on meanings and concepts. When applied to interviewing, there is much debate on the topic of which type of analysis should be used. Some researchers think that content analysis is inherently quantitative, while others feel that symbols and meanings are more important than numbers (Berg, 1998).

Berg thinks that this debate can be resolved by simply using both methods. Manifest content, physically present elements, and latent content, symbols and meanings, should be given equal consideration. When using quantitative analysis, common practice



is to count one or more, possibly in combination, of the following: words, themes, characters, paragraphs, items, concepts or semantics. Further analysis is accomplished through use of coding frames. Use of coding frames essentially puts each case/interview into an organized structure of divisions/subdivision. Once placed, each case's relevance can be explored with relation to its place in the study. Also, information used to support concluding ideas can be drawn from coded sources (Berg, 1998).

Content analysis is important to this project in that it will produce expressible ideas and relationships from a series of interviews. These ideas and relationships will be used as a basis for the project's conclusions. These conclusions will be presented to agencies working toward the regeneration of Merton in the final paper and distributed through the London Borough of Merton.

#### **2.6.0 Recapitulation of Background Knowledge**

This background research has laid out the required information in order to gain adequate knowledge before preceding with the actual project. Literature was found on both primary objectives; studying the agency members' views on regeneration, and identifying characteristics of a successful partnership. Since both of these objectives are linked to one another, it is extremely important to have information regarding the study of both of these issues.

This project will hopefully guide the regeneration partnerships in their future endeavors involving regeneration. Every successful project should have a successful team behind it first. If a partnership has a common goal and common views on what it requires to be a success, it will be able to be more successful in its future regeneration

projects, and in the issues concerned. This in turn, will benefit the reputation of their organization as well as, improving the general quality of life for Merton residents.

### 3.0 METHODOLOGY

This methodology details the manner in which this project was completed. The steps in the process included synchronizing goals between this team and our liaison, pre-testing interview questions, interviewing, content analysis, drawing conclusions, and presenting results. The methodology is based on the five component strategy, MICAP, including: method, instrument, collection, analysis, and presentation (Jamison, 1999).

Upon arrival in London, it was immediately necessary to synchronize goals and the problem statement with the liaison and the sponsor. A shift from the initial proposal's goals was determined and discussed with the liaison. Originally, the project was expected to concentrate on evaluating a regeneration partnership in Merton and identifying how agencies thought regeneration applied to Merton. It was discovered that the Community Regeneration Partnership was not formally established due to funding issues. Currently, regeneration projects are completed by agencies working together as partners outside of the authority of any central regeneration partnership. In light of this, the project's focus was shifted towards an understanding of what regeneration is and what it takes to make regeneration partnerships successful. This understanding will be gleaned from the agencies working in these regeneration partnerships. Without this primary clarification of goals, it would have been impossible to complete the project to the satisfaction of the sponsor.

The hypothesis developed for this project was that the agencies working together towards the regeneration of Merton do not have a mutually consistent definition of regeneration. Furthermore, our hypothesis stated that these agencies do not have a mutually consistent approach to successful partnerships.

Successful completion of project goals required gathering data from the agencies performing regeneration work within Merton. These data were gathered through a series of interviews with representatives at the different agencies. Contingency plans had been developed which would have involved gathering data outside these partnerships and alternative methods of gathering data from the partnerships. These contingency plans were not needed.

Interviews for the purpose of gathering data were directed by the interviewer through a list of prepared questions. These interviews were conducted in the “semi-standardized” manner. This means that the interview was conducted with open questioning, but that the interviewers had a partial list of questions which were asked during the course of the interview. These questions were developed by us based on discussion with the project’s liaison and used the information presented in the literature review as prompts. The actual interview schedule used during the interviews is attached in the Appendix.

At the beginning of each interview, every interviewee is read the same introduction. This provides the standardized element to our interview. Giving each person the same description of our project allowed us to assume that all interviewees had a consistent understanding of the project objectives when answering the questions. The first two questions chosen for our interview are basically throw-away questions. However, the answers to these questions will provide us with an understanding of how much exposure each agency has had toward regeneration and what particular projects each agency has worked on with regard to the regeneration of Merton.

Instead of using disjointed transitions, scripted statements were used when ending one portion of a subject section and beginning it with another. This ensured that the interviewee was clearly focused on the subject to which the proceeding questions would apply. In questioning the interviewee about the definition of regeneration, it was necessary to convey the idea to the interviewee that the questions were not seeking out an absolute definition of regeneration, but rather that individual agency's perception of regeneration. Questions were structured using phrases such as "Which do you feel", "In your own words", and "How do you think"; these phrases emphasize perception instead of an exact definition.

When developing questions relating to successful partnerships, prompts were prepared for all the questions. These prompts were to be used if an interviewee was not able to give responses at the time. These prompts were intended to give the interviewee examples to facilitate remembering and thinking processes. Some prompts were suggested by the project's liaison, while others were established from the background research for this project. Within the partnership section of the interview, two questions asked the interviewee to think of the best and worst partnership experience that they have had. These questions were used to draw on the experience that the agency has gained through partnership work, while limiting the criticism of specific past events that they could offer. Finally, the last questions asked the interviewee to offer some advice to a hypothetical agency without any experience working in regeneration partnerships. This question essentially asked the interviewee to list which characteristics to partnership success and obstacles to avoid were critical.

This type of interview was required by this project for two reasons. First, flexibility was mandated by the presence of the varied topics which need to be addressed. Both the individual agencies' understanding of regeneration and their opinions on requirements for successful partnerships were addressed in the course of the interview. Secondly, without open questioning it would have been very difficult to make suitable transition from point to point and not to appear contrived in manner.

Before real interviews were performed, it was necessary to pre-test the interview method listed above. The project's liaison was consulted to identify cultural problems and missing components in the interview questions. Additionally, in the pretest stage, one representative, Diane Bailey, was selected out of the interviewee pool for a non-data gathering interview to screen out any problems in the interview method. Revisions were made to the interview method based on feedback from participants in the pretest stage. These revisions were focused on the delivery on interview questions, such as trying to make the interview seem more casual and avoiding repetitive questions.

Approximately ten types of agencies were identified as having significant involvement with regeneration in Merton. Thirty-two people representing agencies from the ten different types were suggested by our liaison and were initially contacted by a letter (Appendix) requesting a telephone reply. In essence, a stratified sample of the agencies doing regeneration partnership work in Merton was selected drawing from the ten different types of regeneration agencies. Based on responses and follow up telephone calls, interviews were scheduled between 4/6 - 4/20. Interviews were conducted at the representative's choice of time and location. In total, twenty-two interviews were completed.

Interviews were conducted in professional attire with prepared nametags. These interviews were recorded using a micro-cassette recorder, and were also supplemented by field notes from all three interviewers. Extra pens, batteries, and cassettes were present during the interview to ensure that no recording problems occurred. Because each interview was expected to take only an hour, it was important to make the best use of time. Arriving on site early with prepared questions and topic areas helped to ensure the interview ran smoothly with no interruptions and that data gathering was successful.

Once data were gathered, it was necessary to perform qualitative analysis. This was achieved by performing content analysis on interview transcripts and analysis note sheets. Transcripts were created from cassette recordings of the interview for the first five interviews, including the pre-test. Interview and analysis notes were made for all other interviews by listening to the interview recordings. Key phrases and direct quotations involving the main objectives were noted. Manual content analysis was performed to identify similar and divergent themes, as well as to compare responses with the background research. Conclusions were then drawn based on our hypothesis that there is no mutually consistent understanding of regeneration or approach to successful partnerships.

A compilation of agency responses was reported. This included the variation in definitions of regeneration, as well as a list of improvements which the agencies felt were regenerative. A list of characteristics which the agencies identified as leading to partnership success were reported, along with obstacles which could prohibit success. Conclusions and comparisons, regarding the agencies' opinions drawn from the data, were presented. Finally, a pamphlet was created to show the diversity of responses and

educate agencies in what other agencies may be thinking. The goal of this pamphlet is to facilitate a common understanding of regeneration and successful partnership work among agencies working towards the regeneration of Merton. This pamphlet will be distributed at the Merton Partnership Conference in May, 1999.

Verbal presentation of the project and its findings included a brief description of the methodology. This form of presentation only included some examples of critical responses. Then, conclusions drawn from the data were presented, along with examples of responses on regeneration and partnerships. Verbal presentations ended with a quick recapitulation and a question and answer session.



#### **4.0 DATA AND ANALYSIS: REPRESENTATIVE INTERVIEWS**

As previously discussed in the Methodology, two hypotheses were formed. These hypotheses question whether the agencies working towards the regeneration of Merton have a mutually consistent understanding of regeneration as well as, a mutually consistent approach to successful partnership work. The hypotheses stated that a mutually consistent understanding and approach does not exist.

Data was collected by conducting twenty-two interviews out of the thirty-two requested between April 9<sup>th</sup> and April 20<sup>th</sup>. Interviewees represented one of the following agency types: the council, officers of the London Borough of Merton, health authority, education, training and enterprise, religion, ethnic groups, voluntary sector and local business. Due to the confidentiality promised to the interviewees, representative names, their organizations, transcripts and analysis notes will not be distributed. When applicable, direct quotes have been used to demonstrate fundamental ideas, but these quotes were edited so that they did not disclose the identity of the speaker.

Throughout this section, the terms “agency” and “organization” have been used interchangeably to substitute for the exact name of the entity represented by a particular interviewee. These ambiguous terms have been selected intentionally to protect the confidentiality of the representatives interviewed. It should be understood that in some cases “agency” or “organization” may not be the best term to describe the entity in question.

Finally, the information in this section is organized to follow the order in which questions were asked during the semi-standardized interviews. These questions were broken up into two sections reflecting the two hypotheses. The first section,

regeneration, includes data and analysis for questions pertaining to the regeneration hypothesis. The second section, successful partnerships, includes data and analysis for questions relating to the second hypothesis regarding successful partnerships.

#### **4.1 Regeneration**

*How long has your agency been involved in the regeneration of Merton?*

Representative responses with regard to experience working with regeneration were varied. On the average, most representatives said that their agency had been working towards the regeneration of Merton for five to ten years. A handful of representatives indicated that their agency has been working toward the regeneration of Merton for over forty years; these representatives further stated that their organizations have “always been involved in regeneration”. Two representatives said that their agency has never been involved in regeneration, and an additional two representatives said that they could not estimate how long their agency has been working towards regeneration. Overall, interviewees who do not represent the council, one of Merton’s officers or one of the council’s key partners had less experience, or could not easily describe their involvement with regeneration in Merton.

It is clear that the council is involved in some manner with almost all the regeneration projects in Merton. Additionally, there is a core group of agencies which usually accompanies the council in these projects, such as: police, health authority, education and training. Beyond this core group, some of the other agency types are involved, depending on the type of project, for example, a project dealing with a certain demographic would include community groups representing that part of the community.

In this manner, small, specialized organizations may not have had a great deal of experience working with regeneration. This would account for the variation in agency responses, as well as some agencies having little to no experience with regeneration.

*What types of projects has your agency been involved in the interest of regenerating Merton?*

Responses to this question tended to vary according to the agency's particular expertise. The majority of projects mentioned by particular agencies focused specifically on their area of expertise. Certain major projects, however, were common among many agencies. These projects mainly included the Pollard's Hill project and the bidding of the SRB (Single Regeneration Budget) rounds I, II, III, IV along with the current bidding for SRB V. Large-scale projects of this kind focus on a particular geographic area in Merton, while covering a wide variety of improvement types. Most of the interviewees who represented the council or one of the council's core partners mentioned these large projects.

Representatives from agencies with limited or little experience with regeneration, as explained previously, did not usually mention large-scale projects. The projects mentioned by these organizations were focused on a smaller, more localized level. One example of this is assisting people who cannot read in filling out their income tax forms. Not only would assistance be provided in completion of the form, but also, these people would be taught the skills necessary to do this for themselves in the future. Another example was providing advice and support to people with marriage and relationship problems. Smaller-scale projects usually focus on one specific type of project as well as, a particular geographic area or a particular demographic.

*Would you please define your understanding of regeneration in your own words?*

*What types of improvements do you associate with regeneration?*

All representatives agreed that the definition of regeneration is working to improve some part of the community of Merton in some way. However, the specifics of each individual definition did not match from agency to agency. Representative responses are listed in no particular order; this intentional lack of organization is used to show the variation as well as to emphasize confidentiality.

- “It’s about bringing life back into the community...in every aspect from housing, making people employable, health, transport, access. Making a place where people want to live. Empowering those people. Making a place where people care for other people.”
- “The borough has been losing jobs... We must bring in industry and other investments to reclaim the jobs in the borough and create new ones... working with training and skill enhancement.”
- “It’s about renewal of the community and its physical structure, which would include making physical improvements and intellectual social improvements, particularly through wider participation in partnership with government agencies and people... a greater participation of the community, redevelopment of buildings and sites.”
- “To bring communities together to develop a common ground of what they want for their communities, because most communities have got something broken down. Other than physical areas, believe the community needs the leisure activities, the transport, a general ambience...community activity, not so much physical activity”

- “Looking how you can sustain or rebuild an economy that will enable employment...making the area a positive area to live and work. All aspects should be involved. Everyone should be for all aspects...security is an important issue.”
- “Social exclusion, environmental issues, health, housing needs, if you are homeless, you probably cannot get a job...regenerating the economy.”
- “Developing the community, revitalizing it, sustaining it, creating and taking up opportunities, and if you look at the particular thing we do, we give out enhancing people’s life skills...we support them and teach them new skills. It is really about the quality of life...Regeneration actually builds up communities. We assist disadvantaged people in overcoming their problems and teach them skills. We give enhancing life skills.”
- “...to provide support to create an environment where employment can grow. You have to look at what the government is doing and what the state of the economy is.”
- “It’s about increasing the amount of money brought into an area...that used for a specific purposes and can make a difference in the lives of people in the area. It should be sustainable. It could be about changing people’s perceptions. It could be about providing services for themselves...Helping people get their fair slice of the cake...community involvement must be sustainable...it’s not about big business forcing their agendas on the community. It includes financial, environment, better health, education, community and local services, and they are all interwoven.”
- “...involves a range of problems...lack of skills, lack of involvement, etc. etc. Regeneration is about working with the local community and bringing about change.

It also involves economic and social issues. It includes housing employment, health, basically the quality of life.”

- “Starting again, making it new, improving things-making it a good place for people to live in, a good quality of life, improving things for business, etc... environment, business opportunities.”
- “Developing on whatever we have and improving and making it better. To help the individuals improve their own lifestyles...to give them the facilities to enable them to get jobs, to basically improve their living standards...unemployment...providing them with skills for employment...education.”
- “It’s the process of revitalizing communities that are in some way disadvantaged...bringing opportunities back...empowering local residents so they can manage themselves...providing facilities to communities...everything that better the quality of life.”
- “Providing every member of the community with the opportunity to succeed both culturally and socially and economically...it is underpinning each of those functions.”
- “It’s putting into the community, the means by which they can improve the services it provides to others and thereby improve the various social and environmental health...you get into those areas being identified as of in need of help and that the social conditions are such that the people on the whole are not thriving, it’s getting them to take responsibility and to give them the skills to actually improve their social and environmental circumstances.”
- “Involving people at every level, the whole bottom up approach...we believe that it’s everything, it’s involving people who believe and work here, local businesses, local

organizations, everyone possible trying to work together for a common aim...It's about tackling any problems...involving people in small ways makes them value the community more.”

- “It's about employability, and sustaining employment, and through that we can continue to upgrade their skills so they can stay employed. So regeneration as far as the training enterprise is making sure we have the skills to remain competitive.”
- “In all aspects, it is making the borough a place where it's actually nicer to be. It could be in the environment or in decent housing, and where above all there is an industrial base to provide jobs to all the people who live there...It is our interest to make the work opportunities of the environment something everyone could use, particularly people with disabilities. A lot of it has to do with environment. I would like to see it moving more down towards the employment area and continue to move down the housing area.”
- “Regeneration is providing activities that improve the quality of life for various communities in Merton. I don't see it as purely economic regeneration, money alone could not deliver what we want. We have to look at housing, environment, transport, education. Regeneration is about tackling all those issues.”

Approximately half of the representatives included the phrase “quality of life” in their response to one of these two questions. These individuals maintained that improving the quality of life of community residents was the ultimate goal of all regeneration projects. The other half of the representatives did not identify an ultimate goal for regeneration efforts. Although all representatives agreed that the purpose of

regeneration was to improve the community, these interviewees did not indicate that there was an ultimate goal in more explicit terms.

Representatives responded in four ways when discussing the nature of regenerative improvements. A few representatives associated regeneration with a variety of improvement types, such as social, economical, and environment improvements. Examples of responses from these representatives are “bringing in business”, “ensuring employment” and “capacity building” (skills training).

Another group of similar size discussed a different perspective, directly associating regeneration with community involvement or smaller projects derived from strong community involvement. Providing a comfortable place for the community to socialize, interact and get advice is an example of one of these responses. These two groups are mutually exclusive such that neither mentioned the view point of the other group; the first group omitted community involvement, and the second group did not mention any specific types of improvements.

Alternatively, the remaining respondents, a majority, indicated that regeneration involved different types of projects as well as a strong aspect of community involvement. These respondents included a varied range of improvement types, as well as including a strong community aspect to regeneration. Respondents who answered in this manner gave a more multi-layered definition of regeneration.

Finally, three representatives simply associated regeneration with improvements dealing specifically with their expertise, including neither a wide range of improvement types nor broad community involvement. One example of this type of response was “sustaining employment”.



The pool of representatives was divided, again, on the issue of sustainability. When responding to the two questions italicized above, three of the representatives used the term “sustainable”. Among the responses from all the representatives, this is the only explicit mention of a time frame for regeneration projects. These three representatives said that regeneration was only truly successful if it was sustainable. There was no other mention of time with respect to regeneration.

Identifying the issues which regeneration will be used to address is the source of another difference in representative responses. Out of the twenty-two respondents only three included identifying the problems with Merton which would be addressed by regeneration in their definition of regeneration. Two of these three respondents indicated that regeneration was used to respond to problems already identified in the past. One respondent from the entire pool stated that part of regeneration was talking to members of the community to identify problems and then developing ways to address these problems. While the majority of respondents made no explicit mention of identifying problems, most indicated through other statements that they were operating under the assumption that regeneration began after problems were identified, i.e. identifying problems would not be considered part of regeneration.

Finally, almost all of the respondents indicated in their responses that regeneration was not an individual effort. The group work underlying regeneration in this case included working with other agencies, other partnerships and generally, members of the Merton community.

*Do you feel that any regeneration improvements are more important than others?*

Three-quarters of the representatives that mentioned enhancing “the quality of life” as an answer to one of the previous questions, indicated that this was the most important improvement associated with regeneration. In this view, enhancing the quality of life is accomplished by choosing projects that are the most needed by the community at the time. These respondents indicated that the best improvements depend on the needs of the community. Additionally, several respondents stated that no particular regeneration improvement was more important than any other. The reasoning for this was that improvements are interconnected, such that none of these improvement can succeed while other improvements fail. A few representatives concentrated solely on improvements within their realm of expertise, saying that none of these improvements was more important than any of the others.

The responses to this question followed a pattern very similar to the themes identified previously when the interviewees were asked to explain their understanding of regeneration. Those respondents who gave broad definitions of regeneration said, in general, that no particular improvement was more important than another or stated that the improvements that were the most important were the ones which are the most needed by the community. Similarly, those representatives from agencies with type specific definitions of regeneration stated that improvements dealing specifically with their area of expertise were more important to them, but that within this set of improvements none was more important than another.

*How do you think your definition and understanding of regeneration differs from that of other agencies with whom you have worked?*

Approximately twelve of the respondents felt that all agency members generally wanted to improve the community; however, their priorities were varied according to their areas of expertise. Another three respondents stated that different agencies may have had the same definition of regeneration “on paper”; however, they differed in “practice” when dealing with actual projects. Furthermore, six representatives felt that certain parts of their definition of regeneration would coincide with the definition of other agencies. One representative stated that when it came to working on regeneration projects, his/her agency focused more on “quality” rather than the number or size of improvements.

All of representatives agree that there is a some common understanding of regeneration. Additionally, all of the representatives stated that none of the agencies would have the exact same definition or understanding of regeneration. Their responses fell somewhere between these two extremes, differing considerably. Prioritizing the same set of improvements differently and selecting overlapping but not identical lists of improvements are the two major ways in which understandings would vary according to representatives. Therefore, approximately twenty respondents believe that a large common understanding of regeneration exists among agencies. Only about two representatives feel that there is very little common understanding of regeneration among agencies in Merton.

*What are some of the other agencies with whom you work?*

Representatives who responded with a broader definition of regeneration were found to mention a larger range of agency types with whom they had worked. On the other hand, representatives with a more expertise specific definition of regeneration only named a few agencies which related to their field.

Of those representatives who gave broader definitions of regeneration, some of the most common responses were: the local authority (council and officers of the London Borough of Merton), AZTEC (skills training), health authority, voluntary organizations, police, education and employment services. Due to the repeated mentions of these agencies, it is clear that they are the key partners working towards the regeneration of Merton. The most frequently mentioned of this list is the local authority, which indicates that the local authority has a large, and possibly the largest, role in regenerating Merton.

*Regeneration partnerships are responsible for many improvements in Merton, how do you see your agency fitting into that scheme?*

Councilors, officers, and the local authorities identified themselves as the facilitators of the projects. The voluntary and community groups felt that representing the community's wants and needs was their role in regeneration. Education and training organizations stated that their role was to provide the knowledge and expertise to educate the community, thereby making members of the community more employable.

These roles are congruent to the daily tasks of these agencies. These responses indicate that agencies usually work in partnerships in the same capacity in which they work outside of partnerships. Local authority facilitates and organizes management of a community and they take this role of facilitator and organizer in partnership. Additionally, local authority manages community services, and it is indicated by representative responses that it continues to manage when in partnerships. In a similar manner, AZTEC provides skills training privately and in partnerships continues to provide skills training. It is important to note that responses do not limit agency roles in a partnership to the type of work that they do independently; some agencies stated that they

take on roles which are not integral to their activities outside of partnership workings. An example of this would be a skills training agency taking the role of leader in a partnership.

#### **4.2 Successful Partnership Work**

This section contains data and analysis of the representative answers given in response to questions regarding characteristics of successful partnership work. These questions sought to draw out the characteristics which representatives feel indicate or result in successful partnership work.

*Please think about one of the more successful partnership experiences with which you have been involved. What made this partnership so successful? Ideally, what types of characteristics contribute to a successful regeneration partnerships?*

Representatives responses included (listed by order of frequency):

- openness with respect to communication (mentioned by 9 out of 22 representatives)
- common goals (8/22)
- mutual trust (8/22)
- clear objectives (6/22)
- equality (6/22)
- strong partner commitment (5/22)
- mutual respect (3/22)
- flexible agendas (3/22)
- honesty (3/22)
- clear definition of tasks and roles (2/22)

- set time frame/limit (2/22)
- understanding of other partners' expectations (2/22)
- mutual interest in the partnership(1/22)
- setting a fair pace (1/22)
- getting/giving regular feedback (1/22)
- correct partners selection with respect to skills and knowledge (1/22)
- understanding of other partners' cultures and restrictions (1/22)
- skilled personnel (1/22)
- shared accountability (1/22)
- ability to resolve conflicts (1/22)
- regular communication (1/22)
- achievable objectives (1/22)

Frequency is the most perceptible theme in representative responses. Obviously, some characteristics were mentioned more than others. The majority of characteristics were not mentioned more than twice, while there is a small group of characteristics which are emphasized by the responses. Some representatives mentioned only a few characteristics, while others listed several characteristics in response to these questions. Also, none of the representatives mentioned more than one or two of the characteristics which were mentioned only once.

Additionally, all the characteristics relate to successful partnership work as identified in section 2.1.3, such that there are no outliers or characteristics that do not relate to successful partnership work. In this way, all responses were pertaining to the same theme. There were no perceptible themes with regard to which representatives said

which types of characteristics, or in how many characteristics a representative of a particular agency type listed.

#### **4.3 Problems with and Requirements for Partnerships Success**

As the previous section concentrated on the questions which relate to identifying characteristics of successful partnerships, this section focuses on the data and analysis of responses to questions relating to the problems which need to be overcome and the requirements which must be acknowledged for partnerships.

*Please think about a less successful partnership experience. What do you feel are the main reasons that this partnership was less successful? In general, what obstacles do you think partnerships need to overcome to achieve success?*

Representatives responses included (listed in order by frequency):

- being dominated by other partners (mentioned by 8 representatives out of 22)
- partners do not have proper skills (7/22)
- lack of understanding of project requirements (5/22)
- management structure problems within the partnership (4/22)
- lack of friendship (3/22)
- lack of flexibility in agendas (2/22)
- avoiding risks by having vague goals (2/22)
- lack of clear objectives (2/22)
- different agendas (2/22)
- lack of trust (1/22)
- no common interest (1/22)

- no clarity (1/22)
- partners inflexible with agendas (1/22)
- no common goals (1/22)
- lack of consultation prior to partnership formation (1/22)
- no clear ways of measuring success (1/22)
- no sustainability (1/22)
- being forced into partnership (1/22)
- difficulty in managing change (1/22)
- fear of sharing financial responsibility (1/22)
- staff turnover (1/22)
- no resources (1/22)
- hostility (1/22)
- lack of respect (1/22)
- unclear roles (1/22)
- lack of communication (1/22)
- funding (1/22)

As with characteristics for successful partnerships, the most distinct theme among responses is the frequency in which a particular obstacle was mentioned. Again, some representatives listed only a few obstacles, while others mentioned several. Consistent with characteristics for success, none of the representatives mentioned more than one or two of the obstacles which were only mentioned once.



It is not possible to associate a particular agency type with a particular obstacle or set of obstacles. The obstacles appear to be random with respect to the agency of the speaker.

As with characteristics for success, the majority of obstacles mentioned were not mentioned more than twice, such that only five obstacles in particular were mentioned more than twice. This shows a few critical obstacles and a wide variety of obstacles which were not emphasized by representatives.

*What do you think working in a partnership requires from a partner?*

Almost all representatives responded to this question by saying money and time are required to make a partnership successful. The majority of representatives continued to add that it was difficult to say what a partnership's cost would be without knowing the specifics of the partnership, but that time and money were always required. Besides time and money, a few representatives said that patience would be required. Patience in this case refers to having patience with other partners as well as, patience with the project's progress. Five representatives said commitment was required of a partnership. In this view, partners need to continue with the project from start to finish, regardless of what occurs in between. One representative said that a partner would be required to endure stress.

*Suppose that you were giving advice to an agency beginning work on its first regeneration partnership, what would you suggest?*

Approximately half of the representatives said that it is important that each agency understands why it is involved in a particular partnership. Consistent with understanding why they are involved, agencies need to know what they will be expected to contribute

and what compensation they can expect to receive. In this view, agencies must understand the terms of their participation and agree to them; this includes agreement with the goals and the objectives of the partnership. One representative used the example of an agency's awareness of whether it will be involved in the decision making process or be used simply as a "token partner" who will sign a bid in exchange for funding for private projects. To avoid dissatisfaction in the future, an agency must understand and accept the terms of its work within a partnership, prior to its involvement.

The majority of the respondents who represented voluntary, community, health or religious organizations said that equality was required for the partnership to be a success. These representatives said that when one or two members dominate a partnership, the other partners grow dissatisfied and lose their desire to be involved. These same representatives stated that prior to getting into a partnership, the agency needs to know where the decision making lies within that partnership. They indicated that often partners who were lacking adequate skills and knowledge in regard to the project often times made the decisions, or decisions were made without consulting other agencies within the partnership. They continued by saying that this sort of domination stifles the valuable input that dominated groups can provide and does not foster success or future cooperation. While other types of organizations did mention domination, it was not a common response.

Understanding who will lead the partnership was a reoccurring theme in representative responses. Approximately four representatives stated that for a partnership to be successful, a leader was needed. These interviewees continued by saying that it is important for everyone to understand and agree about who leads the partnership. In this

view, formal leadership was required to organize plans and settle disputes among partners.

One representative felt that “ownership” of ideas and plans was important. It was suggested that all partners within partnership should get together prior to setting a formal strategy or approach to the project. In doing this, partners can feel that they have equally contributed to forming an agenda. Partners will therefore feel they have “ownership” of a portion of the project and will have a further interest in its success. In addition, partners can feel they have an equal say directly from the start of the project.

A number of respondents stated that partners needed to be open. The term open in this context can be split into two separate themes. The first theme indicates openness in the sense that partners need to be honest and forthright about their strengths and weaknesses. In the second case, openness means that partners should not have a “hidden agenda.” In this view, partners should openly communicate their true goals and objectives to other partners.

#### **4.4 Comparison to Background Research**

This section focuses on comparing the responses of agency representatives to the background research. This comparison features sections 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 2.1.4, regarding partnership work.

In section 2.1.3, community involvement is listed as a prerequisite for successful regeneration work. While a number of representatives, mostly centered around voluntary groups and other community organizations, did mention community involvement, this

group is not in the majority. There was no recognition among all representatives that community involvement was critical to a successful regeneration partnership.

Common goals and understanding is another characteristic discussed in the background research which is necessary for partnership success. The majority of representatives did include this characteristic in their response at some point in the interview; however, a few of the representatives did not include this characteristic at all.

“Honesty” was identified as critical to partnership success by approximately half of the respondents. This characteristic’s importance is corroborated by the background research. Section 2.1.3 indicated, on the topic of honesty, that hidden agendas cannot be tolerated and that “the partnership must decide on appropriate ground rules that do not tolerate personal and political gain at the expense of the common good.” None of the representatives said that formal rules should be created to stop agencies from acting on hidden agendas; most representatives thought that partners should understand the damage that hidden agendas can have and should, therefore, voluntarily and forthrightly communicate their applicable, internal agendas.

The section 2.1.3 indicates that each partner should be assigned specific roles within the partnership to prevent redundancy and the waste of valuable resources. Only a handful of representatives stated that a clear definition of roles was important to partnership success.

Approximately half of the representatives in some way stated that equality was critical to partnership success. This is validated by the background research. The background research states, “When developing problem definitions, alternatives and solutions, all partner agencies should be involved.” The background research has

established that all partners should share in success, risks and credit equally. By saying equality, representatives in most cases meant that all partners should simply be given an equal vote in all decisions; these representatives did not use the term equality in the same comprehensive sense as the literature.

The literature identifies flexibility as a critical component to partnership success. A number of representatives also said that flexibility was important to partnership work. A disparity arises in the meaning which each is assigning to flexibility. The literature uses flexibility in the context of planning, such that plans should have built-in flexibility to ensure that they come to fruition. Representatives used flexibility in the context of defining partnership objectives, such that partners need to be flexible with their own internal objectives or be willing to compromise.

The representatives in many cases mentioned characteristics of a successful partnership, which were not stated in the background research. These characteristics included a friendly relationship with other partners (mentioned by 3 representatives), clear objectives (6), ensuring that partners have adequate skills with regard to the project (2), not being afraid of taking risks (2), working towards mutual trust of other partners (8), having clear measures of success (2), avoiding vague goals (2), sustainability (1), and correctly limiting time (3). Out of this list, only having clear objectives and working towards trust were mentioned by a significant number of representatives.

While these characteristics are not explicitly mentioned, some do follow from the rules set forth in the background research. Honesty and “openness” are described in the background research; these characteristics directly relate to working towards mutual trust. One of the key components to trust is believing that partners are being honest. Honesty

over a period of time leads to mutual trust, while dishonesty can destroy mutual trust among partners.

Finally, leadership was mentioned by four representatives, but leadership does not appear in the background research. The background research, sections 4.1.2 and 4.1.3, tend to emphasize democracy and equality, such that leadership is not mentioned. It is possible that some form of leadership is taken for granted in the literature. Leadership by nature means that one partner will have more power than another, which is contrary to equality as discussed in the background research. It is noteworthy that even among responses of representatives who felt that their agency had been dominated in the past, leadership is accepted as necessary. While most representatives did not explicitly mention leadership as a characteristic of success, most representatives seemed to accept the fact that some amount of leadership is required. Responses indicate that the problem with leadership is that it can lead to domination.

## 5.0 CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

In order to provide a balanced understanding of these findings, it is necessary to state that many of the agencies interviewed have fairly similar understandings of both regeneration and successful partnership work. There is, however, to a large degree in some cases, a need for more consensus. Increased success in future partnership working will depend on developing a more mutually consistent understanding of these two topics.

For the purposes of this project, two hypotheses were developed. The first is that the agencies working towards the regeneration of Merton do not have a mutually consistent definition of regeneration. This hypothesis has held true. While representatives did agree that regeneration consisted of working to improve the community, there was limited consensus beyond this point. The types of improvements associated with regeneration and the extent of community involvement provide the basis for most of the differences in representative responses. Additionally, the ultimate goal of regeneration was not characterized uniformly by representative responses.

It is clear that experience in working with regeneration has a direct effect on how broad one's understanding of regeneration will be. More specifically, the types of projects which an agency has worked on within the context of regeneration affects that agency's understanding of regeneration. Agencies whose projects were focused on one particular theme focused their definition of regeneration on that particular theme. For example, an agency that worked largely towards reducing unemployment would focus their definition of regeneration on raising employment in the area. Additionally, community groups that work primarily with members of the community focused their definitions of regeneration on getting the community involved in helping themselves.

Furthermore, agencies who worked with a large variety of other types of agency, were likely to have a broader definition of regeneration.

That fact that these agencies do not have a significant, common definition of regeneration, means that they are not approaching regeneration projects from entirely the same perspective. The implication of this is that partnerships may be wasting valuable time attempting to develop common objectives. It may be difficult for partners to agree about which projects should be completed in the interest of regeneration when they do not have a completely common definition of regeneration. This dysfunction can discourage partners and hamper the working of future partnerships. In short, working towards regeneration is more difficult without a mutually consistent understanding of regeneration.

The second hypothesis of this project is that agencies working in regeneration partnerships in Merton do not have a mutually consistent approach to successful partnership work. This hypothesis is true with some qualifications. There were a handful of characteristics which were mentioned by many of the representatives, such as openness and avoiding domination; however, most characteristics for success or obstacles to be avoided were only mentioned by one or two representatives. A mutually consistent approach to successful partnership work is not possible with this large variation of responses.

The majority of the voluntary and community groups stated that equality was necessary for partnership success. This point was one of the most heavily stressed in the responses of these representatives. One representative indicated that they would no longer engage in partnership activities that were not based on equality. Many other



representatives indicated that there was growing frustration with projects in which they did not have an equal role in decision making. It is likely that these groups will become frustrated and discontinue efforts with partners which they feel continually dominate partnerships. This growing sense of inequality must be addressed to ensure success of future regeneration partnership efforts. Understanding that equality is an issue for partners is the first step. A discussion among partners regarding their feelings about the equality within the partnership is necessary for bringing to light who feels dominated. Only then can these problems be addressed and remedied, possibly by including those who feel neglected into more of the decision making.

Many respondents felt that partnerships were often formed primarily to get government funding for a project. Since individual agencies are unable to receive government funding, often times this is the only way to gain money. Several partners stated that partnerships are often inappropriate for completion of some regeneration projects, and individual agencies may actually complete the project more successfully without facing the problems often associated with partnership working. In these circumstances, it may be concluded that partnerships have not been working to their full potential. Perhaps these groups may not have a proper understanding of successful partnership working. It is also possible that some regeneration projects do not mandate partnerships, but it is noteworthy that almost all respondents included group work in their definition of regeneration.

The list compiled based on representative responses is more comprehensive than the Rules for Partnership Success (section 2.1.3) in the background research. The literature lists a number of characteristics which all need to be present for partnerships to

achieve success. While representatives were able to give a comprehensive list of characteristics for success, no one representative gave the entire list or even all the characteristics listed in the literature. Collectively, these representatives were able to compile a very comprehensive list, but individually they could not.

The literature explains that successful partnerships exhibit all the characteristics for success at the same time. The fact that none of the representatives could mention all the characteristics for success listed in section 2.1.3 indicates that these characteristics are not present at the same time in partnerships in Merton. The literature states that it is not sufficient for some representatives to know some characteristics, all representatives must know all the characteristics for success, so that they can be applied to partnership workings.

Overall, it is obvious that these agencies do understand a great deal about regeneration and how to succeed in partnership work. It is also clear that it is possible to improve on this situation, by ensuring that all partners approach regeneration and partnership from a similar perspective. This can be done by informing agencies of the present disparities, so that they will be cognizant of the different perspectives taken by other agencies. Once informed of the difference in perspective, it will be possible to come to a common understanding through focused discussion.

Additionally, it is extremely important to combine the aspects of equality and leadership without any sort of domination taking place. This can be accomplished by free and open communication directly at the beginning of the partnership. In this way, roles can be defined at the initiation of the project so problems can be avoided in the future. It is also of key importance that the leader be capable of taking on the leadership

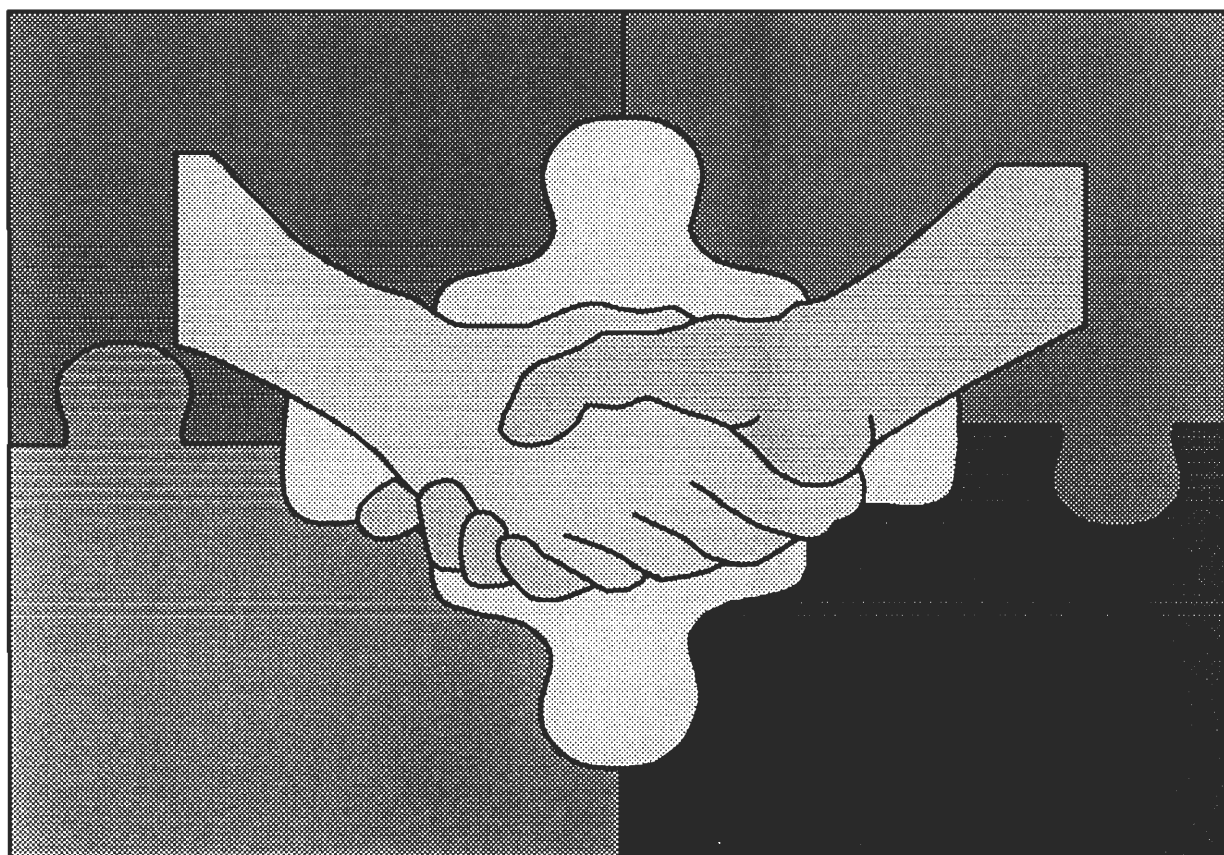
role. Whether the leader be individuals or a group of people, it is important that they take all opinions and ideas within the partnership into consideration. The leader should not be there to make decisions for the partnership, but to make sure that everyone's voice within the partnership is heard and to facilitate decision making.

Open and free communication at the beginning of the partnership also allows partners to come to agreement on objectives and goals. In this way, partners can feel that they "own" part of the project. This feeling of "ownership" further develops the interest of partners involved. If they feel that they have had an active role from the time the project begins, they will most likely take an active role in the future of the project. Common goals and objectives also ensure that partners are at the same starting point. Therefore, they do not have individual agendas, but are beginning from a common agenda. This will assist the success of the partnership as well as the success of the project.

The best way to promote the success of a regeneration partnership, formed or new, is to ensure that all the partners have a mutually consistent understanding of regeneration and a mutually consistent approach to successful partnerships. Consensus can be secured by presenting the partners with a comprehensive list of characteristics for partnership success and obstacles to avoid, as well as some of the requirements to be expected of partnership working. Demonstrating the variation in understandings of regeneration should lead to a discussion of what regeneration is or will be for that particular partnership. To aid in this process, we have developed a pamphlet (Section 6.0) presenting this material to assist partnerships in reaching a mutually consistent

understanding of regeneration and a mutually consistent approach to successful partnership work.

# Regeneration Partnerships in Merton – Ingredients for Success



**By:**

**Sumedha Ahuja  
William Harnois  
Jeremy Proulx**

## **Where Did This Guide Come From?**

*Merton Council regularly works in partnership with other agencies towards the improvement or regeneration of the borough of Merton. But what does regeneration actually mean to the many partnership agencies operating at the local level in Merton? And what makes for good and bad regeneration partnership working? This guide is the product of research undertaken by research students of Worcester Polytechnic Institute exploring these issues. The Chief Executive's Department of Merton Council have sponsored this research as they recognize the importance of evaluating partners' experiences of regeneration partnership working in Merton. Additionally, they hope the practical guide produced will make for even better regeneration partnership working on behalf of the residents of Merton in the future. The research undertaken had two objectives. The first was to ask representatives from a variety of agencies to explain their understanding of regeneration. The second objective involved questioning these same representatives on what they felt contributed to successful and less successful regeneration partnership working.*

*The ultimate goal of this research was to consider the similarities and disparities between responses given and establish whether or not a mutual understanding of these issues existed. The findings of this guide were collected by undertaking interviews with twenty-two out of thirty-two representatives with whom interviews were requested. The responses were analyzed in order to draw conclusions and to gain a better understanding of partnership work as it currently exists. This guide is intended to be an informal presentation of the research findings.*

*At this point, we would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the representatives for their co-operation with this project. As this guide demonstrates collectively agencies working within Merton have a comprehensive understanding of regeneration and partnership working. We sincerely hope that this project will be beneficial to all of your organizations in the future!*

# Regeneration Partnerships in Merton – Ingredients for Success

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## How is this guide helpful?

In regeneration partnerships, it is essential for all participants to approach regeneration and partnership work from a similar perspective. This prevents conflicts and a waste of time due to miscommunication. Projects are most successful when everyone has the same understanding of regeneration and the same approach to successful partnership work.

One goal of this guide is to present the different understandings of regeneration, held by representatives from a variety of agencies working towards the regeneration of Merton.

Hopefully, this material will prompt a discussion in current and future partnerships as to what regeneration is. This discussion will ensure that all partners are looking at regeneration from a similar perspective.

Secondly, this guide will present a list of characteristics of successful partnerships as well as, some potential problems to avoid. These lists are based on background research and responses from representatives of organizations working toward the regeneration of Merton. Achieving the requirements of success, while avoiding the potential problems will help partnerships get the best results for the residents of Merton.

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## What is “Regeneration”?

These are some of the responses given by local organization representatives:

- “It’s about bringing life back into the community...in every aspect from housing, making people employable, health, transport, access. Making a place where people want to live. Empowering those people. Making a place where people care for other people.”
- “The borough has been losing jobs... We must bring in industry and other investments to reclaim the jobs in the borough and create new ones...working with training and skill enhancement.”
- “It’s about renewal of the community and its physical structure, which would include making physical improvements and intellectual social improvements, particularly through wider participation in partnership with government agencies and people...a greater participation of the community, redevelopment of buildings and sites.”
- “To bring communities together to develop a common ground of what they want for their communities, because most communities

- have got something broken down. Other than physical areas, believe the community needs the leisure activities, the transport, a general ambience...community activity, not so much physical activity”
- “Looking how you can sustain or rebuild an economy that will enable employment...making the area a positive area to live and work. All aspects should be involved. Everyone should be for all aspects...security is an important issue.”
  - “Social exclusion, environmental issues, health, housing needs, if you are homeless, you probably cannot get a job...regenerating the economy.”
  - “Developing the community, revitalizing it, sustaining it, creating and taking up opportunities, and if you look at the particular thing we do, we give out enhancing people’s life skills...we support them and teach them new skills. It is really about the quality of life...Regeneration actually builds up communities. We assist disadvantaged people in overcoming their problems and teach them skills. We give enhancing life skills.”
  - “...to provide support to create an environment where employment can grow. You have to look at what the government is doing and what the state of the economy is.”
  - “...involves a range of problems...lack of skills, lack of involvement, etc. etc. Regeneration is about working with the local community and bringing about change. It also involves economic and social issues. It includes housing employment, health, basically the quality of life.”
  - “Starting again, making it new, improving things-making it a good place for people to live in, a good quality of life, improving things for business, etc... environment, business opportunities.”
  - “Developing on whatever we have and improving and making it better. To help the individuals improve their own lifestyles...to give them the facilities to enable them to get jobs, to basically improve their living standards...unemployment...providing them with skills for employment...education.”
  - “It’s the process of revitalizing communities that are in some way disadvantaged,...bringing opportunities back...empowering local residents so they can manage themselves...providing facilities to communities...everything that better the quality of life.”
  - “Providing every member of the community with the opportunity to succeed both culturally and socially and economically...it is underpinning each of those functions.”
  - “It’s putting into the community, the means by which they can improve the services it provides to others and thereby improve the various social and environmental health...you get into those areas being identified as of in need of help and that the social conditions are such that the people on the whole are not thriving, it’s getting them to take responsibility and to give them the skills to actually improve their social and environmental circumstances.”
  - “Involving people at every level, the whole bottom up approach...we believe that it’s everything, it’s involving people who believe and work here, local businesses, local organizations, everyone possible trying to work together for a common aim...It’s about tackling any problems...involving people in small ways makes them value the community more.”
  - “It’s about employability, and sustaining employment, and through that we can continue to upgrade their skills so they can stay employed. So regeneration as far as the training enterprise is making sure we have the skills to remain competitive.”
  - “In all aspects, it is making the borough a place where it’s actually nicer to be. It could be in the environment or in decent housing, and where above all there is an industrial base to provide jobs to all the people who live there...It is our interest to make the work opportunities of the environment something everyone could use, particularly people with disabilities. A lot of it has to do with environment. I would like to see it moving more down towards the employment area and continue to move down the housing area.”
  - “Regeneration is providing activities that improve the quality of life for various communities in Merton. I don’t see it as purely economic regeneration, money alone could not deliver what we want. We have to look at housing, environment, transport, education. Regeneration is about tackling all those issues.”



## What Characteristics Make Partnerships A Success?

The most common characteristics mentioned by respondents from various agencies included the following.

- **Openness (mentioned by 9 out of 22 representatives):**

*Partners need to be honest and forthright about their strengths, weaknesses, and agendas. Through openness, partners can better understand each others needs and abilities. Clear and honest communication helps avoid inter-partner conflicts and builds trust.*

- **Common Goals (8/22)**

*All partners need to have a common understanding of what it is that the partnership is trying to achieve. When all partners are working toward a clearly understood, mutual goal progress is made. Otherwise, dealing with the confusion as to the purpose of the partnership can waste valuable time and effort.*

- **Mutual Trust (8/22)**

*Partners need to have a trusting relationship in all aspects of their workings. Without trust, decision making and implementation can be impeded if partners are constantly trying to validate each others claims. 'Openness' over an extended period of time is the best way to build mutual trust.*

- **Clear Objectives (6/22)**

*A partnership needs common goals, but partners also need a clear and focused way to achieve these goals. A clearly planned approach towards common goals can help partnerships organize and be more productive with their time and resources.*

- **Equality (6/22)**

*Partners should have an equal say when it comes to decision making, forming objectives, and agreeing on a strategy to achieve the final goal. Partners will have more of an interest in the project knowing that they have put in an equal amount of input and effort as the rest of the partners involved. Equality assists in gaining input from different sectors of the community. In this way, partners can feel that all of their voices have been heard within partnerships.*

Other less common responses included:

- ◆ strong partner commitment (5/22)
- ◆ mutual respect (3/22)
- ◆ flexible agendas (3/22)
- ◆ honesty (3/22)
- ◆ clear definition of tasks and roles (2/22)
- ◆ set time frame/limit (2/22)
- ◆ understanding of other partners' expectations (2/22)
- ◆ mutual interest (1/22)
- ◆ setting a fair pace (1/22)
- ◆ getting/giving regular feedback (1/22)
- ◆ correct partners selection with respect to skills and knowledge (1/22)
- ◆ understanding of other partners' cultures and restrictions (1/22)
- ◆ skilled personnel (1/22)
- ◆ shared accountability (1/22)
- ◆ ability to resolve conflicts (1/22)
- ◆ regular communication (1/22)
- ◆ achievable objectives (1/22)

Here are some other characteristic for success which can be found in literature on partnerships. These characteristics, though important, were not mentioned as often as responses previously mentioned:

- **Community Involvement**

*Community members are the people who are affected by the regeneration efforts and the associated problems. Involvement ensures that the community is getting something that it wants and needs.*

- **Plan Flexibility**

*Partnerships plans and objectives should be designed to be flexible. No plan should depend too heavily on one particular component, if avoidable; should problems arise with this one component, the whole plan would fail to come to fruition.*

- **Clear Definition of Roles**

*It is imperative that partners know what their role will be prior to getting involved with a partnership. Partnerships are more productive when partners “own” individual portions of a project. In this way, partners can see the results of their efforts and will remain interested. Alternatively, if partners constantly repeat each others work, conflicts may emerge and time will be wasted.*

- **Leadership**

*While equality of partners within partnerships is important, there is still a need for an agreed lead agency or group of agencies. Leadership is required to organize and to settle disputes if they arise. With leadership, meetings can be more productive in addressing all components while maintaining organization and order. Good leadership seeks to include the input of all partners in design as well as, decision making.*

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## Some Potential Problems to Avoid...

- **Domination** – This occurs when one or two partners have more power in a partnership, and the other partners’ inputs are trivialized or ignored. If all partners do not feel valued, the success and longevity of a partnership can be severely undermined.
- **Improperly Skilled Partners** – Sometimes organizations are invited into a partnership in tokenistic manner, not because they can make a valid contribution towards the goals of the partnership. Such arrangements should be avoided as they have the potential to undermine agencies’ future contributions.
- **Inflexibility** – Partners are often not willing to compromise or modify their own agendas, so that the partnership cannot agree on one unifying agenda.
- **Personality Conflicts** – Partners often forget that they need to respect other partners’ personal views and opinions even though they may differ from their own. Partners may come from different backgrounds and cultures, and their personal beliefs need to be honored even though others may not agree with them.
- **Overload** - Partnerships are sometimes formed to address issues which are currently being addressed by another partnership. Prior to the establishment of new partnerships, consideration should be given to their necessity. “Real” partnerships can achieve more substantial results.

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## Appendices

- A. Letter sent requesting an interview
- B. Interview questions

## Appendix A

«Title», «FirstName» «LastName»  
«JobTitle»  
«Company»  
«Address1»  
«Address2»  
«Address3»  
«City», «PostalCode»

May 5, 1999

Dear «FirstName»:

### **Re: Regeneration Partnership Working in Merton**

We are currently doing a project sponsored by the London Borough of Merton exploring regeneration partnership working in Merton. You have been identified as a representative of an agency which is working towards the regeneration of Merton. Our research has two objectives. Firstly, we are concerned with exploring agencies' perceptions of regeneration. Our second objective is to identify characteristics for successful regeneration partnerships. The overall purpose of our research is to produce a short guide entitled: 'Regeneration Partnerships in Merton – Ingredients for Success.' You will be invited to a presentation of the findings on May 6th.

To perform this research, we would like to interview you. Your input is extremely valuable to us and to the success of this project. We are hoping to interview you as well as other agency representatives between April 6<sup>th</sup> and April 20<sup>th</sup>. The interview should only take approximately an hour of your time. For your convenience, we will work on your schedule. Please contact any of us at 0181-545-4720, during standard business hours if you are prepared to be interviewed. To fit within our tight schedule, we would like your response **as soon as possible**.

We appreciate your time and hope to hear from you soon. If you any questions about our research, please do not hesitate to telephone. For your information, we have enclosed a guide describing Worcester Polytechnic Institute's London Project Centre, which provided us with this project.

Many thanks in advance,

Sumedha Ahuja  
William Harnois  
Jeremy Proulx

ENC: WPI Information

## Appendix B

### Interview Schedule

[Introduce ourselves. Thank you for your time. There are two objectives to this project. The first is to find out what different agencies working in regeneration partnerships in Merton understand regeneration to be. The second is to identify characteristics which lead to successful partnerships. The information that we get will be used to develop a guide called 'Regeneration Partnerships – Ingredients for Success', which you will receive. We want to assure you that your responses will be kept confidential and will not be able to be identified in our final results. The spirit behind this project is not to judge past experiences but to learn lessons to ensure that future partnership workings are even more successful future.]

1. How long has your agency been involved in the regeneration of Merton? (years)
2. What types of projects has your agency been involved in the interest of regenerating Merton? (training, environmental improvement, estate renewal)

[Let's begin with our first objective, the term regeneration.]

3. Would you please define your understanding of regeneration in your own words?
4. What types of improvements do you associate with regeneration? Which do you feel are the most important? (poverty, equality, improve quality of life, etc.)
5. How do you think that your definition and understand of regeneration differs from that of other agencies with whom you have worked?

[We are going to now move to the second objective, successful partnerships.]

6. What are some of the other agencies with whom you work?
7. Regeneration partnerships are responsible for many improvements in Merton, how do you see your agency fitting into that scheme? (role, significance)
8. Please think about one of the more successful partnership experience with which you have been involved. What made this partnership so successful?
9. Ideally, what types of characteristics contribute to a successful regeneration partnership (possible prompts: willingness, community involvement, honesty, definition of roles, planning input, flexibility, common goals and understanding)?
10. Please think about a less successful partnership experience. What do you feel are the main reasons that this partnership was less successful?
11. In general, what obstacles do you think partnerships need to overcome to achieve success?
12. What do you think working in a partnership requires from a partner? (cost, resources)



13. Suppose that you were giving advice to an agency beginning work on its first regeneration partnership, what would you suggest?

[Thank you very much.. Your comments have been very helpful. You will be invited to a presentation of our findings on May 6<sup>th</sup> and will receive a copy of the guide we create. Do you have any questions for us?]