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1 **Introduction**

2 National government-directed public spending cuts since 2010 continue to put UK
3 cities under considerable pressure to provide and manage green spaces with fewer
4 resources (Heritage Lottery Fund, 2014). In this vein, local public sector authorities
5 look to involve communities and organisations from other sectors much more in how
6 they deliver green space management on the ground (Burton and Mathers, 2014).
7 There is a growing body of knowledge about cross-sector partnerships in relation to
8 environmental stewardship and how they can contribute to improving environmental
9 quality (e.g. Fisher et al., 2012). Some research explores the structure of existing
10 partnerships and the capacity of their resources (e.g. Svendsen and Campbell, 2008;
11 Connolly et al., 2014), decision-making networks and processes (e.g. Holt et al.,
12 2012) while other researchers have measured the outcomes of partnerships, e.g.
13 ecological or biophysical performance of community-led interventions (e.g. Anderson
14 *et al.*, 2014; Ernstson, 2013). There is however little examination of cross-sector
15 partnerships specifically created to replace existing governance structures in green
16 space¹ management (e.g. Mathers et al., 2015). In this paper, we aim to examine in
17 detail a cross-sector partnership in Southey Owlerton, Sheffield. Fifteen years have
18 passed since the partnership was established to physically transform the area
19 through high-quality design and establish and monitor the maintenance activities of
20 landowners. The partnership was based on the premise, and shared belief, that
21 stakeholders from different sectors working together can deliver sustainable and
22 successful green space management. Visiting the parks and green spaces in
23 Southey Owlerton today, one will not find sustained or consistently good quality
24 landscapes across all parks and green spaces. This paper therefore aims to find out
25 why this was the case.

26

27 **Green space partnerships**

¹ In this paper, the term 'green space' refers to publicly accessible green space.

28 Partnerships are considered to be ‘effective democratic tool[s]’ which can ensure that
29 affected stakeholders are represented and have the opportunity to empower
30 communities (Burton and Mathers, 2014, p. 77). The rise of partnerships mark a shift
31 from *government* working in isolation towards *governance* where governments lead
32 or steer working relationships with actors from other sectors, including local
33 communities (Mathers et al., 2015). This also involves the ‘third’ or non-government
34 sector. Third sector organisations in the UK are diverse and can describe local
35 community trusts and not-for-profit social enterprises as well as larger organisations
36 such as the National Trust, which owns large areas of green space for which it has
37 direct management responsibilities (Smith et al., 2014a). Skelcher and Sullivan
38 (2008, p. 752) describe partnerships as ‘public-purpose collaborations’ whose aims
39 are for the benefit of the wider community. This is predicated on an assumption that
40 partnerships are a better mode of public service delivery than by public sector alone
41 (O’Leary and Vij, 2012)².

42

43 Cross-sector partnerships are supported through international agreements including
44 the Aarhus Convention and Agenda 21 (Sherlock et al., 2004), demonstrating the
45 ‘international enthusiasm for inter-agency collaborative working’ (Rigg and
46 O’Mahony, 2013, p. 84). It is argued that cross-sector partnerships illustrate the
47 devolution of resources and control from public service providers towards local
48 communities (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2011), and the process of community
49 empowerment towards collective action (Laverack and Wallerstein, 2001).
50 Fischbacher-Smith (2015) highlights the range of sectors in which partnership
51 working is now commonplace, including housing and community health, and there is

² There are other mechanisms for service delivery of green space management, including in-house provision by municipal authorities, contracting-out to external organisations, and to a lesser and more recent extent, Business Improvement Districts. These are not the focus of this paper and discussions on these models can be found in, e.g. Dempsey et al. (2014) and Lindholst (2009).

52 a growing body of literature in sectors such as public administration and healthcare
53 into the challenges of partnership working (e.g. Baron et al., 2009).
54
55 Evidence examining partnership working in landscape and green space management
56 is increasing, as civic organisations and volunteers such as Friends Groups and
57 Conservancies as cross-sector partners contribute to an 'emergent governance
58 structure in many cities throughout the world' (Connolly et al., 2014, p. 187; Fisher et
59 al., 2012). The broadening evidence base to date has focused on the resources,
60 structure and capacity of multiple partnerships over relatively wide geographical
61 scales including north-eastern USA (Svendsen and Campbell, 2008), Scotland
62 (Sherlock et al., 2004) and cities such as New York City (Connolly et al., 2014; Fisher
63 et al., 2012) and Stockholm (Ernstson et al., 2010). Findings from these large-scale
64 studies show how cross-sector partnerships involve the direct (strategic or on-the-
65 ground) management of sites with underlying aims of community engagement,
66 improving human wellbeing and environmental quality (Connolly et al., 2014).
67 Sherlock et al. (2004) conducted an ethnographic study examining the working
68 cross-sector partnerships of a Scottish national government agency. Advantages of
69 partnership working included *more scope for* a) the holistic definition of problems, b)
70 spreading the resource load among partners, and c) better policy solutions.
71 Disadvantages included *the difficulties of* a) understanding multiple perspectives, b)
72 dealing with scarce resources, c) not having the required specialist skills to make
73 partnerships work (e.g. conflict management), d) maintaining a shared vision, and e)
74 matching the aspiration to collaborate with limited ability to deliver in practice.
75 Ernstson et al.'s research on network governance in Stockholm (2010) also reported
76 difficulties for partnerships including poor communication between actors,
77 administrative structures restricting cooperation between actors and a mismatch in
78 the different (local, city, regional) scales due to lack of information flows. This is
79 echoed by Mathers et al. (2015) who explored the capacity of cross-sector

80 partnerships via particular themes including motivation, commitment and skills. Their
81 findings showed that partnership capacity is influenced by factors occurring at the
82 scale of the individual, the partnership itself and the wider context beyond (e.g. the
83 impact of decreasing amount of national funding to local authorities.

84 Skelcher and Sullivan (2008), examining three case studies at the city-scale or wider,
85 discuss the different motivations of partnership collaborations which may be altruistic
86 to improve outcomes or guided by self-interest, such as maximizing resources. They
87 also raise questions about how democracy and accountability of all stakeholders
88 involved in cross-sector partnership operations are ensured for transparency and
89 openness, not least because the source of their funding is tax-generated.

90

91 From this review of relevant literature of green space and landscape management
92 studies, we identify two main gaps in knowledge. Firstly, we concur with Andrews
93 and Edwards (2005) and Ernstson et al. (2010) on the need to focus on the local
94 spatial scale which most research to date does not (Mathers et al., 2015 is a recent
95 exception). Secondly, existing research does not tend to consider the relationship
96 between the governance of a green space partnership and the implementation of its
97 agreed activities (after Smith et al., 2014a), and so does not provide an assessment
98 of how effective is a partnership. This paper therefore aims to address these gaps in
99 knowledge by examining in detail the case of the cross-sector partnership formed in
100 Southey Owlerton, Sheffield to improve the governance and implementation of local
101 green space management. In this way, we will examine how well this cross-sector
102 partnership approach delivered effective green space management at the local scale.

103

104 **Green space management on (and off) the political agenda in the UK**

105 Unlike the health service and education provision, in most countries green space
106 management is a non-statutory service: there is no legal requirement to provide it
107 (CABE Space, 2006). Economic recession, and ensuing public sector budget cuts,

108 puts the non-statutory management of green space under threat. During the 1970s-
109 1980s, local environmental quality declined dramatically in the UK and elsewhere as
110 funding in green spaces and the public realm was reduced (Urban Parks Forum,
111 2001; Wilson and Hughes, 2011). Jones (2000, p. 30) describes 'a backlog of derelict
112 parks, no extra financial resources, and a stock of low-skilled parks personnel' and
113 the 'contextual necessity of regaining the support and involvement of local
114 communities'. In the late 1990s, the then Labour government in the UK identified the
115 local environment as a vehicle for urban regeneration to address local
116 neighbourhood-scale problems (Shaw et al., 2004). This political emphasis reflects
117 the importance of local green space in urban neighbourhoods that practitioners and
118 residents have long recognised, illustrated by the large number of 'Friends of' and
119 'User' parks/ green spaces groups around the UK and elsewhere (Mathers et al.,
120 2015).

121

122 Around the same time, area-based urban regeneration initiatives were rolled out
123 around Europe (Carpenter, 2006), including the 'million programme' in Sweden and
124 the Big Cities regeneration programme in the Netherlands (Dekker and Van Kampen,
125 2006). In the UK, local public sector authorities could apply for funding streams in
126 partnership with different sector organisations which included the Neighbourhood
127 Renewal Fund (2001-2009) as well as the Safer & Stronger Communities Fund
128 (2005-08) which incorporated the Liveability Fund (Lupton et al., 2013; Amion, 2010).
129 This was predicated in part on devolved decision-making powers to deal with local
130 environment issues – in part only because those issues were already identified by
131 the national funding streams (Brook Lyndhurst, 2005). Funding was targeted at
132 deprived areas to facilitate community empowerment in disadvantaged
133 neighbourhoods (Shaw et al., 2004), and tackle problems around neighbourhood
134 management and local environment (Bradford and Jackson, 2005). Shaw et al.
135 describe the concept of liveability in the UK as based on a 'less visionary agenda'

136 that the original American 'livability' principles (dating back to the 1970s) which
137 encompass green space preservation, traffic easement, restoration of social
138 cohesion and enhancement of economic competitiveness (2004, pp. 2-3). Liveability
139 in the UK was defined at the time as providing safe, clean and green neighbourhoods
140 in deprived areas (Shaw et al., 2004). Liveability was about giving communities the
141 capacity – in terms of the resources, skills and confidence – to sustain these
142 improved, safe, green and clean neighbourhoods for the long term (Groundwork
143 Trust, 2002). Liveability therefore aimed to reduce the gaps between residents in
144 poorer and richer neighbourhoods in relation to their access to social and economic
145 opportunities, services and goods (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001; Lupton, 2013).
146 Cross-sector partnerships were strongly encouraged as the vehicle for delivering the
147 aims of these funding streams (Amion, 2010).

148

149 **Research methodology**

150 To explore the extent to which cross-sector partnership working delivered effective
151 green space management in Southey Owlerton, we employed a co-produced
152 research design (after Dodson et al, 2007). The project aims, methods and sampling
153 strategy were all devised in collaboration with green space management
154 stakeholders on the project's Advisory Group (AG). We firstly had to agree on a
155 definition of *effectiveness* which is often not defined in research (Wiener et al., 2011).
156 We assessed effectiveness in relation to the intended function of the partnership
157 (after Hahn and Pinkse, 2014). We adopted a case study research approach to
158 explain an individual episode and to test the underlying hypothesis of the paper (after
159 Levy, 2008): *a cross-sector partnership approach can deliver effective green space
160 management at the local scale*. The case study is well-used in social sciences
161 research as a method of in-depth exploration to help understand wider phenomena
162 (Yin, 1994). Berg agrees with this when he states that through focusing on a single
163 community, or neighbourhood in this case, 'the manifest interaction of significant

164 factors' characteristic of this setting can be uncovered by the researcher (2004, p.
165 251). We recognize the inherent limitations in examining a single case study but we
166 believe that it contributes to the process of theory generation as a case which refutes
167 as well as supports the existing theory outlined in the literature review above, forming
168 part of a process of refining theory through evidence (Levy, 2008). The research
169 approach we take here is a retrospective longitudinal case study as we asked
170 research participants about their perceptions of what happened during different
171 stages of the cross-sector partnership.

172

173 Interviews were used to collect data. We conducted them in a semi-structured format
174 so that participants were able to discuss aspects of the cross-sector partnership
175 which went beyond the scope of the interviewer's questions (after Bryman, 2012).
176 Participants from different sector organisations were selected and asked questions
177 designed in collaboration with the AG. 14 contacts were originally identified; of those,
178 6 could not be interviewed as they either: now worked outside Sheffield, had retired
179 elsewhere, or were no longer responsible for green space management, including
180 one contracting organisation to whom the council had outsourced some of this work.
181 8 participants completed an interview between February and April 2014 (referred to
182 as N01-08). They represented different public and third sector organisations involved
183 in the cross-sector partnership, including Sheffield City Council (at councillor and
184 officer level), local social enterprises and a local community group. A set of 'before,
185 during and after' questions were asked about individual and group motivation and
186 behaviour (see Appendix) to assess to what extent members of this particular cross-
187 sector partnership agreed that it delivered effective green space management at the
188 local scale. We were unable to ask residents about their perceptions of the
189 partnership as it was outside the scope, time and resources of this particular project
190 but may be the subject of further research.

191

192 Data about the context (e.g. funding stream, neighbourhood characteristics) were
193 sourced through the interviews and a small number of existing reports produced
194 throughout the funding timescale (ERS, 2007; Roger Evans Associates, 2005). The
195 data were analysed via a process of content analysis using thematic coding of each
196 transcript (after Robson, 2011). Themes were analysed by individual researchers
197 and then collectively as a team. They were then discussed with the AG as part of a
198 validation process. While the cross-sector partnership itself is under scrutiny here, so
199 too is the green space management process followed by the stakeholders. This
200 meant that the content of the interviews went beyond the partnership to encompass
201 interrelated dimensions of long-term green space management. The Appendix shows
202 that we asked questions which focused on the partnership, not specifically about
203 other dimensions of green space management. However a number of recurring
204 themes emerged from the data. To make sense of these data, we employed 'place-
205 keeping' as an analytical framework which is outlined below.

206

207 ***Place-keeping: an analytical framework for long-term management***

208 As we will show later, inherent within the cross-sector partnership was an underlying
209 agreement that long-term management of green space was as important as the
210 design of new and regenerated spaces in Southey Owlerton (after Tibbalds, 2001).
211 While some theorists have argued that management is a matter of maintaining the
212 physical infrastructure (Wilson and Kelling, 1982), others attribute a need for
213 designers to consider management at the initial design stage (Trancik, 1986).
214 However, it is often unclear who has the responsibility to manage a space after the
215 designers/ contractors have completed their work (Dempsey et al., 2014).
216 Furthermore, Jansson and Lindgren (2012) argue that research and literature on
217 green space management rarely defines what is meant by *management*. Recent
218 research has tended to explore management as a broad-scale set of practices and
219 activities (e.g. Jones, 2000), such as having an open space strategy, using standards

220 and indicators (Carmona and de Magalhaes, 2006), or through the use of tools for
221 decision-making (e.g. Łopucki and Kiersztyn, 2015). In this vein, we need to
222 understand long-term management as more than a postscript activity based on the
223 assumption that somebody will look after a place.

224

225 Place-keeping provides a framework which posits a set of overlapping dimensions of
226 long-term management (Table 1). Place-keeping was developed to improve
227 understanding of open space management as a long-term and complex process
228 made up of different, yet interrelated, dimensions. Place-keeping builds on existing
229 normative models and conceptualisations of open space management (e.g. Carmona
230 et al., 2008; CABE Space, 2004; Wild et al., 2008). It allows for an understanding of
231 partnership as part of a process of ongoing management which incorporates initial
232 place-making, e.g. here, green space regeneration (Dempsey and Smith, 2014).

233

234 Place-keeping encompasses interrelated dimensions of: partnerships (discussed
235 above), policy, governance, funding, evaluation, design and maintenance within a
236 given context. Examples of the underpinning literature are listed in Table 1 and are
237 discussed in more detail by Dempsey et al. (2014). *Policy* relates to place-keeping at
238 a range of scales from national to individual site. Aspects of place-keeping are often
239 referred to in policy guidance (e.g. Heritage Lottery Fund, 2014) but not statutory
240 legislation (Mathers et al., 2015), limiting strategic efforts to, for example, citywide
241 green space strategies (Randrup and Persson, 2009). *Governance* encompasses
242 decision-making and differing roles and responsibilities stakeholders have in that
243 process (Jansson and Lindgren, 2012), such as residents and communities (Castell,
244 2010). *Funding* for place-keeping activities is particularly insecure given its non-
245 statutory nature. The funding source (and accompanying stipulations) also varies
246 depending on the stakeholder's sector (Choumert and Salanie, 2008), and can be
247 closely related to policy when it is the public sector (Kreutz et al. 2014). The

248 relationship between the *design and maintenance* of a place is often uncoordinated
249 (Burton and Rymsa-Fitschen, 2008). When maintenance is not considered in the
250 design process, this can jeopardise the extent to which a place is fit for purpose
251 (Carmona et al., 2008). *Evaluation* of place-keeping can be conducted in a number of
252 ways (e.g. Gidlow et al., 2012) and is closely related to concepts of (monetary and
253 other kinds of) value and value for money (Smith et al., 2014b).

254

255 <<< Table 1. The dimensions of place-keeping. >>> about here

256

257 Literature and research tend to focus on individual dimensions – e.g. the wide body
258 of literature reviewed above on partnership – whereas framing the findings around
259 inter-related dimensions of place-keeping permits a more holistic examination of
260 green space management. The cross-sector partnership in Southey Owlerton
261 therefore provides a single case study which provides findings which we suggest are
262 of relevance elsewhere. However, we do recognise that there are some context-
263 specific characteristics which may limit the application of findings from Sheffield to
264 other cases. The context is outlined next.

265

266 **The Sheffield context (before the partnership)**

267 The deprived area in Southey Owlerton which qualified for the Liveability funding
268 comprises a large council housing estate built according to a loose interpretation of
269 garden city principles with a large proportion of land comprising parks and gardens,
270 grassed street corners and verges. The plan and layout of the estate was
271 significantly different from Ebenezer Howard’s original garden city design principles,
272 with much lower housing densities and house frontages which did not open out onto,
273 but rather backed onto, the open spaces. Local facilities were limited meaning that
274 residents had to travel out of the area to access services, jobs and public transport.
275 Like many urban areas in the UK, Sheffield suffered from a lack of public sector

276 investment during the late 1970s-1980s which led to significant social and
277 environmental problems in the area.

278

279 ***The cross-sector partnership's aims***

280 The following problems in Southey Owlerton underpinned the activities of the cross-
281 sector partnership:

- 282 • *safety*: significant vandalism, poor lighting in parks and streets and a need for
283 safer places for children's play
- 284 • *lack of environment and estate management*: specifically tree management,
285 litter removal, pavement repairs and bins
- 286 • *lack of community and social facilities*: specifically meeting places, play
287 facilities and local shops
- 288 • *insufficient parks provision*: poor quality play areas and swathes of underused
289 grassed areas.

290 There were three main service providers providing green space management
291 services here: two public and one private sector. The cross-sector partnership's
292 central objective was to create a single client structure (via the newly-funded
293 Liveability manager) to oversee the green space management programme of
294 physical improvements with a single operational team to implement the partnership's
295 priorities and make best use of shared resources (ERS, 2007). This aimed to
296 address the highly fragmented land ownership and responsibility for land
297 management. This was described as '...seeing it as council land and a shared
298 responsibility...so the ethos behind it was that we'd break down the barriers and
299 work as a single service' (N01). Partners collectively agreed on the shared aims to:

- 300 • improve the quality of life of residents by increasing community participation;
- 301 • physically transform the area through high-quality design;

- 302 • establish and monitor the maintenance across landowners (including litter-picking
303 service reform);
- 304 • increase site presence.

305

306 The rationale was to challenge existing ‘boundaries of territory’ to create a joined-up
307 service provider for green spaces across the area (N03&06). In this way, the
308 partnership provided a long-term vision for managing council-owned green space
309 through shared responsibility and effective management by amalgamating service
310 provision. The key partners included different council departments; a private sector
311 organisation contractor; community and third sector organisations. Central to the
312 cross-sector partnership was local community involvement – the Liveability grant
313 budget holder had to be a community organisation, in accordance with the funding
314 conditions.

315

316 ***Analysis: governance and funding structures before and during the***
317 ***partnership***

318 All interviewees concurred that, pre-Liveability funding, there was little or no
319 partnership working between the stakeholders. The three main service providers had
320 different levels of resources to apply to green space management. This was partly
321 down to each provider working to different performance targets, quality standards
322 and charging tariffs. Service providers were territorial about exactly where they
323 worked, which at times was within the same green space (N01). Operational staff
324 were strongly averse to working in green spaces they would not normally manage
325 because of service providers’ perceptions of ‘that’s my land’ (N06). Numerous
326 interviewees described a lack of communication between service providers. No one
327 organisation acted as lead stakeholder for green space management. N03 described
328 this as like ‘getting three plumbers in to mend a leak’. For N07, ‘the big joke was the
329 fact that literally you’d see three different guys coming out on three different

330 machines cutting parallel pieces of grass'. N04 highlighted the frustration when litter
331 on 'X Council department land...didn't get picked up even though Y Council
332 department were out picking up litter'. Management practices in this area were
333 therefore considered inefficient and expensive, which is partly why the Liveability
334 programme was targeted as a source of funding. For N07, the funding allowed 'a
335 grace period and testing, basically to establish a new kind of mainstreamed delivery
336 service. And if all the players had been keen on it being mainstreamed, that's exactly
337 what it would have done'.

338

339 The Liveability funding was based on allocations to the third sector – a funding
340 stream for which public sector was ineligible. Not being funded from public sector
341 budgets was described as an advantage: it 'allows you certain freedoms' to do things
342 more innovatively (N05). According to N07, 'Everybody was there and everybody got
343 some money. So everybody managed to do a little bit more in the area because they
344 got paid for it...[the premise behind the Liveability funding] was more about...stirring
345 it all up together and reinventing it...'.
346

346

347 The following sections discuss the successes and failures during and beyond the life
348 of the cross-sector partnership according to the interviewees (Table 2).

349

350 **Analysis: partnership successes**

351 Most of the interviewees cite the key success of the partnership as the physical
352 improvements made to the green spaces and public realm.

353

354 ***Design/ management***

355 'It looks like somebody cares' (N06). A number of interviewees described greatly
356 improved sites compared to previous condition and quality (N01&04-06&08). This
357 included physical improvements (Figures 1-2) with 'lots of them [parks] still in a very

358 good state of repair, actually...considering how the parks will have been prior to
359 liveability' (N05). N06 commented how 'for that part of the city they were vast
360 improvements on what had been there before which had been completely un-
361 designed bits of grass'.

362

363 <<Figures 1 and 2. Examples of physical improvements in the area.>> about here

364

365 The physical context partly influenced success of green spaces and those sites
366 which were overlooked fared better than those that were not. For example, Cookson
367 Park was successfully improved (N01&05&08), partly because it is overlooked on all
368 sides and 'therefore publicly policed' (N01), while Parson Cross Park was described
369 as the least successful: 'just nothing there left, not one piece of equipment, all
370 destroyed' (N03). N01 attributed this in part to the secluded nature of the site with no
371 overlooking houses, dense vegetation and less frequently reported vandalism.

372

373 ***Evaluation***

374 Evaluation was designed, developed and implemented to monitor certain tasks by
375 the partnership through site inspections. This 'started off as elaborate maintenance
376 management plans' and was simplified to litter and fly-tipping removal (N06).

377 Standardised quality measures were employed to measure green spaces
378 improvements, which N01 attributes to the process of joint working. Other
379 interviewees attribute this to the capital investment funding. This evaluation method
380 (the 'Sheffield Standard') continues to be used by the council to evaluate green
381 space quality across the city today.

382

383 N01 describes increasing user numbers since before the project although no
384 interviewee could cite specific figures. Informal site monitoring was also considered a
385 success based on a Neighbourhood Watch scheme adopted across the wider area

386 with 'local people taking part in the monitoring of those sites and reporting any
387 issues' (N05). N06 echoes this, stating that delivery of the partnership's tasks was
388 more responsive to complaints and described 'customers' as more satisfied.

389

390 ***Partnership***

391 Consultation was central to the partnership process and described as a significant
392 reason for the success for Park A (N06), specifically engagement with children in the
393 design stage (N08). Community involvement is also described as successful and a
394 legacy (N05), through increased community capacity to get involved in the
395 management and funding of parks, e.g. through resident forums (N06&08), learning
396 new skills and associated gains in confidence (N07).

397

398 ***Policy and associated funding***

399 N03 attributes the city's open space strategy and ongoing green space evaluation
400 method to 'where the language around clean, safe, well-maintained came from'
401 which was also underpinned by national policy focus on these issues (ODPM, 2002).
402 All respondents describe the Liveability funding stream as sufficient. While the
403 physical improvements have been described as a resounding Liveability success, not
404 all physical improvements were funded by Liveability and (as already discussed) not
405 all spaces benefited equally.

406

407 ***Analysis: partnership failures***

408 The interviewees discuss a number of reasons why the aims of the partnership were
409 not achieved or translated into effective practice.

410

411 ***Contextual issues***

412 Interviewees describe how area characteristics and the resident population had a
413 negative impact on the partnership's success. N06 describes the *geographic area* as

414 too large for the programme to work. N03 describes 'one of the flaws [of] the whole
415 process [is] the type of area [it] was and is, still. It's a very difficult, deprived area.
416 Difficult to...protect the investment at the time'. This is echoed by N06 who highlights
417 the cultural expectations of residents based on the idea that 'we pay our council tax
418 and people are supposed to come and pick up the litter for us thank you'. Managers
419 would be unreasonable to expect residents to do more than report instances of anti-
420 social behaviour (N06).

421

422 The long-term legacy of the funding was predicated on the success of the business
423 model of the neighbourhood centres providing revenue for long-term management.
424 However, at the end of the Liveability funding timescale, businesses were struggling
425 (N07). For example, four green spaces (Longley Four Greens) were meant to be
426 managed by the neighbourhood centre, funded through income generated from the
427 local businesses (N01). But poor viability led the council to take ownership (and
428 management) of three of them – had the council taken on management of all four
429 spaces, the funding would have been recalled.

430

431 ***Design/ maintenance***

432 N03 describes the inappropriateness of some designs and features created because
433 of poor understanding of the context by the non-local professionals employed. N03
434 states 'the flaw was in bringing in designers from London, Glasgow wherever they
435 were from...the designs they put in, wasn't appropriate for the area, in terms of future
436 maintenance, robustness'. There were high aspirations for the area to create a new
437 local identity via high-quality design (N01) which has not happened (N08).

438

439 Another point relates to the timing of the improvements. The funding was closely
440 linked to wider economic regeneration of the area and new housing was proposed
441 around Parson Cross Park in 2003. However, funding time constraints meant the

442 park was built before the housing and today none of the features installed in the park
443 remain because of 'systematic vandalism' (N03): ' a decision was made to stop
444 throwing good money after bad...a lot of money has been spent on [Parson Cross
445 Park]...then it quickly got damaged to an extent that it were unusable again'. To date,
446 the housing has not yet been constructed around the park.

447

448 Despite widespread positive comments about the physical improvements,
449 maintenance is an ongoing problem and vandalism is an issue for all parks (N04).
450 The unanticipated measure of the council now looking after three extra green spaces
451 means that they receive basic maintenance service only (N01). Original features
452 include green gym equipment and walled garden, some of which is damaged and
453 unusable, and very little planting remains.

454

455 Litter management emerges as an important task, highlighted as a top priority for
456 communities, but it is considered a basic grounds maintenance task by service
457 providers. N01 describes operatives feeling undermined by their roles being reduced
458 to litter-picking.

459

460 **Governance**

461 N01 describes the culture within the partner organisations as 'difficult to break
462 down... where staff in parks have been asked to go and work in another park... they
463 have become very territorial and very upset about that...'. The role of the Liveability
464 manager was considered a limitation of the partnership, acting as 'both single client
465 and single point of delivery' (N06). For some interviewees, the single client model
466 worked to best deploy the resources, while others disagreed. The Liveability
467 manager had responsibility for coordinating services locally (N06) but was unable to
468 exercise effective authority or power within existing organisational hierarchies of the
469 main service providers. The role was not senior enough to be effective, indicating a

470 lack of leadership. N06 describes the organisational structure as 'like a manager
471 [who] was staffed entirely by [more senior] directors. Well, that was never going to
472 work...'. N04 states that more seniority was required for the role while N06 describes
473 lack of agreement of who should lead the single vision and where that person should
474 be located. There was no one voice with adequate authority and motivation to
475 challenge partners' perceptions of why it couldn't happen. The lack of leadership was
476 attributed to a particular understanding of place management which was 'based
477 on...big ideas...and a much more public realm front-end agenda' (N07).
478 Furthermore, once the designs were implemented and people moved on, 'there was
479 nobody then left to make the leadership happen' (N07).

480

481 ***Partnership***

482 A key barrier for the cross-sector partnership was the lack of commitment. N06
483 describes this as 'some buy-in...but without that real push from the top...the council
484 never really took it on at a senior level and in the end, there was no-one senior
485 enough to really push it through...with the will to make it work'. This lack of 'buy-in'
486 led to operational staff who 'were often disengaged' (N01). This also extended to a
487 reluctance to share information, attributed to a 'lack of shared vision' (N06).

488

489 The lack of commitment related to partner organisations' fear of change in
490 management practices (N01&3). Because the partnership working involved dealing
491 with unions and changing working practices, the council was reluctant to commit to
492 the partnership (N07). Partners viewed the partnership as 'empire building' by others,
493 and felt vulnerable about losing power (N01).

494

495 Undue influence in the council over certain key stakeholder decision-makers to block
496 the partnership's activities is described as 'sabotage' by one interviewee (N06). This

497 then led to a perceived lack of buy-in, underpinned by an attitude of ‘that’s not my
498 job, X should do it’.

499

500 It was highlighted earlier that the public doesn’t care who actually does the open
501 space management and maintenance as long as it gets done (N06). However,
502 interviewees state that service providers (particularly the council) really did care
503 about who carried out these tasks, partly attributed to a concerns for jobs and
504 potentially competing against other services (N01).

505

506 The interviewees highlight an imbalance in partner relationships. They discuss how
507 weak relationships tended to emerge where personality clashes existed between
508 partners, many of which related to issues such as lack of commitment. Clashes were
509 reported between designers and community. One interviewee describes the designer
510 as ‘a snotty devil’ and members of the community ‘not having that tatty thing that [the
511 designer] drew up, it was so mundane...[it was] a waste of space’ (N08).

512

513 Weak relationships were also reported between specific service providers,
514 stakeholders and the Liveability manager (N07). It should be noted that the
515 imbalance in this stakeholder relationship was attributed to the funding allocation
516 (N06&07) – see below.

517

518 ***Funding***

519 Some interviewees and AG members suggest that because the council did not
520 receive Liveability funding directly, they opposed the partnership. Council officers
521 were railroaded into carrying out improvements without reference to their
522 professional expertise, because external designers provided this. ‘A lot of intellect
523 was focused on spending lots of cash in a short period of time. The brainpower was

524 very limited on thinking about the management – it was easier to think about the
525 [capital investment] place-making, not the place-keeping’ (AG).

526

527 The Liveability funding stream, despite its onus on management, was subject to the
528 standard principle of ‘spend the money within the time period or lose it’. The AG
529 describe the short-term capital funding as the ‘real sweetener’. In practice, while
530 long-term budgets were discussed, actual figures were never shared between the
531 service providers (N06). N07 describes how the council was expected to manage
532 these spaces, but this was never discussed with relevant council departments nor
533 budgets allocated.

534

535 The cross-sector partnership’s vision was based on shared budgets which did not
536 materialise. Existing budgeting and accounting mechanisms would not allow revenue
537 funding to be ring-fenced without political support. N07 commented: ‘if you couldn’t
538 control the budget nor create a neighbourhood management team...with that quality
539 of [management] at the heart of it, then it wasn’t going to work’. The AG also
540 highlights the lack of contingency planning in the capital investment programme for
541 activities such as tree planting e.g. in case of vandalism.

542

543 This all led to a poorly integrated team with the three service providers charging one
544 another for their services. The rates charged were not considered good value for
545 money, causing friction and animosity (N03). In addition, the lack of a formal Service
546 Level Agreement meant service providers were not held to account (N03).

547

548 The end of the grant funding stream meant very limited capacity to keep activities
549 going (e.g. monitoring, community engagement) and led to a reliance on volunteers
550 (N07). ‘Some of the key partners just sort of receded so [the Liveability staff] were
551 sort of left on [their] own with the maintenance and management and all this tricky

552 stuff...[the partners] set off with all these management plans and visions of how it
553 would be...[they] just sort of couldn't quite sustain all of that' (N06).

554

555 ***Policy***

556 'Everyone knew [Liveability] was the right thing to do and...the thing they wanted to
557 do but it was something about grasping the nettle. I don't know – maybe it felt like it
558 was too hard?' (N06). This sentiment is repeated by other interviewees, suggesting
559 that right from the outset it was 'doomed to fail'. Despite the available funding, and
560 clear information about how much revenue funding was needed over the long term,
561 there was no buy-in from the council at the top level to ring fence funding. For N07, 'it
562 wasn't politically supported, it wasn't supported at Exec[utive] level...I think it was
563 "here's a lump of money – let's spend it and let's not have it rock the boat too much".
564 While the management of green spaces associated with some housing was covered
565 to some extent through Section 106 funding, the long-term nature of the vision
566 required for Liveability was simply not adopted.

567

568 ***Evaluation***

569 N07 criticises how the focus of the evaluation changed from place-keeping to
570 grounds maintenance: 'high quality spaces, 24hrs a day, the whole animation, use of
571 the space, that was what started to drift away'.

572

573 One of the partnership's aims was to establish and monitor maintenance standards
574 across landowners. Zones were established where each service provider had
575 responsibility for litter picking. An interim evaluation report argued that a dedicated
576 Liveability team could have standardised contracts of employment, rather than being
577 set by the individual service providers at different rates and conditions (ERS, 2007).

578

579 **Discussion: Lack of shared vision, lack of shared responsibility?**

580 The lack of commitment to the partnership was blamed on ‘the lack of shared vision
581 [or] shared modus operandi’. ‘Nobody wanted the responsibility. Or everybody
582 wanted their own bit of responsibility. Nobody wanted the whole thing. Nobody
583 wanted to do full-on neighbourhood management’ (N07). N07 also describes ‘an
584 opportunity to grab this lump of money [which]...didn’t cascade into value for all of
585 the partners, it just actually gave a bit of a headache... [and] didn’t give them
586 continuity’. While one council department was keen to lead the partnership, they
587 were considered ineligible with their limited green space management skills and
588 knowledge (N06) – interviewees suggest this led this department to be obstructive
589 throughout the process (N06&07). ‘Department Y had neighbourhood wardens, but
590 there was in an invisible force field around parks, they couldn’t walk on the grass or
591 through parks – no, we only do the streets’ (N03).

592

593 <<< Table 2. Place-keeping analysis of the cross-sector partnership based on
594 interviewees’ responses. >>> about here

595

596 **Reflecting on the partnership’s legacy in today’s context**

597 The Liveability funding sat within the UK government’s Safer, Cleaner, Greener
598 programme. Punter (2011) argues that there was a weak understanding of what
599 *Greener* meant, which perhaps explains the focus on the (easily measurable) littering
600 in the public realm. This has arguably contributed to the dominance of grounds
601 maintenance, rather than place activation, tasks in Southey Owlerton. This is echoed
602 in Parkinson et al.’s finding (2006) that nationally, cities became cleaner post-urban
603 regeneration funding, but quality of their public realm did not improve. We further
604 reflect on the effectiveness of the cross-sector partnership’s legacy by continuing to
605 frame it within place-keeping.

606

607 The economic and *political context* has changed dramatically since the Liveability
608 programme. The current economic climate means that funding has decreased
609 significantly for green and open space design, planning and management. The AG
610 describes how this has led to massive cultural change in how organisations now
611 operate. They also highlighted the increased scope for shared budgets within
612 councils as departments become more integrated as a consequence of austerity.
613 Recognition of the changing circumstances chimes with Jones (2000) who found the
614 difficulty of divorcing service quality from context. While *funding* for capital
615 investments in parks is still available (albeit limited), a key criterion for new capital-
616 investment projects in Sheffield is the requirement for at least five years of
617 management funding in place. However current low capacity in the council may
618 mean that even these projects are not supported (N03). Most stakeholders are
619 working to a strategy of reduce, renew, replace – i.e. green space renewal without
620 increasing management costs – rather than relying on capital investments, as was
621 the case during Liveability (AG).

622

623 In terms of the *governance* structure, there are fewer partners now, and those
624 partners are at reduced capacity compared to the Liveability era. 'At the time, [it] was
625 a golden period of partners... we've got the same or worse problems now without all
626 those people we had at that time' (N03). According to N07, 'now, we are in a very,
627 very different world. The community groups...the neighbourhood centres [are] in a
628 much, much stronger position. The ones that survived are actually stronger'.

629

630 *Partnerships* have improved since the pre-Liveability days. Some relationships which
631 developed through the partnership continue, where (remaining) staff continue to work
632 in the area. Such longevity of relationship is considered favourably by interviewees
633 and supported in the literature (Rigg and O'Mahony, 2013). However, for the council,
634 the changed economic context means fewer staff members to work with Friends

635 groups and, for third sector organisations, it means more competition for more limited
636 funding (AG), echoed by Mathers et al. (2015). A positive outcome from this has
637 arguably been a strengthening of partnership working within the council, as council
638 department X secures formal contracts for grounds maintenance for other
639 departments (AG). N03 considers this an improvement in terms of value for money
640 from the Liveability days of working with contractors, which supports Skelcher and
641 Sullivan's (2008) observation that partnership collaborations can be guided by self-
642 interest (or here, self-preservation). But like the Liveability team (for which it was then
643 criticised), is this department now acting as both the client and the *evaluator*? This
644 raises Skelcher and Sullivan's question about accountability and openness of
645 partnership working.

646

647 The cross-sector partnership began by engaging in long-term and active
648 *management*, but it was essentially boiled down to grounds maintenance
649 (N01&06&07). In part this was because of parity or commonality amongst skillsets
650 across the key stakeholders, but also the scale of different tasks meant that anything
651 beyond grounds maintenance would be difficult for all partners to deliver effectively.
652 While this in itself is acknowledged as a positive outcome because it broke down
653 barriers – encapsulated as 'I only work on this section of land' (N01) – it also led to
654 staff feeling devalued with their skills and knowledge reduced to litter-picking.

655

656 The *design and management* of green and open spaces of the study area have
657 undoubtedly been improved since the funding was applied. However, when
658 considering the overall ability of the cross-sector partnership to implement effective
659 green space management, the majority of research participants described it as a
660 failure. This was because the assumptions underpinning the partnership were to
661 some extent flawed: the business model of the neighbourhood centres and the
662 capacity for service providers to engage in shared management practices were

663 unrealistic. This supports research which calls into question the notion that
664 partnerships necessarily have the capacity required to deliver effective management
665 (Mathers et al., 2015). As the partnership continued, the lack of buy-in, entrenched
666 cultural views and impact of personality clashes all rose to the surface. The ideas
667 underpinning the partnership approach were not necessarily the cause of these
668 unanticipated issues. While some of the ideas initiated by the project are now
669 common practice, perhaps the partnership working and budget sharing ideas were
670 simply ahead of their time. Or perhaps they failed because they were applied in too
671 'healthy' an economic context and these ideas lend themselves more easily in times
672 of constrained budgets. We do not naively suggest that the ongoing government's
673 cuts to local authority budgets and lack of urban renewal policies are positive steps.
674 Indeed national indicators (for England) to date show drops in levels of satisfaction of
675 residents in deprived areas with their neighbourhood as a place to live since 2010
676 (Lupton and Fitzgerald, 2015). The Liveability programme is an example of capital-
677 rich, place-making urban regeneration programmes which are prevalent around the
678 world. As a funding mechanism it provided little support or allowance for a long-term
679 sustainable business model approach given the short-term timeframe within which
680 the money had to be spent. The funding did not allow any flexibility for meeting
681 additional costs of managing the green space improvements and regenerated
682 facilities in deprived and therefore challenging areas of cities. In other words,
683 Liveability was designed to bring about long-term changes in the way the partnership
684 managed open spaces over the long-term, however it provided funding to deliver on
685 a short-term agenda. More research is needed to examine the viability of long-term
686 and innovative open space management approaches financed by short-term funding
687 streams.

688

689 In this in-depth examination of how one cross-sector green space management
690 partnership achieved the specific set of objectives it was formed to deliver, this paper

691 has demonstrated how successes and failures are reliant on a number of inter-
692 related place-keeping dimensions (which are summarised in Table 2). Alongside the
693 dimensions of partnership, its governance, underpinning policy, funding, evaluation
694 and green space design/ management, the place-keeping framework permits an
695 examination of the effectiveness of the partnership within the wider political
696 economic, socio-cultural and historic context. From this case study, our findings
697 show that for truly long-term action by cross-sector partnerships, buy-in at all levels
698 of the political and organisational spectrums is required. This buy-in is required from
699 the lowest rungs of local authorities/ organisations where delivery happens on the
700 ground, to the highest levels of national governments. We therefore suggest that for
701 cross-sector partnerships to deliver effective place management, they should be
702 permitted to operate beyond short-term and funding-driven political timeframes and
703 allegiances.

704

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710

711 **Appendix. Interview questions.**

712 We want to get a picture of why and how the liveability model was implemented in
713 the XXXX area and who is still involved in managing the area and green spaces now.

- 714 • What do you remember about the liveability approach? How were you involved in
715 the liveability project?

716 Before Liveability

- 717 • Who were the green space management stakeholders before Liveability?

- 718 • What were their roles and responsibilities? Which stakeholders were most
719 influential/ had most responsibility?
- 720 • What were the relationships between stakeholders? Formal? Informal? Strong?
721 Weak? Non-existent?
- 722 • How successful was this model / these partnerships at managing the green
723 spaces? What was working well? Why? What was hindering effective working?
724 Were their limits on what could be achieved? Why?

725 Liveability

- 726 • Who were the green space management stakeholders during Liveability?
- 727 • What were their roles and responsibilities? Which stakeholders were most
728 influential/ had most responsibility?
- 729 • What were the relationships between stakeholders? Formal? Informal? Strong?
730 Weak? Non-existent?
- 731 • How did the partnership work in practice?
- 732 • How successful was this partnership at developing and managing the green
733 spaces? What contributed to the success? What hindered it? What was
734 achieved?
- 735 • Why was this particular Liveability (Leadership Model) approach chosen for this
736 area? What evidence was the Liveability approach based on? How was it
737 decided on and who made the decision?
- 738 • How were the community engaged in the project? What was the level of input?
739 How did this contribute to the development / management of the green spaces?

740 Liveability Legacy, current situation

- 741 • Who are the current stakeholders in green space management? What are their
742 roles and responsibilities? Which stakeholders are most influential/ had most
743 responsibility?

- 744 • What are the relationships between stakeholders? Formal? Informal? Strong?
 745 Weak? Non-existent?
- 746 • Is this a partnership? How does it work in practice?
- 747 • How successful is this partnership at developing and managing the green
 748 spaces? What contributes to the success? What hinders it?
- 749 • Comparing the situation now to the 'during liveability' model, what remains? Why
 750 and how have these elements of the model survived / changed?
- 751 • Were all of the aims of the Liveability project were met? If not why were they
 752 not?
- 753 • There were a number of different parks that were invested in between 2004 to
 754 2005. Which of these parks do you think has been the most successful and why?
 755 Which park do you think has been least successful? Why do you think this park
 756 has been least successful and why?
- 757 • How have changes in governance and funding affected the area? Have these
 758 changes had an effect on how the parks are managed?
- 759 • Are partnerships the way forward? Is this the right approach for managing green
 760 spaces? Why/why not? Certain types of green space?
- 761 • What lessons can be learnt from the Liveability approach that can inform future
 762 landscape (or place-keeping) projects in the area/city/ country?
- 763 • Are there any missing skills and knowledge in the partnership?

764

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