

Communities and Communication

URBAN MANAGEMENT SERIES

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**Building Urban
Partnerships**

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The current paradigm of partnership in urban development and management is widely used and accepted but there is little understanding of what makes partnerships work or fail. The broad premise that underpins this book is that a partnership is a relationship based on an agreement to share both benefits and risks. Partnership thus depends upon a high level of trust between partners. Trust depends upon understanding -- understanding the strengths and weaknesses, goals and aspirations, and the capacities of each partner. Understanding depends upon communication -- the ability to transfer comprehension and information. Three cities, one from each continent of the South, are studied for their complementary differences in experience and approach to local government and communication. Colombo has a long tradition of government support to community participation in slum upgrading but does not have a well-developed urban NGO movement. Nairobi has a well-organized urban NGO sector but the city has both a weak democratically-elected City Council and a centrally appointed Provincial Administration. Rio de Janeiro, which is considerably bigger than the other two cities, does not have a tradition of participation and recent municipal upgrading initiatives fail to demonstrate much meaningful resident involvement. What emerges is a picture of misunderstanding, mistrust and prejudice. The manipulation of rumour and half-truths within urban low-income communities by the local leadership marginalizes the non-elite. The lack of communication, indeed competition, between different departments of local administration militate against coherent partnership in the delivery and management of urban infrastructure and services. The authors examine the potential of clearly focused NGOs to generate an awareness within and between low-income communities and local governments for new approaches to communication and capacity-building.

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