Private sector involvement in urban governance: The case of Business Improvement Districts and Town Centre Management partnerships in England

Ian R. Cook

Department of Social Sciences, Northumbria University

ian.cook@northumbria.ac.uk

Abstract

Although it has many merits, the voluminous literature on urban governance gives scant attention to the actual involvement and positioning of business elites and businesses within Public–Private Partnerships. There is also little consensus among academics as to why the private sector become involved in such schemes. This paper begins to address these issues through a critical empirical examination of how and why the private sector is involved with three English Town Centre Management (TCM) partnerships and the Business Improvement District (BID) subsidiaries all three partnerships have recently developed. In order to do this, the empirical study is guided by a conceptual framework that foregrounds the relationship between (a) the opening up and monitoring of 'institutional space' by partnerships and the state, and (b) the motivations and 'constrained agency' of the business elites. The paper demonstrates that the positioning of the private sector is more multifarious and fractured than previous studies of urban governance have suggested. It also reveals that business elites and businesses view their participation as an 'investment' that needs to accrue significant financial returns and that partnership and state officials are highly selective in their choice of 'who governs'.

Keywords: Urban governance; Business elites; Political mobilization; Business Improvement Districts; Town Centre Management; England

1. Introduction

Geographers and academics in cognate disciplines have spent considerable time outlining the

emergence of Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs) and the inclusion of business elites within contemporary urban governance (e.g. Imrie and Raco, 1999; Ward, 2000; Geddes, 2006). They have also paid close attention to the problematic rolling out of speculative, entrepreneurial projects from place marketing to urban regeneration and their governance by the 'new urban governors' (e.g. Harvey, 1989; Raco, 2003a; Kavaratzis, 2007). These studies provide extremely useful accounts of the reconfiguration of urban politics and the nature of contemporary urbanism. Yet they tend to fall short on two fronts. First, they are often unclear how business elites and businesses are positioned within urban governance and, second, there is little consensus as to why business elites and businesses get involved. Through an empirical examination of three English Town Centre Management (TCM) PPPs and the Business Improvement District (BID) subsidiaries all three TCM partnerships have developed, this paper offers a tentative insight into the positioning and motivations of the private sector in contemporary urban governance. This paper begins by critically reviewing the existing literature on the subject and developing a conceptual framework for understanding business involvement in urban governance. Using this framework, it then examines the positioning and motivation of businesses and business elites within TCM partnerships and their BID subsidiaries in Coventry, Plymouth and Reading. An empirical analysis of these case studies is useful in three respects. First, it vividly demonstrates the diverse inner-workings of two of the most-used and powerful PPP formations in England and the positioning of the private sector within these. Second, the comparative dimension of this study enables us to see the geographically hybrid nature of BIDs and TCM schemes, simultaneously stressing the commonalities and differences between these 'actually-existing' partnerships (Nijman, 2007; Ward, 2008). Third, these empirical insights can, and will, inform the conceptual points made by this paper.

Methodologically, this paper draws from semi-structured elite interviews conducted between January 2006 and January 2007. Interviews were conducted with four groups of actors, namely those involved in the national governance of TCM and BIDs; partnership staff and members of the three local partnerships; representatives of other institutions that worked closely with the partnerships; and a small number of business elites who had limited or fractured engagement with the local partnerships. In total, 49 interviews were conducted, each of whom were recorded, transcribed and encoded using the software package NVivo7. The case studies of CV One in Coventry, the Plymouth City Centre Company (hereafter Plymouth CCC) and Reading UK Community Interest Company (hereafter Reading UK CIC) were selected because of their differentiated TCM and BID organisational structures (as will be detailed later).

2. Reconstituting the local state

The local state has been heavily influenced and intertwined with the private sector. Focusing on England in particular, many of the practices and agendas of the local state have become more private sector-like. The local state, in the words of Phil Hubbard and Tim Hall, is "being run in a more businesslike manner" (Hubbard and Hall, 1998, p. 2), adopting "characteristics once distinctive to business – risk-taking, inventiveness, promotion and profit motivation" (Hall and Hubbard, 1996, p. 153). Their characterisation echoes the literature on the New Public Management (NPM) which identifies an increased emphasis by the state on competitiveness, accountability, efficiency, 'hands-on' auditing and benchmarking (the measuring and comparing of performance) and a move towards flatter hierarchies (e.g. Dunleavey and Hood, 1994; Dibben and Higgins, 2004). However, the

emulation of private sector practices and mentalities, as Ward (2007a, pp. 7–8) notes, is an uneven and often unstructured process, varying between policy fields, organisations and places.

In addition, the local state has opened its doors to non-state actors and PPPs in the governance and delivery of 'public' services. For Jessop (1997, p. 37), a de-statisation of the state is taking place. For others, a shift from government to governance is underway (e.g. Ward, 2000; Kjær, 2009). Nonetheless, we should be careful not to see this as a clear-cut binary shift from one epoch to another. As Imrie and Raco (1999, 2001) insist, this transition is uneven spatially and temporally with non-elected elites and entrepreneurial tactics having longer (if somewhat hidden) histories in local government than first suspected (cf. Ward, 2000, 2001).

Under New Labour, there has been a partial and uneven emphasis on involving residents, the voluntary sector and 'communities' in urban governance (Raco and Flint, 2001; Atkinson, 2003; Geddes, 2006). However, it is the private sector and its business elites that have been the most actively welcomed 'outsiders' to the new governance structures. Research has revealed five frequently-used strategies in which local government and its partners have sought to involve the private sector, namely: the contracting out of selected local state services (Szymanski and Wilkins, 1993; Grimshaw et al., 2002; Reimer, 2003; Higgins et al., 2005); the privatising of selected local state services and assets (Ginsburg, 2005); private financing for public and public–private services and buildings (Medway et al., 1999, 2000; Flinders, 2005, 2006); the use of private auditors, financial advisors and consultants (e.g. Saint-Martin, 1998; Shaoul et al., 2007); and the development of PPPs (Peck and Tickell, 1995; Flinders, 2005; Geddes, 2006). For Flinders (2006, p. 225) the

restructuring of who governs, delivers and finances public services has led to a blurring of the lines demarcating the public and private sectors with a substantial 'grey zone' emerging "where the public–private distinction becomes opaque and the established frameworks for ensuring legitimacy, accountability and control become less clear".

Beyond these observations, the urban governance literature is somewhat unclear about the positioning of private sector elites and institutions within these new structures. Wood (2004), for instance, argues that it is hard to decipher from the literature what private sector elites actually do when they sit on PPP boards or how they influence the partnerships' agendas. That said, a number of studies within the management studies tradition have provided partial insights into the internal operations of voluntary and nonprofit boards (e.g. Harris, 1996; Mole, 2003; Rochester, 2003). They have usefully examined, among other things, the tension and collaborations within the boardroom; the shifting division of labour between board members, chief executives and staff; and the ways in which decisions are made. However, while this literature is empirically rich, it rarely focuses on the external, multi-scalar pressures and influences facing the boards (Cornforth, 2003) or how these boards actively shape the wider processes of neoliberalisation (Wood, 2004).

Although it casts little light on the political roles and powers of the private sector, the urban governance literature does provide a few clues as to why they are involved. In two influential papers, Peck and Tickell (1995; Peck, 1995) reason that the contemporary political empowerment of the private sector is the result of centrally-orchestrated, neoliberal state restructuring whereby state power is strategically licensed out to the private sector. Behind this restructuring is the belief that business elites possess more appropriate, neo-liberal-like skills for the job (e.g. creativity, market expertise, efficiency) than the 'rule-bound' public

bureaucrats of local government (Peck, 1995; see also Farnsworth, 2006). Peck and Tickell, therefore, argue that business involvement should be seen as being "part and parcel of the process of state restructuring, not as some autonomous, grassroots revival of business paternalism" (Peck and Tickell, 1995, p. 76). Yet as Wood (2004, p. 2108) argues, their 'state-centric approach' cannot answer one fundamental question: "why, in the absence of compulsion, do businessmen and women answer the 'call to arms'?"

Stone (1989) provides an indirect answer to this question. He argues that public and private institutions try to work together because of the deep-seated division of labour between the state and market in a fragmented, complex world. For Stone, no one group monopolises power and resources; therefore, policymakers and other elites actively seek to work with each other in order to fully realise their ambitions. However, this reasoning alone cannot explain the sharp rise in partnership working in the UK since the late 1980s.

According to Logan and Molotch (1987; Molotch, 1976, 1993) and Cox and Mair (1988, 1989), the thirst for profit maximisation is behind the political mobilisation of the private sector. For these authors, particular types of capital lead these partnerships, or 'growth machines' as Molotch (1976) calls them. Logan and Molotch pinpoint 'rentiers' (property owners) as the leaders of the growth machine. They argue that rentiers are 'parochial capital', whose assets are often geographically immobile or deep-rooted (e.g. buildings, land). As a result of this immobility, they either develop policies or lobby for policies that focus on intensifying or replacing existing land uses and attracting more mobile 'metropolitan' capital, in turn increasing land rent and property values. Similarly, Cox and Mair (1988, 1989) argue it is the extent of an institution's local dependence – in other words, its relatively spatial immobility – that determines whether it will get involved in local economic development-

based coalitions or not (see also Imrie et al., 1995). As Cox and Mair (1988, p. 310) contend:

> "[T]he primary interest of locally dependent firms is in defending or enhancing the
> flow of value through a specific locality: the territory that defines for them a
> geographically circumscribed content of exchange relations critical to their
> reproduction; and that, for reasons ranging from the immobility of their built
> environment facilities to the non-substitutable character of their exchange relations, is
> difficult to reconstitute elsewhere. Locally dependent firms [therefore] engage in
> collective strategies via business coalitions in order to realize their common interests in
> a particular area, interests that are antagonistic to those of locally dependent firms in
> other places."

Unlike Logan and Molotch, Cox and Mair do not suggest that property owners are the
leaders in such a movement but do hint at their involvement alongside other locally
dependent businesses such as financial institutions, public utilities and the local media.
Logan and Molotch (1987) also argue that property owners are supported by other business
interests who may benefit directly from real estate (e.g. construction, planning industries) or
from increased consumption as a result of the redevelopment (e.g. retailers and the local
media) (cf. Thomas, 1994). These observations reflect Peck's (1995) wider insight that
certain fractions of capital are more involved in, and encouraged to be involved in, urban
governance than others.

Wood and colleagues (Wood et al., 1998; Wood, 2004), however, are unconvinced that
material interests easily translate into local political activity in the way that Cox and Mair
imply. In a study of local business political mobilisation in Barnsley, Accrington and
Macclesfield, they reason that "the creation of local business agendas may be simply one

among a number of avenues through which businesses seek to realise their interests in the locality" (Wood et al., 1998, p. 22). They also point out that 'locally dependent' businesses may not always have common, complementary or coherent interests and agendas (see also Peck, 1995; Raco, 2003b). More crucially, they argue that local dependence alone does not explain private sector mobilisation and involvement. Rather as Wood (2004, p. 2112, emphasis in original) reveals: "the ties between firm characteristics and the extent and nature of their political activity [are] complex and variable. For the most part, the motivations driving engagement [are] not readily reducible to any simple set of commercial dependencies on the locality."

Wood and colleagues (Wood et al., 1998; Valler et al., 2000; North et al., 2001; Wood, 2004) also criticise the inattention to business agendas and agency within the 'state-centric' understandings of urban governance which focus on the creation of 'institutional space' for the private sector and the extra-local pressures on local PPPs. A more productive avenue of research, they argue, is to analyse the formative actions of business elites, business organisations and business agendas. For them, attention should be placed on three aspects: "local business interest[s] and business organisations; the process of 'business interest' formation; and the subsequent deployment of business agendas by organisations both independently and within wider institutional fora" (Wood et al., 1998, p. 17). However, while their empirical analyses provide useful insights into the creation of business agendas, it fails to show the processes through which business agendas actually enter into public policy arenas. Perhaps unwittingly, business agenda formation and public policy formation appear as very separate spheres.

On reflection then, some important insights have been made into the inclusion of the private

sector within the 'new urban politics' (Cox, 1993). However, there remains little consensus as to why they get involved or what they actually do within urban governance. In order to understand these issues better, we need to take seriously the structuration of urban governance, highlighting the interconnectedness of structure and agency, business and state. No longer should we excessively privilege one side of these dualisms, leaving the other side neglected (Giddens, 1984; Valler and Wood, 2004; Gregson, 2005). Urban governance, after all, is shaped by "the interaction of a strategically selective context that privileges certain forms of interests and activities, and strategic actors who continually examine the options open to them in pursuing their various interests" (Valler and Wood, 2004, p. 1837, emphasis added). In concrete terms then, analyses of urban governance should pay particular attention to the relationship between (a) the selective opening up and monitoring of institutional space by the state and other institutions and (b) the agendas, 'constrained agency' and motivations of the business elites. Using this conceptual framework, this paper will now look at the positioning of the private sector within three Town Centre Management (TCM) partnerships in Coventry, Plymouth and Reading and their motivations for taking part.

3. The introduction of Town Centre Management and Business Improvement District partnerships

Since the mid-1990s, there has been a significant growth in the number of PPPs governing urban centres in England. The most prominent of these are TCM schemes and BIDs. TCM schemes and BIDs share similar characteristics and genealogies. Both are partnership-based and focused on creating conducive conditions for business profitability (Ward, 2007b). They seek to encourage more visitors, more investors and more sales, while fending off the

increasing competition from elsewhere (e.g. out-of-town shopping centres, rival urban centres, business parks, retail parks). Both partnership-types attempt this by improving the public realm of their centres, often through mundane, routine services such as street cleaning, horticultural enhancements, CCTV monitoring and mobile security patrols (Mitchell, 2008; Cook, 2010). Many also seek to liaise with potential investors directly or attract them through promotional materials such as websites and newspaper advertisements (Warnaby et al., 2005).

Neither BIDs nor TCM schemes are unique to England. TCM-like schemes are increasingly common in Australia and several European countries including France, Italy, Sweden and Spain (Forsberg et al., 1999; Coca-Stefaniak et al., 2009). BIDs, meanwhile, first emerged in North America and spread into New Zealand and South Africa and pockets of Western and Central Europe, notably Albania, Germany, Ireland, Serbia and the UK (Cook, 2008; Morçöl et al., 2008). The development of TCM in England, beginning in the late 1980s, was somewhat independent of the emergence of TCM-like schemes outside of the UK. In contrast, the introduction of BIDs in England during the early-to-mid 2000s drew on experiences elsewhere through a selective policy transfer from the United States where the New Labour government and Association of Town Centre Management perceived BIDs to be key players in the regeneration of once-depressed downtowns (Cook, 2008).[1]

There are five other important differences between BIDs and TCM schemes. First, although both partnership-types receive mixed levels of public sector funding, the two have diverging private sector funding arrangements. English BIDs are funded primarily by a mandatory, multi-year tax on business occupiers, while TCM schemes receive only voluntary payments

---

[1] For critical overviews of the experience of BIDs in the US see Briffault (1999) and Mitchell (2008).

from the private sector. The difference is important, not least because BIDs were introduced to help rectify the inadequate levels of private sector TCM funding (low levels of private sector donations were seen to be the result of the voluntary nature of private sector funding that allowed many businesses to 'free-ride' on others' donations). Second, rather than being replacements of TCM, BIDs are frequently extensions to TCM schemes, often existing as sub-committees of TCM companies. Third, although a number of stand-alone BIDs are emerging, very few are in urban centres and the majority of these are in out-of-centre industrial estates and business parks – places that TCM has not emerged. Fourth, reflecting in part the much earlier introduction of TCM schemes, there are, at the time of writing, considerably more TCM schemes than BIDs in operation in England, with 81 BIDs and over 500 TCM schemes in November 2008 (www.atcm.org; www.ukbids.org).[2] Fifth, business occupiers are allowed to vote on whether or not BIDs can be established in their district, an opportunity not available to businesses if a TCM scheme is planned in their district.

Between 1987 and 1996, TCM emerged in the urban centres of Coventry, Plymouth and Reading amid uncertain economic conditions. Beginning in the 1970s deindustrialisation was destructively underway in Plymouth, Reading and, perhaps most painfully, Coventry where jobs in manufacturing were being, and continue to be, lost at a staggering rate in a once thriving city which promoted itself as the car manufacturing centre of the UK (see, for instance, Healey and Dunham, 1994). In addition to deindustrialisation, Plymouth was contending with a rapidly contracting dockyard that it depended upon for local employment (Bishop, 1991). In contrast to Plymouth and Coventry, Reading's economy was able to

---

[2] TCM schemes and BIDs have also developed in other parts of the UK. However, BIDs only went 'live' in Scotland in 2008 (following the development of BIDs legislation and regulations by the Scottish Executive) and, at the time of writing, BIDs have yet to be legislated in Northern Ireland.

mitigate the economic problems of its declining manufacturing sector primarily through the influx of new information technology, insurance and financial firms to the town (Raco, 2004). Reading's growing professional sector, however, could not mask the problems of its town centre which, like city centres of Coventry and Plymouth, was suffering from fluctuating levels of consumer spending and increased competition from new business parks, retail parks and rival centres. The controlling elites within the three councils felt that in order to bring economic regeneration, "feeding the downtown monster", in the words of Harvey (2000, p. 141), was required. But they felt increasingly unable to do so by themselves. Establishing TCM, it was felt, would enable business elites to help them achieve this. After all, the private sector operated day-in, day-out in the centres, and better knew the needs of business and the ways to attract customers and investment. Developing TCM also meant that several sought-after central government regeneration grants, which were only available to PPPs, became accessible. The rolling out of TCM was also structured by the wider embrace, nationally and locally, of neoliberal ideologies which made speculative and partnership-based schemes such as TCM politically desirable (Lloyd and Peel, 2008). TCM was in the spirit of the times.

The three TCM schemes have all evolved, acquiring new services, new private sector-led management boards and company status. By early 2005, CV One was responsible for a variety of 'street services' including car park management, CCTV monitoring, street trading licensing, street lighting maintenance, street cleaning, landscaping and the maintenance of the city centre public spaces. Following a merger with Coventry and Warwickshire Promotions, it also had responsibility for events management as well as promoting Coventry and the wider county of Warwickshire as a tourist destination. Plymouth CCC in early 2005 was also responsible for encouraging inward investment, street trading licensing and city

centre street wardens. Reading UK CIC, meanwhile, was responsible for strategic planning and attracting inward investment but did not deliver any 'on-the-ground' street services. Many of these services in the three partnerships were simply transferred from their respective councils (while continuing to be paid for by the councils), although a small number of services have been started up by the companies, often funded by non-council grants.

Table 1. Partnership structures, operations and funding.

	CV One	Plymouth CCC	Reading UK CIC
Establishment of TCM and BID	Appointment of City Centre Janitor in 1987. TCM company formed in 1997. Merged with Coventry and Warwickshire Promotions in 2002. BID established in 2005	Informal TCM board established in 1996. City Centre Manager appointed in 1998. BID established in 2005	Town Centre Manager appointed 1989. TCM board established in mid-1990s. BID established in 2006. Evolution into town-wide economic development company in 2007
Legal status	Not-for-profit company limited-by-guarantee (from 1997)	Not-for-profit company limited-by-guarantee (from 2004)	Community Interest Company (CIC) (from 2006)
Relationship between TCM and BID tables	BID committee reports to TCM board	One board focusing on all TCM and BID issues	BID committee reports to CIC board. The Reading Market Group, Local Economy Group and Staff Committee also report to CIC board
Major TCM operations	Car park management, street cleansing, landscaping, toilet cleaning, street trading licensing, retail radio and PubWatch, events management, marketing, CCTV monitoring, business development, Customer Service Assistants	CCTV monitoring, street cleaning, street trading licensing, events management, marketing	Strategic planning, marketing, inward investment and business support
Major BID operations	Evening Ambassadors, rapid response cleaning team, landscaping, Christmas lights, marketing	Free membership to Plymouth Against Retail Crime (PARC) initiative, landscaping, cleaning, Christmas lights, signage and CCTV installation, PCSO match-funding	Street washing, graffiti removal, Christmas lighting, marketing, PCSO match-funding
2007/08 funding	Approx. £9.7m including £6.3m grant from City Council and £286,000 from BID levy	Approx. £660,000 including £256,000 from BID levy, £292,000 from City Council and £105,000 from property owners	Approx. £550,000 including £275,000 from BID levy and £42,000 from Borough Council
BID assessment formula	0.9 percent of rateable value with 33 percent discount for businesses within shopping centres	1 percent of rateable value	1 percent of rateable value excluding shopping centre businesses that do not have street-facing shop front

Source: Partnership websites, interviews conducted and personal communication

Each of the three TCM schemes developed BIDs and these were introduced in April 2005 (CV One, Plymouth CCC) and April 2006 (Reading UK CIC). As detailed in Table 1, additional services have been financed and governed by the BIDs, such as street cleaning, mobile patrols and Christmas lights by CV One and Plymouth CCC. The BID levy, furthermore, has allowed Reading UK CIC to provide on-the-ground street services for the first time. However, their BID services has been limited to the provision of twice-yearly power washing of the streets, the match-funding of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), graffiti removal, Christmas lights provision, additional marketing and CCTV signage. TCM services continue to be provided alongside the newer BID services. Furthermore, all three companies have added to their non-BID funded service portfolios since the rolling out of BIDs, adding services such as street cleaning and city-wide CCTV monitoring (Plymouth CCC) and city-wide economic development and tourism services (Reading UK CIC).

4. Positioning business and business elites within BIDs and TCM

Since their inceptions, officials and supporters have frequently cited the partnerships' abilities to successfully and rightfully empower the private sector. For instance, one Reading UK CIC official interviewed (#2, July 2006) claimed that: "the fundamental principle is that the BID in Reading is 100% business-led". Relatedly, it is frequently suggested that BIDs and TCM are simultaneously by business and for business. Going beyond the discourse, it is possible to identify 10 core, yet overlapping, positions that businesses and business elites have taken up, not always voluntarily, inside and outside of the partnerships. As Table 2 demonstrates, these positions can be divided into three heuristic categories: internal

facilitators (creators, governors, service providers), external facilitators (voters, funders, lobbyists, consultees) and recipients (service users, representees and beneficiaries). Many of these positions are not new to businesses in England who have been 'courted' by other partnership bodies since the early 1980s. However, the positioning of external businesses as voters is unique to BIDs, as is the positioning of businesses as mandatory funders. As TCM and BIDs have drawn upon old partnership-business relations and developed new relations, this paper will now focus in depth on one old relation (business as governors) and one new relation (business as voters). By doing this, the paper can provide a more detailed insight into the different ways in which businesses and business elites are approached and positioned within urban governance and the reasons behind their involvement.

Table 2. The multiple positions of business and business elites within BIDs and TCM.

Internal facilitators	External facilitators	Recipients
Creators. Businesses can directly help establish both partnership-types (e.g. through financing and governing their introduction).	*Voters.* Business occupiers are allowed to vote to establish or reject a BID in their district. Businesses cannot vote on proposed TCM schemes.	*Service users.* A number of TCM and BID services are solely provided for businesses within their districts (e.g. retail radios, business forums).
Governors. Businesses can sit on committees and boards within both partnership-types making decisions about what services are provided, by whom and how.	*Funders.* Businesses can voluntarily fund both partnership-types. If a BID is voted in, business occupiers must pay a BID levy. Other business types (e.g. property owners) do not pay the levy.	*Representees.* TCM schemes and BIDs often liaise with and lobby councils, funding bodies and other organisations to gain favourable decisions for businesses in their district.
Service deliverers. By governing TCM and BIDs, business elites can indirectly provide services for business in their area. If services are contracted out, profit-making firms can deliver these.	*Lobbyists.* Businesses can actively encourage both partnership-types to alter, introduce, reject or dismantle a policy or service. They can also request that TCM and BIDs represents them in other institutional decision-making settings. *Consultees.* Businesses can be consulted on policies and services	*Beneficiaries.* Businesses can benefit directly and indirectly from (a) the services provided to them, customers and investors, and (b) the representation offered by both partnership-types. The benefits will not be guaranteed or evenly distributed.

in BIDs and TCM (e.g. through business forums). Businesses are especially consulted over the content of BID business plans.

4.1. Business as governors

Across the three partnerships, there are eight decision-making tables (including boards of directors and representative committees which operate under the board of directors), all of whom have private sector representatives. Plymouth CCC has one board governing all TCM and BID activities while CV One has a board responsible for pre-existing TCM functions and a BID committee responsible for overseeing the BID services. Within Reading UK CIC, there are four committees (for marketing, economic development, the BID and staff matters) that are accountable to the board of directors.

As Table 3 shows, the decision-making tables are made up of a mixture of partnership staff and representatives from the private and public sectors. All tables feature public sector officials with councils the most frequently represented institution. Nonetheless, the vast majority of members are from the private sector, almost all of these being representatives of companies that have physical assets (such as stores or property) within the associated districts. Retailers dominate some boards (e.g. the Reading UK CIC BID committee) but are less prevalent on others (e.g. CV One board of directors). Property owners are often well represented on most boards but absent on CV One's BID committee and Reading UK CIC's BID committee. With a few exceptions, independent businesses, industry and office-based businesses are under-represented on the eight tables with 'shop-floor' workers and trade unions completely absent. Reflecting wider patterns in local governance structures (see Tickell and Peck, 1996; Robinson and Shaw, 2003), the tables are dominated by white,

middle-aged, middle-class men; exceptions are rare.

The table members across the three partnerships are responsible for making major 'in-house' decisions primarily through board and committee meetings. In Coventry and Reading, BID committee members are responsible for making delegated decisions regarding the delivery of the BID services. Day-to-day management of the partnerships is devolved to the manager and staff in the three partnerships, and they are accountable to the committee and board members. The committee members at CV One and Reading UK CIC are also accountable to board members. Apart from the day-to-day partnership staff on the boards and committees, the public and private representatives consider their positions to be part-time attending less than a handful of meetings a year. Compared to their 'day jobs', the hours spent in the capacities of partnership members are very limited. Reflecting the corporatisation of the three partnerships, the members' roles have morphed over time moving away from advisors to their respective councils to making important decisions themselves. There is a degree of variation between the roles on the three boards, due to, among other things, the nature of the services provided, the mentalities and vested interests of the members, and the finances available. Nevertheless, the private sector members across the three partnerships and eight tables share three core responsibilities (cf. Harris, 1996; Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004, p. 21).

Table 3. Composition of partnerships' boards and BID committees (August 2007).

Sector	CV One Board of Directors	CV One BID Sub-committee	Plymouth City Centre Company Board of Directors	Reading UK CIC Board of Directors	Reading UK CIC BID Committee	Reading UK CIC Reading Marketing Group	Reading UK CIC Local Economy Group	Reading UK CIC Staff Committee
Retail	-	1 (1i)	4 (4m)	1 (1m)	7 (4m 3i)	-	-	-
Financial and professional services	1 (1m)	1 (1m)	1 (1m)	1 (1m)	1 (1i)	-	-	1 (m)
Restaurant, café, drinking establishments and takeaways	-	1 (1i)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Office	-	-	-	-	-	1 (1i)	-	-
Industry	1 (m)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hotels	-	-	-	1 (1m)	1 (1m)	1 (1m)	-	-
Property owners and developers*	1 (1m)	-	3 (3m)	3 (3m)	-	2 (2m)	-	-
Shopping centre managers	-	1	1	1	2	1	1	1
Leisure facilities/centres	-	1	-	-	-	3	-	-
Community and voluntary groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
Chamber of Commerce	-	1	-	1	1	-	-	-
Council	2	-	2	2	1	2	2	1
Police	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-
University	2	-	1	-	-	2	1	-
Transport	1	-	-	1	-	1	-	-
Media	-	-	1	2	-	2	-	1
City Centre Management	1	2	1	-	2	-	5	-
Others	2	-	1	-	1	-	-	-
Total	11	8	14	13	16	15	9	4

Key: m = multiple, i = independent, * excluding shopping centre managers

Source: Personal communication with BID managers

20

First, they are responsible for designing and sanctioning new projects. Within this, they develop, discuss and select project ideas that the partnerships will deliver and the ways in which these projects will be delivered. Implementing these designs is invariably delegated to the partnership staff. The decision-making processes vary between the boards but are often based on a one-personone-vote system (which by no means renders the uneven power relations at work on these boards obsolete).

Second, they are also responsible for service and budget supervision. The members must oversee their implementation of projects and ensure that staffs are delivering the services efficiently and effectively. They are also responsible for looking over the partnerships' financial accounts. As several of the partnerships' services are delivered by private and public sector contractors, the board members have assisted the staff in selecting the preferred contractor and overseeing service delivery. Day-to-day interaction between the partnerships and service provider is also delegated to the manager and staff.

The third responsibility is 'representing' business. The members see themselves as representatives of their own businesses and often as representatives for all the businesses in their geographical district, street or sector. They are, in their minds at least, the conduits through which messages can be passed from their business and other businesses to the partnerships. As one interviewee argued:

> "[A]t the moment we are like a sounding box more than anything else. Trying to give feedback from actual retailers in and around the area to the committee and hopefully that will be of use to formulate plans." Manager, independent retailer, Reading (interview, August 2006)

However, the members are not passive containers transferring all opinions and views precisely and articulately. They are inevitably selective in their translating and, as the interviews revealed, many have only talked to a very small proportion of their fellow businesses regarding the partnerships' activities. One interviewee even admitted that he had never talked to another retailer about the BID outside of those retailers acting as partnership members.

Taking these three areas of responsibility together, it is clear that members have significant powers to define the goals and agendas of the partnerships and to set out the parameters through which the staff can perform their day-to-day jobs. Nonetheless, these powers are shaped, facilitated and constrained by a variety of local and extra-local factors. Most importantly, their decisionmaking in the selection of services is somewhat constrained by their limited finances (York Consulting, 2007). Even CV One, whose budget is far bigger than almost every TCM scheme and BID in England, has not been able to deliver the services it would like. All three partnerships are also limited by funding stipulations from local councils and the attached performance targets set by the councils who demand 'value for money'. They are also influenced by instructions and requests from their 'host' companies; the pressures of 'juggling' a day-job, a social/family life and the duties of being a partnership member; ongoing trading performance; interactions and agreements with other public and private personnel and organisations; bidding requirements; and national government legislation and regulations. Furthermore, the members are also shaped by the cultural norms, discourses and tacit understandings of (a) how to 'behave' as a member and (b) how to shape and deliver 'effective', 'efficient' TCM and BID services (cf. Justice, 2006).

As being a member is effectively a voluntary, part-time job, it is useful to consider why the

private sector members have taken on this role. From the interviews conducted, it clear the decisions to take part have not been made by the individuals alone. Instead, they have depended upon the partnerships allowing them (or in most cases, inviting them) onto the board and committees, and, in the case of multiples, on their head offices or regional managers permitting them to participate. Conversely, the partnerships have been reliant on the desired elites wanting to join. Both sides of the story are, therefore, important to consider.

Although the composition has varied from table to table, the partnerships have all sought a variety of private sector members. This has not been in terms of class, gender, age or ethnicity but in terms of the type of businesses they represent. Having a variety of business types, it has been believed, is more 'representative' and give the partnerships a wider range of skills, resources, knowledges and understandings (Stone, 1989). Nonetheless, the selection of board and committee members has been extremely selective (Peck, 1995; Raco, 2003b). Some business elites and businesses have been approached, asked, accepted and included; others have not.

Reading UK CIC has explicitly rewarded 'suitable' voluntary financial donors with places on its board of directors. Although donations have not been an explicit requirement for entry to the other tables in the three partnerships, donors seem to have been cast in a more favourable light during the selection of possible board members. Nevertheless, the ability to donate money has not been the only criteria for board selection. Many have been chosen because they represent 'flagship' businesses (e.g. shopping centres) or organisations that they have worked alongside (e.g. councils, Chambers of Commerce). In selecting these representatives, the partnerships have believed that (a) stronger intra-organisational linkages

would develop and (b) they would then be able to influence the decisions of the other organisations 'from within'.

Some elites have been selected because they are popular, powerful and well-known within the local business communities. Not only would they add kudos and legitimacy to the partnerships, they would provide knowledge of the local business environment, the needs of businesses and the 'art' of attracting customers and investors. The private sector members have not been selected for their understandings of, or training in, how to clean streets or plant flowers! Furthermore, those targeted have often been regulars on the boards and committees of other partnerships and associations and have, therefore, been seen as "possessing the right skills to become a successful partnership member" (official #1, CV One, interview, August 2006).

The decisions to accept or reject, seek or not seek an invitation have not been the result of fully-rational calculations. The elites possess bounded, partial and uneven knowledge about the partnerships and can only ever make subjective estimations of their future roles as members, the success of the partnerships, and the impacts of their involvement (Justice, 2006). Six reasons for joining were regularly cited in the interviews. The first is that majority have been strongly encouraged to take part whether the invitation has come from partnership elites or from within their own business. In the case of multiples, this encouragement has often been from their head offices. Some of those interviewed, furthermore, suggested that they have been reluctant to disappoint those inviting them with a rejection. Others noted that their predecessors were members and it was part of their job descriptions to follow in their footsteps. A second reason has been a desire to get into the 'inner circle' and actively take part in the decision-making. These decisions were seen as

having important effects on their business and their profitability. Therefore, businesses have wanted to influence the outcome of these decisions.

The third reason for joining is the perception that the services and partnerships are effective catalysts at increasing consumer spending, profits and property values. As one national property company representative on the Plymouth CCC commented during an interview (October 2006):

> "We wanted to get involved to improve the city centre because if the city centre improves, hopefully the value of our holdings will increase. . . [It is] a purely selfish point of view that hopefully a better Plymouth city centre means better returns on our properties, our rents and better capital values if we come to sell them."

Supporting the partnerships may also reduce the need for them to close down their premises or move elsewhere. Significant sunk costs have been invested over many years by retailers and fellow businesses on opening, accommodating, refurbishing and operating their outlets. Should they relocate, significant exit and re-opening costs would arise with a potential disruption to the local customer base and trade linkages (see Cox and Mair, 1988; Guy, 1997, 1999).

The fourth reason is that their presence on the tables can help the partnerships to improve the performance of their business district, which in turn could increase the profitability of their own assets. A fifth reason for joining is that boardroom and committee meetings provide opportunities to liaise regularly with powerful local public and private elites. Before joining many envisaged these 'networking spaces' as being positive for their 'day' jobs and organisations as regular contact could build up trust with competitors and facilitators and

potentially lead to joint-ventures and the selective sharing of information and 'good practices'. Some also foresaw the potential to gain favour with council officials (who are present on many of the tables) which, in turn, could allow them to indirectly influence council decisions that would impinge on them.

The sixth reason cited by the interviewees, albeit less frequently, is a personal or corporate desire to help the local area.

As a manager of an independent restaurant in Coventry (interview, November 2006) commented, "it is nice at times just to put a little bit back in I suppose." Indeed, some reasoned that they have wanted to help improve the facilities and 'shopping experience' in the centre for residents:

> "As a company we believe that we have to make a commitment to the local community, it is not just a question of taking from the community, it is about giving back. And sometimes. . . giving back is not just money but in terms of time and experience and that sort of stuff." Manager, independent retailer, Reading (interview, August 2006)

Some explained that their desire to help the locality has been down to a personal attachment to the area. Many of those interviewed live in the locality or have grown up there and witnessed firsthand the decline of their centre (see also Wood et al., 1998). Many, however, were relatively new to the locality as store managers often had to relocate to take up jobs. Nonetheless, it is revealing that this cultural attachment to place was only ever cited as a secondary factor behind more economic-orientated reasons. Therefore, the decisions to join have not been acts of altruism as businesses have wanted something in return: money. It is

also possible that some of those interviewed who highlighted a desire to help 'their' community may have used this to counterbalance reasons that could come across as being self-centred and profit-orientated.

Non-participation, conversely, seems to have been down to a number of intertwining factors. A number of business elites interviewed who were not positioned as partnership members reasoned that their non-involvement was down to their fear that the partnerships were, and would be, inappropriate and unsuccessful (cf. Medway et al., 2000). Several also reasoned that they lacked, or were perceived to lack, the time, knowledge, status or connections to participate. It was also pointed out that the spaces at the tables had not always been widely advertised and that they are often 'invitation-only'. Arguably then, the abilities of the partnerships to be selective in who they choose to invite makes the 'excluded' business elites' fears of being part of an unsuccessful scheme or being personally ill-equipped to participate somewhat inconsequential.

4.2. Business as voters[3]

Following the Local Government Act 2003, businesses located within a proposed BID area have been able to vote on its establishment. More recently, businesses have also had the opportunity to re-elect existing BIDs for a second term (as BIDs are not allowed to operate beyond 5 years without a positive re-election ballot). Participating in a referendum is new terrain for the private sector in England, which had no such voting power during the

---

[3] Although businesses frequently act as voters in TCM and BID boardroom decisionmaking within their more general remit as governors, this section focuses on their 'external' role as voters in BID ballots.

establishment of the parental TCM schemes or any other PPP formation. It had also been a long time since businesses were last eligible to vote in general elections (1949) or in local elections (1968, with the exception of the City of London which still allows businesses located in the City to vote).

It was decided by New Labour officials to make BID levies extensions of the existing business taxation system, Uniform Business Rates (UBR), in order to reduce "administrative burdens" for local councils who would collect both taxes (interview, New Labour MP, February 2006). As business occupiers rather than property owners were taxed by UBRs, they would also be taxed by the BID levy (i.e. tax)[4]. Therefore, as only business occupiers would pay the BID levy, it was considered appropriate that only business occu- piers could vote in the BID ballots. Property owners who only rented out their properties would be ineligible to vote in BID ballots or pay the BID levy (Cook, 2008).

In line with English and Welsh legislation, the BID proposals in Coventry, Plymouth and Reading had to pass the 'dual-key test' at the ballot box. First, they required 'yes' votes from 50% of the voters. Second, those that voted yes needed to possess a higher combined 'rateable value' (i.e. estimated rental value of the properties) than all those who voted against the proposal. All three partnerships achieved both parts of the dual-key test reasonably comfortably although, as Table 4 demonstrates, the margin of support was greater in Coventry and Plymouth than in Reading. CV One was also successfully re-elected in early 2008, although the voting figures changed little from their first election in 2005. Reelections are expected during 2009 in Reading and 2010 in Plymouth. More widely, between

---

[4] With the exception of Ireland, overseas BID financing systems – in Canada, Germany, Ireland, South Africa and the US for instance – require property owners to pay the BID levy (Morçöl et al., 2008). Even in Scotland, local schemes can choose to empower property owners, alongside occupiers, as mandatory financers and voters should they wish.

November 2004 and November 2008, 98 BID ballots had taken place across England with 81 BIDs proposals voted in and 17 proposals rejected. The latter included three schemes that have been rejected twice (that is, once initially and once again in a re-ballot).

Table 4. BID ballot results.

	CV One (1st ballot)	CV One (2nd ballot)	Plymouth CCC	Reading UK CIC
Ballot ended	24 February 2005	28 February 2008	1 March 2005	17 November 2005
% of votes for by number	78%	83%	77%	68%
% of votes for by rateable value	75%	85%	66%	60%
Turnout	37%	36%	58%	38%
Number of votes	263	254	305	134
Commencement date	1 April 2005	1 April 2008	1 April 2005	1 April 2006
BID duration	3 years	5 years	5 years	3 years

Source: Partnership websites

As businesses are widely perceived as being opposed to tax increases of any kind, it is important to consider why large numbers of businesses voted to establish BIDs. An analysis of the first round of ballots in Coventry (2005), Plymouth (2005) and Reading (2006) provide some answers. To begin, a causal link between the size and type of businesses and their voting patterns was not apparent. A variety of businesses supported the three BIDs, and equally a variety voted against them or simply did not vote.[5] The person responsible for

---

[5] This was ascertained through interviewing businesses who voted in the BID ballots. As with political party elections, the BID ballots were anonymous and, therefore, a quantitative breakdown of voting patterns was not possible.

casting the vote, however, did differ between independent and multiple businesses. The independent stores frequently left this decision to the in-store manager or owner. The chain stores, who dominate the properties in the centres and the peak rental sites in particular, rarely left this decision with store managers. Instead, the decision was frequently centralised and made by head office officials, several of whom had begun constructing standardised decision-making criteria to make voting in multiple BID ballots simpler. Voting, therefore, was no means a 'local' issue.

The three partnerships spent significant amounts of time canvassing for support prior to the ballots, developing websites, disseminating business proposals, and setting up face-to-face meetings and telephone conversations with potential voters. Six central, overlapping messages were put across to the businesses: first, this was a necessary investment and would improve profitability; second, the services would be ring-fenced and additional to those already provided; third, the proposals had been constructed through consultation with businesses; fourth, the BID would be led by businesses, for businesses, therefore offering control about how money was spent; fifth, as the existing TCM partnership had been successful, this success would be continued with the BID; and sixth, other businesses and the local authority supported the proposal. These messages were altered depending on the perceived needs of the audience and their reception. Messages, furthermore, were subtly morphed to appeal to "similar but not identical values, to explain the similarity of those shared values" (North et al., 2001, p. 832) and the necessity for businesses to back the proposal.

The canvassing was clearly successful in the sense that all three BIDs were voted in. However, a closer look at the referendum statistics in Fig. 1 reveals that business support

was by no means wholesale. In Coventry 29% of the eligible businesses voted in favour of the BID, in Plymouth it was 45% and in Reading 26%. The majority of businesses either did not vote or voted no. Voter turnout was relatively low at 37% in Coventry, 38% in Reading and 58% in Plymouth. These statistics demonstrate that a consensus had not emerged among businesses in the three centres. While some BID officials promoted the victory as a "clear mandate by the business community" (Reading UK CIC, 2005, p. 1), business support was actually somewhat fragmented and partial.

As with the decisions to join the partnerships' boards and committees, the voting decisions were about making informed but bounded judgements and predictions. Many were persuaded by the partnerships' electoral campaign discourse, while others disagreed, were unaware or simply disinterested. Some perceived the BID to be a beneficial, even necessary, catalyst that would raise the trading performance and value of their relatively fixed investments:

> "Our decision was a long-term one. Would these services improve the attractiveness of the area? Would it make people more likely to visit? Would it improve our profits? The answer to these is yes. So why would we say no?" Store manager, multiple retailer, Reading (interview, August 2006)
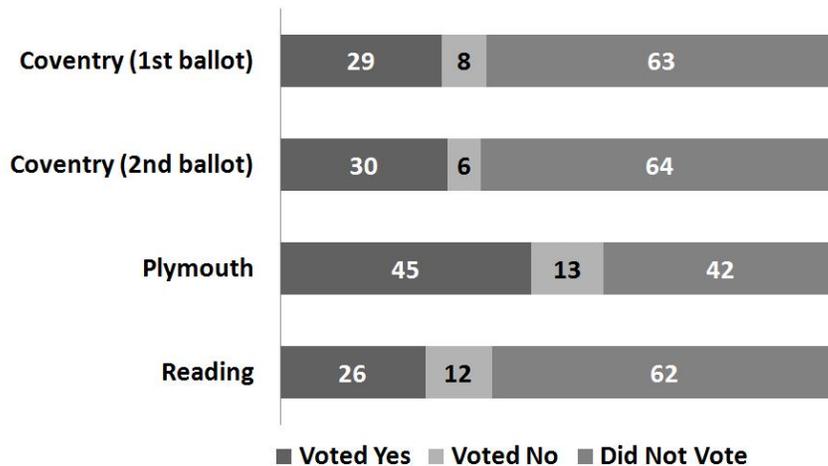
Fig. 1. Percentages of businesses voting yes, voting no or abstaining in Coventry, Plymouth and Reading.

Others, however, were unconvinced, believing that there were no guaranteed assurances that the BID would perform or that its services would deliver a return on their investment. After all, the services selected were inherently speculative; increased marketing, mobile patrols and cleaner streets were by no means guaranteed to increase consumer spending and investment (interview, manager, independent retailer, Plymouth, October 2006).

Several multiple retailers situated within the BID districts also had property interests. A small number such as the Co-operative Group have property development or investment 'wings' to their companies, while many other companies have freehold ownership of the property their stores inhabit (Guy, 1997; Medway et al., 2000). These businesses, therefore, had to consider whether the proposed BID would help raise property values as well as in-store sales.

The 'business-led' and ring-fenced nature of the BIDs was also important to many decision-

makers. Some businesses were reassured that the proposed services were governed by business-dominated boards and decided through business consultation. Their money, furthermore, would remain within the district and would not be redirected elsewhere in the city or country as the UBR system was perceived to be doing. As the interviews revealed, it is highly unlikely that businesses would have voted for the schemes if the money generated was not 'ring-fenced' or if the BIDs were deemed to be council-run or council-dominated. Nonetheless, there were many who saw the mandatory levy as a costly and unnecessary level of business taxation spent on an unknown entity. Many were concerned that property owners and the respective councils were benefiting unnecessarily from the BID services paid for by their levy contributions. Some objected to having to pay for services that the council and police already provide, funded in part by their UBRs and council tax. Any additional services, in their eyes, should have been funded by the public sector. As the HMV Group's Head of Property (who voted on behalf of their multiple stores in Coventry, Plymouth and Reading) stated:

> "We are convinced of the need to make environments clean and safe, but believe that is why we already pay business taxes and that burden should fall on the local authority... We judge each BID on a case-by-case basis, but have yet to find one that convinced us of its business worth... BIDs should tackle more strategic issues and if they work towards making a difference there, we would back them." (Quoted in Creevy, 2006, p. 36)

While opposition to the BID levy existed among businesses, it was not organised opposition. The most vocal opponents to the BID levy were the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) who perceived BIDs to be an additional expense on small businesses whose profit margins

are often precariously low. While they campaigned vocally during the construction of national legislation, this vocalism disintegrated afterwards as they moved on to monitor other national government policy prescriptions. In turn, their opposition to local BID proposals has been somewhat half-hearted. Outside of FSB circles, organised opposition was almost non-existent in Coventry, Plymouth and Reading. The Chambers of Commerce, traditional conduits for businesses to lobby urban governance officials, were broadly supportive of the BID proposals in the three localities. Neither head office officials nor local retailers who were opposed to the BIDs engaged in any sustained form of consensus-building. Their hostility was generally restricted to intra-organisational mutterings, a no vote or a discarded voting form.

Many businesses, of course, abstained from voting. In some senses this is surprising as they had the opportunity to vote on the creation of an additional business tax, something that you would expect businesses to have expressed some form of interest in. Nonetheless, the level of apathy can be attributed to four key factors: first, the decision-makers having a lack of interest in the initiative; second, a belief that the BID would make little difference to their profits; third, a lack of information about what they were voting for and how they could vote; and fourth, some may have simply felt that their vote would make little difference. The partnerships, after all, were keen to pronounce the high level of support prior to the elections resulting in some onlookers thinking (positively or negative) that the result was a foregone conclusion (interview, manager, independent retailer, Plymouth, October 2006). What this demonstrates is that businesses do not simply support any partnership scheme, no matter how 'business-led' it is promoted as being. As BIDs in Coventry, Plymouth and Reading show, private sector apathy, indecision and opposition are significant issues in urban governance.

5. Conclusion

This paper has offered an insight into the positioning of businesses and business elites in urban governance and the motivations behind their involvement through a comparative analysis of TCM and BID partnerships in the urban centres of Coventry, Plymouth and Reading. It has demonstrated that the positioning of the private sector within urban governance is more complex, multifarious, selective and fractured than previous accounts of urban governance and partnership discourses have implied. Varying from partnership to partnership, businesses are nearly always involved with urban governance in at least one of three ways: as internal facilitators (e.g. creators, governors, service deliverers), external facilitators (e.g. voters, funders, lobbyists, consultees) and recipients (e.g. service users, representees, beneficiaries). English BIDs go beyond most business-PPP relations by positioning business occupiers as (external) voters and mandatory funders. It remains to be seen whether these unique tactics will be replicated by non-BID or TCM partnerships.

One key issue that can be drawn out from this study is that of scalar relations. Quite simply, the dynamics of business involvement in TCMs and BIDs is not just a local issue. Local decisions, politics, economic plights and organisational structures are vitally important in contingently shaping business involvement. However, as Jessop et al. (1999) have argued, excessively 'localist' readings are inadequate as they overlook the ways in which decisions and actions of local actors and the contexts in which they act and make decisions are shaped, subtly and not so subtly, by extra-local actors, institutions, decisions, rules and processes. In this paper, we have seen that a multitude of extra-local factors influence the ways in which the private sector is positioning within TCM schemes and BIDs. These range from the

desire of head-offices (nearly always located elsewhere) to cast BID votes and pressure store managers into participating in the BIDs to the national government 'rule regimes' which, for instance, develop the legal requirements of company directors and exclude property owners from being taxed and voting in BID ballots. Actors such as the local business elites in Coventry, Plymouth and Reading are not dupes, of course, and have a significant degree of autonomy in how they engage with, or do not engage with, others and in how they interpret and implement centrally prescribed policies and advice. Fundamentally though, they are acting and thinking in a (shifting) context not of their own choosing. Urban politics, in sum, is not confined to the boundaries of the city.

The research conducted supports Peck's (1995) argument that it is state restructuring and the licensing out of state power that creates the institutional space for business elites and businesses to occupy in the first place. Like many other partnerships, TCM schemes would not have been created if councils did not engage in 'partnership working' or privatise council services. However, as Wood (2004) correctly notes, the political empowerment of the private sector requires business elites and businesses to get involved. There must be some complicity and activity by the private sector for PPPs such as TCM and BIDs to exist. In line with Logan and Molotch (1987; Molotch, 1976, 1993) and Cox and Mair's (1988, 1989) arguments, the study also suggests that the thirst for profit maximisation is the primary motivation for the political mobilisation of the private sector. Whether or not the partnerships and their services will enhance the profitability of their relatively-fixed assets appears to be the central factor in the private sectors' decisions to donate time, money and resources. This is not to say that other factors, such as a cultural attachment to place, are not important (Wood et al., 1998). Rather, it is to say that they are often only secondary considerations. This study has also demonstrated that material interests do not automatically

translate into local political activity in the way that Cox and Mair implicitly suggest (Wood et al., 1998; Wood, 2004). This would be a functionalist argument. Instead, decisions to take part are made by actors who 'weigh up' the potential advantages and disadvantages of taking part, and predict the potential effects on their assets (Justice, 2006). Furthermore, their involvement, on boards especially, is subject to negotiation with the partnerships. Some are encouraged or invited while others are ignored, overlooked or rejected.

This leads on to the final key point: private sector involvement is uneven and highly selective. Business elites have more influence on some institutions, policies and services than others, and this influence is temporally and spatially variable. Furthermore, as Peck (1995) noted several years ago, it is often only a select few business elites who are able to take part in these new governance structures. Some are not included or have tokenistic involvement, while others struggle to make their views heard. What is more, the private sectors' willingness to actually get involved, irrespective of whether the state or partnerships want them to, is highly variable. Many do not share the 'official line' that the partnerships will make significant returns on their investments and, as a result, are reluctant to assist. Inclusion and exclusion in urban governance, therefore, is shaped by the willingness and abilities of the private sector to get involved and articulate their views vis-à-vis the partnerships and other state institutions' entry requirements, monitoring procedures and communication channels. In sum, the politics of business involvement in urban governance is complex, centred primarily on the desire for profit maximisation, and, as the promotional rhetoric of the new urban politics rarely tells us, involves significant and uneven volumes of apathy, dissensus and exclusion.

Acknowledgements

References

Atkinson, R., 2003. Addressing urban social exclusion through community involvement in urban regeneration. In: Imrie, I., Raco, M. (Eds.), Urban Renaissance? New Labour, Community and Urban Policy. Policy Press, Bristol, pp. 101–120.

Bishop, P., 1991. Defence, the dockyard and diversification. In: Chalkley, B., Dunkerley, D., Gripaios, P. (Eds.), Plymouth: Maritime City in Transition. David and Charles, Newton Abbott, pp. 107–117.

Briffault, R., 1999. A government for our time? Business Improvement Districts and urban governance. Columbia Law Review 99 (2), 365–477.

Coca-Stefaniak, J.A., Parker, C., Quin, S., Rinaldi, R., Byrom, J., 2009. Town centre management models: a European perspective. Cities 26 (1), 74–80.

Cook, I.R., 2008. Mobilising urban policies: the policy transfer of US Business Improvement Districts to England and Wales. Urban Studies 45 (4), 773–795.

Cook, I.R., 2011. Policing, partnerships and profit: the operations of Business Improvement Districts and Town Centre Management schemes in England. Urban Geography 31 (4), 453-478.

Cornforth, C., 2003. Conclusion: contextualising and managing the paradoxes of governance. In: Cornforth, C. (Ed.), The Governance of Public and Non-Profit Organisations: What do Boards do? Routledge, London, pp. 237–253.

Cox, K.R., 1993. The local and the global in the new urban politics: a critical review. Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 11 (4), 443–448.

Cox, K.R., Mair, A., 1988. Locality and community in the politics of local economic development. Annals of the Association of American Geographers 78 (2), 307– 325.

Cox, K.R., Mair, A., 1989. Urban growth machines and the politics of local economic development. International Journal of Urban and Regional Research 13 (1), 137– 146.

Creevy, J., 2006. Making the right bid. Retail Week, 36–37 (9 June). Dibben, P., Higgins, P., 2004. New Public Management: marketisation, managerialism and consumerism. In: Dibben, P., Wood, G., Roper, I. (Eds.), Contesting Public Sector Reforms: Critical Perspectives; International Debates. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, pp. 26–37.

Dunleavey, P., Hood, C., 1994. From old public administration to New Public Management. Public Money and Management 14 (3), 9–16.

Farnsworth, K., 2006. Capital to the rescue? New Labour's business solutions to old welfare problems. Critical Social Policy 26 (4), 817–842. Flinders, M., 2005. The politics of public– private partnerships. British Journal of Politics and International Relations 7 (2), 215–239.

Flinders, M., 2006. Public/private: the boundaries of the state. In: Hay, C., Lister, C., Marsh, D. (Eds.), The State: Theories and Issues. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, pp. 223–247.

Forsberg, H., Medway, D., Warnaby, G., 1999. Town centre management by co-operation: evidence from Sweden. Cities 16 (5), 315–322.

Geddes, M., 2006. Partnership and the limits to local governance in England: institutionalist analysis and neoliberalism. International Journal of Urban and Regional Research 30 (1), 76–97.

Giddens, A., 1984. The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration. Policy Press, Cambridge.

Ginsburg, N., 2005. The privatization of council housing. Critical Social Policy 25 (1), 115–135.

Gregson, N., 2005. Agency:structure. In: Cloke, P., Johnston, R. (Eds.), Spaces of Geographical Thought: Deconstructing Human Geography's Binaries. Sage, London, pp. 21–41.

Grimshaw, D., Vincent, S., Willmott, H., 2002. Going privately: partnership and outsourcing in UK public services. Public Administration 80 (3), 475–502.

Guy, C., 1997. Fixed assets or sunk costs? An assessment of retailers' land and property investment in the United Kingdom. Environment and Planning A 29 (8), 1449–1464.

Guy, C., 1999. Exit strategies and sunk costs: the implications for multiple retailers. International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management 27 (6), 237–245.

Hall, T., Hubbard, P., 1996. The entrepreneurial city: new urban politics, new urban geographies? Progress in Human Geography 20 (2), 153–174.

Harris, M., 1996. Do we need governing bodies? In: Billis, D., Harris, M. (Eds.), Voluntary Agencies: Challenges of Organisation and Management. Macmillan, London, pp. 149–165.

Harvey, D., 1989. From managerialism to entrepreneurialism: the transformation in urban governance in late capitalism. Geografiska Annaler Series B: Human Geography 71 (1), 3–17.

Harvey, D., 2000. Spaces of Hope. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh.

Healey, M.J., Dunham, P.J., 1994. Changing competitive advantage in a local economy: the case of Coventry, 1971–1990. Urban Studies 31 (8), 1279–1301.

Higgins, P., James, P., Roper, I., 2005. The role of competition in best value: how far does it differ from CCT? Local Government Studies 31 (2), 219–235.

Hubbard, P., Hall, T., 1998. The entrepreneurial city and the 'new urban politics'. In: Hall, T., Hubbard, P. (Eds.), The Entrepreneurial City: Geographies of Politics, Regime and Representation. John Wiley and Sons, Chichester, pp. 1–26.

Imrie, R., Raco, M., 1999. How new is the new local governance? Lessons from the United Kingdom. Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers 24 (1), 45–63.

Imrie, R., Raco, M., 2001. 'A critique without a focus': a response to Ward's re-interpretation of urban politics. Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers 25 (1), 121–126.

Imrie, R., Thomas, H., Marshall, T., 1995. Business organisations, local dependence and the

politics of urban renewal in Britain. Urban Studies 32 (1), 31–37.

Jessop, B., 1997. The entrepreneurial city: re-imaging localities, redesigning economic governance, or restructuring capital. In: Jewson, N., MacGregor, S. (Eds.), Transforming Cities: Contested Governance and New Spatial Divisions. Routledge, London, pp. 28–41.

Jessop, B., Peck, J., Tickell, A., 1999. Retooling the machine: economic crisis, state

restructuring, and urban politics. In: Jonas, A.E.G., Wilson, D. (Eds.), The Urban Growth Machine: Critical Perspectives Two Decades Later. SUNY Press, New York, pp. 141–162.

Justice, J., 2006. Social construction of rational self-interest: the case of Business Improvement Districts. Paper presented at the School of Public Policy, University of Birmingham.

Kavaratzis, M., 2007. City marketing: the past, the present and some unresolved issues. Geography Compass 1 (3), 695–712.

Kjær, A.M., 2009. Governance and the urban bureaucracy. In: Davies, J.S., Imbroscio, D.L. (Eds.), Theories of Urban Politics, second ed. Sage, London, pp. 137–152.

Lloyd, G., Peel, D., 2008. From Town Centre Management to the BID model in Britain: towards a new contractualism? In: Morçöl, G., Hoyt, L., Meek, J.W., Zimmerman, U. (Eds.), Business Improvement Districts: Research, Theories, and Controversies. Routledge, London, pp. 71–94.

Logan, J.R., Molotch, M.L., 1987. Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place. University of California Press, Berkeley, CA.

Medway, D., Alexander, A., Bennison, D., Warnaby, G., 1999. Retailers' financial support for town centre management. International Journal of Retail and Distribution 27 (6), 246–255.

Medway, D., Warnaby, G., Bennison, D., Alexander, A., 2000. Reasons for retailers' involvement in town centre management. International Journal of Retail and Distribution 28 (8), 368–378.

Mitchell, J., 2008. Business Improvement Districts and the Shape of American Cities. SUNY Press, New York.

Mole, V., 2003. What are chief executives' expectations and experiences of their board? In: Cornforth, C. (Ed.), The Governance of Public and Non-Profit Organisations: What do Boards do? Routledge, London, pp. 150–163.

Molotch, H., 1976. The city as a growth machine—towards a political economy of place. American Journal of Sociology 82 (2), 309–332.

Molotch, H., 1993. The political economy of growth machines. Journal of Urban Affairs 15 (1), 29–53.

Morçöl, G., Hoyt, L., Meek, J.W., Zimmerman, U. (Eds.), 2008. Business Improvement Districts: Research, Theories, and Controversies. Routledge, London.

Nijman, J., 2007. Introduction – comparative urbanism. Urban Geography 28 (1), 1– 6.

North, P., Valler, D., Wood, A., 2001. Talking business: an actor-centred analysis of business agendas for local economic development. International Journal of Urban and Regional Research 25 (4), 830–846.

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004. BID Guidance: A Working Draft. ODPM, London.

Peck, J., 1995. Moving and shaking: business élites, state localism and urban privatism. Progress in Human Geography 19 (1), 16–46.

Peck, J., Tickell, A., 1995. Business goes local: dissecting the business agenda in Manchester. International Journal of Urban and Regional Research 19 (1), 55– 78.

Raco, M., 2003a. Assessing the discourses and practices of urban regeneration in a growing region. Geoforum 34 (1), 37–55.

Raco, M., 2003b. The social relations of business representation and devolved governance in the United Kingdom. Environment and Planning A 35 (10), 1853– 1876.

Raco, M., 2004. Urban regeneration in a growing region: the renaissance of England's average town. In: Johnstone, C., Whitehead, M. (Eds.), New Horizons in British Urban Policy: Perspectives on New Labour's Urban Renaissance. Ashgate, Aldershot, pp. 41–58.

Raco, M., Flint, J., 2001. Communities, places and institutional relations: assessing the role of area-based community representation in local governance. Political Geography 20 (5), 585– 612.

Robinson, F., Shaw, K., 2003. Who governs North East England? A regional perspective on governance. In: Cornforth, C. (Ed.), The Governance of Public and Non-Profit Organisations: What do Boards do? Routledge, London, pp. 23–39.

Reading UK CIC, 2005. Central Reading Businesses Vote 'Yes' to First BID in the South

East. Reading UK CIC, Reading.

Reimer, S., 2003. Employer strategies and the fragmentation of local employment: the case of contracting out local authority services. In: Martin, R.L., Morrison, P.S. (Eds.), Geographies of Labour Market Inequality. Routledge, London, pp. 110–128.

Rochester, C., 2003. The role of boards in small voluntary organisation. In: Cornforth, C. (Ed.), The Governance of Public and Non-Profit Organisations: What do Boards do? Routledge, London, pp. 115–130.

Saint-Martin, D., 1998. The new managerialism and the policy influence of consultants in government: an historical-institutionalist analysis of Britain, Canada and France. Governance 11 (3), 310–356.

Shaoul, J., Stafford, A., Stapleton, P., 2007. Partnerships and the role of financial advisors: private control over public policy? Policy and Politics 35 (3), 479–495. Stone, C., 1989. Regime Politics: Governing Atlanta 1946–1988. University of Kansas Press, Kansas.

Szymanski, S., Wilkins, S., 1993. Cheap rubbish? Competitive tending and contracting out in refuse collection—1981–1988. Fiscal Studies 14 (3), 109–130.

Thomas, H., 1994. The local press and urban renewal: a South Wales case study. International Journal of Urban and Regional Research 18 (2), 315–333.

Tickell, A., Peck, J., 1996. The return of the Manchester Men: men's words and men's deeds in the remaking of the local state. Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers 21 (4), 595–616.

Valler, D., Wood, A., 2004. Devolution and the politics of business representation: a strategic relational approach. Environment and Planning A 36 (10), 1835–1854.

Valler, D., Wood, A., North, P., 2000. Local governance and local business interests: a critical review. Progress in Human Geography 24 (3), 409–428.

Ward, K., 2000. A critique in search of a corpus: re-visiting governance and reinterpreting urban politics. Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers 25 (2), 169–185.

Ward, K., 2001. The re-interpretation of urban politics: three authors, four papers and the 'shibboleth of regulation theory'. Transactions of the Institute of British Geography 26 (1), 127–133.

Ward, K., 2007a. 'Clean, safe and friendly': Wisconsin's Business Improvement Districts. Imagining Urban Futures Working Paper 3, University of Manchester.

Ward, K., 2007b. Creating a personality for downtown: Business Improvement Districts in Milwaukee. Urban Geography 28 (8), 781–808.

Ward, K., 2008. Editorial – Towards a comparative turn in urban studies? Some Reflections. Urban Geography 29 (5), 405–410.

Warnaby, G., Bennison, D., Davies, B.J., 2005. Marketing town centres: retailing and Town Centre Management. Local Economy 20 (2), 183–204.

Wood, A., 2004. Domesticating urban theory? US concepts, British cities and the limits of cross-national applications. Urban Studies 41 (11), 2103–2118.

Wood, A., Valler, D., North, P., 1998. Local business representation and the private sector

role in local economic policy in Britain. Local Economy 13 (1), 10–27.

York Consulting, 2007. The Development and Implementation of Business Improvement

Districts. Department for Communities and Local Government, London.