IMAGINING URBAN FUTURES

WORKING PAPER 7

Policies in motion and in place: the case of

Business Improvement Districts

Kevin Ward

Geography, School of Environment and Development, University of Manchester

Kevin.ward@manchester.ac.uk

March 2009

Introduction

It is unlikely that many of you have heard of Royston in England. If you have, I

apologize. It is a small market town approximately fifteen miles south west of

Cambridge and forty miles north of London, with a population of just over fifteen

thousand. Not known for much, beyond being where the world's first catalytic

converter was invented, it has in recent years experienced a gradual downtown in its

economic fortunes. While its retail centre retains a mix of independent and multi-

national outlets, those overseeing its future economic viability have become concerned.

Initially a town centre manager was appointed and a Royston Town Centre Forum was

established. This undertook various marketing and promotional activities in an attempt

to make the centre more competitive. While it had its successes, those in the public and

private sectors were also aware of its limits. A senior manager at Johnson Matthey, a

locally based but international-in-reach chemicals company, with operations in over

thirty countries and employing almost nine thousand staff worldwide, together with a

mixture of local store owners and representatives of the city and county government

were aware of how other localities facing similar issues were responding. The fate of

Royston was compared unfavorably with neighboring Rugby, for example. So began

the long process of petitioning for the creation of a Business Improvement District, a

public-private partnership in which property and business owners in a defined

geographical area vote to make a collective contribution to governance of their commercial district. Businesses were questioned on their aspirations for the town centre, an external consultant was hired to 'consult' on the process, and the formal legal procedures were put in place for the vote. And, on the 2 December 2008 Royston became the latest English locality to establish a BID when 39% of the 61% of all businesses who voted agreed to establish a Royston BID. *Royston First*, the group of local stakeholders who led on the campaign to establish a BID formed the not-for-profit private company when the Business Improvement District came into existence on 1 April 2009. It will have five years to deliver on its objectives of 'transforming the local feel of the town, reversing the negative image, increasing footfall, spend and dwell time' (http://www.woodenhouse.com/roystonfirst/Resources/FAQs.pdf). And it won't be doing this in an informational vacuum. As *Royston First* acknowledges, 'there are 76 BIDs operating throughout the UK, so we are able to learn much about what works and what the impact of projects in a BID area are'

(http://www.woodenhouse.com/roystonfirst/Resources/FAQs.pdf).   Add to this a whole plethora of organized events – such as conference, master-classes, seminars and workshops -- and on-line resources, most notably through the National BIDs Advisory Service (http://www.ukbids.org/) – and it is evident that a vast informational infrastructure is place to support the rolling-out of the BID program across the country.

It is hard to imagine a place more dissimilar to New York than Royston. One might also say the same about Bedford (a small town in Bedfordshire in the south east of England), Oldham (a medium size town in the north west of England) and Winchester (a small town in the south west of England). Yet to understand what will take place in Royston over the next five years it is necessary to turn to New York. More specifically, about how what happened in the city in the 1990s involving Business Improvement Districts was behind the UK government's 2001 introduction of a BID program, which in turn shaped the way differently situated and sized cities and towns in England, such as Royston, have strived to revalorize their central economies. For during this period the BID program became to be seen as an important element in the strategy for turning around the previously ailing Manhattan economy. According to one local commentator,' [Business Improvement Districts] … cleaned up, almost alone, key areas of Manhattan business districts … They … contributed to the drop in crime' (Lentz 1998: 4). While the actual origins of the program lay elsewhere (Hoyt 2006; Ward 2006), and other US cities had also introduced Business Improvement District with differing degrees of success (J. Mitchell 2001; Ward 2007a, 2010), it was the program's place in the internationally heralded successful renaissance of New York during the 1990s that alerted practitioners, policy-makers, politicians and a host of other agents of transference to the possibilities of the BID program (Ward 2006), setting the context for the recent vote in Royston.

This paper uses the internationalization of Business Improvement Districts to address the volume's examination of 'the global circuits of knowledge, the institutions, and the individual actors involved in making contemporary cities into governable spaces'. It is in three sections. The first provides a short argument for how best to understand theoretically the way cities are produced through the circuits, networks and webs that connect unevenly and in a geographical differentiated manner a growing number of cities together. This is not about supplanting more traditional and still valuable territorial analyses of 'urban' politics. It highlights the types of agents of transference involved in the moving and embedding of urban development programs in general, focusing on its most visible channels. The second section turns to setting the context for Business Improvement Districts, before the paper moves onto outlining the program's relational and territorial geographies. It presents an analysis that emphasizes both the ways in which the program has been rendered mobile and the place-specific contextual factors that shape how the program has been territorially embedded in different places.

Policies in motion/policies in place

> The cumulative effect of a range of developments – the internationalization of
> consultancy firms; the broadening policy remits of transnational institutions; the
> formation of new policy networks around think tanks, governmental agencies
> and professional associations; and the growth of international conferencing and
> policy tourism – has been to proliferate, widen and lubricate channels of cross-
> border policy transfer (Peck 2003: 228-229)

Relational and territorial geographies

If it were ever enough to account for change in the nature of urban development on the

basis of analysis generated solely from within cities and the countries of which they are

part then that time has surely passed. Recent work from across the social sciences has

instead argued for an approach to the theorization of space that is both relational and

territorial (Allen et al 1998; Allen and Cochrane 2007; McCann and Ward 2008; Massey

1993, 1999, 2007; Morgan 2007). It has highlighted the increasingly open, porous and

inter-connected configuration of territorial entities (Massey 2005, 2007). As MacLeod

and Jones (2007: 1186) put it, 'all contemporary expressions of territory … are, to

varying degrees, punctuated by and orchestrated through a myriad of trans-territorial

networks and relational webs of connectivity.' One such consequence for urban studies

scholars has been a burgeoning interest in the circuits, networks and webs in and

through which is transferred policies and programs (Cook 2008; McCann 2008a, 2008b;

McCann and Ward 2008; Peck and Theodore 2001; Robinson 2007; Ward 2006, 2007b).

Eschewing the political science dominated 'policy transfer' literature, which although

not without its insights is also not without its limits (McCann 2008a, McCann and Ward

2008; Ward 2007), this work has sought to uncover *how* – through what practices, where,

when, and by whom – urban policies are produced in a global relational context, are

transferred and reproduced from place to place, and are negotiated politically in

various territories. For Wacquant (1999: 321) there is a need to:

> reconstitute, link by link, the long chain of institutions, agents, and discursive
>
> supports (advisors' memoranda, commission reports, official missions,
>
> parliamentary exchanges, expert panels, scholarly books and popular pamphlets,
>
> press conferences, newspaper articles and televisions reports, etc.)

Larner (2003: 510) agrees, arguing for a 'more careful tracing of the intellectual, policy,

and practitioner networks that underpin the global expansion of neoliberal ideas, and

their subsequent manifestation in government policies and programmes.' Specifically,

paying particular attention to how, through 'ordinary' and 'extra-ordinary' activities, and in and through 'globalizing micro-spaces' (Larner and Le Heron 2002: 765), such as conferences, seminars and workshops, would reveal how and why some policies are made mobile while others are not, and what this means for the on-going socio-spatial (re)structuring of cities.

Of course, this interest in the mobility of programs should not be taken to suggest that 'territory' or 'place' are academically redundant concepts. Far from it, and indeed, an important aspect in this expanding intellectual field is an acknowledgement of the importance of the territorial embedding of mobile policies in particular places (Peck and Theodore 2001; McCann 2008a, 2008b; McCann and Ward 2008). Approaches that emphasize 'territory' and 'scale' in the forging and representation of the political co-ordinates of the current global urban condition continue to have strong intellectual purchase (Brenner 2004; MacLeod and Jones 2007). There is a long ideational lineage to these contributions, particularly around notions of 'coalitions', 'regimes' and other sorts of territorial alliances (Cox 1995; Cox and Mair 1988; Harvey 1989; Jonas and Wilson 1999; Lauria 1997; Logan and Molotch 1987; Peck 1995; Stone 1989; Ward 2000).

Understanding and explaining the making, unmaking and remaking of spatial restructuring and transformation demands we locate the geographical asymmetrical power geometries that underpin them (Massey 1993; Sayer 2004). This necessitates a continued attention to territoriality, as 'as a micro-world that is experienced and

contested as a lived space; as heterogeneity negotiated habitually through struggles over roads and noise, public spaces, siting decisions, neighborhoods and neighbors, housing developments, street life and so on' (Amin 2004: 39). 'Many prosaic moments of *realpolitik*' (MacLeod and Jones 2007: 1185) are then expressed and conducted through territorial or 'turf' politics of dependence and engagement (Cox 1998).

In the example of the embedding of mobile policies it remains the case that mobility remains heavily structured and stratified by issues of absolute and relative place-based characteristics. Past developments within and between territories make some mobility more or less likely. As McCann (2008b: 37) puts it, 'one's embeddedness in particular institutional and political contexts … define[s] a constrained set of pathways for action.' 'The policy development process is in large part a path-dependent one' we are reminded by Peck and Theodore (2001: 430). The making mobile of programs occurs in the context of a 'discussion of existing problems, general ideas about dealing with them, and specific proposed solutions' according to Wolman (1992: 34), most of which will be structured by past and existing patterns and processes of development within territories.

Historicizing the mobility of policies and the disciplining effects of comparison

Of course, it is not the case that in the past those involved in designing and planning urban revitalization lived in splendid isolation. They did not (Hall 1989; Wolman 1992; Campbell 2001). There is a reasonably long history to the mobility of urban policies and programs. According to Hoyt (2006: 223), 'for hundred of years, urban policy entrepreneurs – like architects, planners and other experts – have traveled to study other places, make contacts, attend lectures and return to homelands to report that they had learned.' For example, the construction of Colonial cities involved the widespread transfer of policies and programs from one colony to another as particular political economic pathways and trajectories were established (Blaut 1993). Within Europe the period from the early twentieth century saw the establishment of a number of 'trans-boundary' 'municipal connections' to the point that:

> [t]he network of individual exchanges, visits, writings and their circulation,
> whether as part of an external structure (a political party, trade union or
> academic conference) or as an activity within an association in the municipal
> world itself … gradually built up a continuum of experience in, and knowledge
> of, municipal government (Saunier 2002: 518)

This is not to argue that has nothing has changed in the world of policy transfer. It has.

In Europe the 1950s onwards saw a change in the nature of the connections between

municipalities as welfare states were restructured, while from the 1960s onwards the

urban development pathways of the UK and the US have become increasingly

intertwined (Wolman 1992). According to Peck and Theodore (2001: 429), the 1990s

were witness to a 'substantially narrow form of 'fast policy transfer' between policy

elites, based on a truncated and technocratic reading of program effectiveness, coupled

with truncated processes of policy formation and evaluation.' And so it has continued

in the 2000s. Behind this changing context for the making mobile of policies and

programs has been the growth in the number of trans-local urban consultancy

organizations and the associated rise of a new global consultcracy, the establishment of

new, or expanded, policy networks around think tanks, governmental agencies,

professional associations, trade unions and NGOs and the expansion in international

conferencing and 'policy tourism' (Peck 2003; McCann 2008a, 2008b; McCann and Ward

2008; Ward 2006, 2007). The emergence globally of the redevelopment 'professional' –

part economist, part engineer, part planner, part marketing executive – has been an

important outcome of, and contributing factor towards, this rapid-fire, no questions

asked movement of policies and programs, of which the BID program is illustrative.

　　　The other side to this increased making mobile of programs is the extra emphasis

placed on comparison and its calculation by agents of transference (Ward 2008).

According to Larner and Le Heron (2002: 417), in recent years 'the global has become more knowable by placing the experiences and performances of others into quantitatively and qualitatively encoded proximity.' Cities are the centre of this new knowable global context. Through the process of *translation* – the means through which governance is performed over a distance – cities are brought into line, the unknown rendered both knowable and comparable. Perhaps the most well–known example of this is benchmarking. This process reduces urban complexity to a series of numbers, bringing into comparative co-existence territories from around the world. Cities are then ranked alongside one another (McCann 2004). As a result the act of comparison becomes a particularly political act (was it ever really anything other?). This point has been made in her work by Robinson (2006). She has argued that the work done by comparing different cities around the world on the basis that some cities are 'global' and others are not can be profoundly disabling for those named 'non-global'. As a consequence 'local' policy development now occurs in a self-consciously comparative … context' (Peck 2003: 229). Key Performance Indicators – which are the most common and globally well known benchmarking technology -- are no longer just the talk of corporate managers. Those running cities have increasingly found themselves governed at a distance by the disciplining consequences of various Key Performance Indicators. They make comparison and ranking easier. From crime rates to educational achievements, employment rates to environmental emissions, cities are now required to

produce a growing amount of information about their performances across a range of

different policy areas. The example of Business Improvement Districts is no exception.

Key Performance Indicators include car park usage, footfall figures, vacancy property

rates and retail sales (Hogg et al. 2006). In the next section of this paper I turn to the

context of the Business Improvement District program.

Business Improvement Districts: context

Rising to prominence in the early 1990s, the Business Improvement District program is

about both a way of governing space and an approach to its planning and regulation. A

BID is a public-private partnership in which property and business owners in a defined

geographical area vote to make a collective contribution to the maintenance,

development and marketing/promotion of their commercial district. So a Business

Improvement District delivers advertising, cleaning, marketing, and security services

across its geographical jurisdiction. The vote by businesses to tax themselves is taken in

order to allow them to take management control over 'their' area. Business

Improvement Districts reflect how 'property owners …, developers and builders, the

local state, and those who hold the mortgage and public debt have much to gain from

forging a local alliance to protect their interests and to ward off the threat of localized

devaluation' (Harvey 1989: 149). BID proponents critique the past role of government

in the business of governing the downtown. Instead, Business Improvement Districts are portrayed as 'more focused and flexible form of governance than large municipal bureaucracies' (Levy 2001: 129). Channeling 'private sector agency towards the solution of public problems' (MacDonald 1996: 42), they are represented as 'an alternative to traditional municipal planning and development' (J. Mitchell 2001: 116). Mallett (1994: 284) goes as far as to claim that Business Improvement Districts are 'a response to the failure of local government to adequately maintain and manage spaces of the post-industrial city.' The BID philosophy is that 'the supervision of public space deters criminal activity and the physical design of public space affects criminal activity' (Hoyt 2004: 369). It draws on the work of Jacobs (1961), Newman (1972) and Wilson and Kelling (1982), which argued that the design of urban space could change the way people behave. As Business Improvement Districts establish the physical layout of benches, street lighting and shop facades, so they shape the ways in which an area is experienced. As such, the BID program draws on, and reinforces, contemporary neo-liberal thinking on both the need to attend to and emphasize the 'business climate' and the 'quality of life'.

The global diffusion of the Business Improvement District program since the mid 1990s has involved a number of agents of transference. Variously situated policy actors have been party to the international diffusion of this program. As it has been moved around the globe from one place to another so the program has been subject to a

number of changes in its institutional DNA. As it has been territorialized – embedded in particular socio-spatial relations – so certain elements of the program have been emphasized, while others have been downplayed. A number of places along the way have shaped the form taken by the program on its introduction into England, most notably New York (McCann and Ward 2008; Ward 2006). However, we begin by retracing its initial emergence.

Mobilizing Business Improvement Districts

The first BID was established in Toronto in 1970 and the program spread rapidly, encouraged by Canadian state funding incentives. After moving across Canada it entered the US, where the initial BID was set up in New Orleans in 1975. Quite how this occurred is not clear (Hoyt 2006). During the 1980s and 1990s the number of US Business Improvement Districts grew slowly but surely. Latest data suggest there are over five hundred across the country, with the majority in just three of the fifty states: California, New York and Wisconsin (J. Mitchell, 2001). However this figure is now a little out of date, and anecdotally it is likely there are almost a thousand US Business Improvement Districts.

By the end of the 1990s the Business Improvement District in the US had moved to centre stage in the efforts by local governments to revitalize their downtowns.

Examples include their activities in Appleton (Ward 2010), Atlanta (Morçöl and Zimmermann 2008), Los Angeles (Meek and Hubler 2008), Milwaukee (Ward 2007b), San Diego (Staeheli and D. Mitchell 2007; Stokes 2008) and Sheboygan (Ward 2010). Business Improvement Districts have then been established in a wide variety of types of US localities. However, there is one place, above all others, whose experiences have been the basis for the internationalization of the BID program: Manhattan, New York.

Business Improvement Districts were first established in New York in the mid 1980s. However, it was in the early 1990s, as part of the *Manhattan Institute's* wider 'new urban paradigm' (Magnet 2000) and Mayor Giuliani's 'quality of life' campaign that the program rose to local, and eventually, international prominence (Ward 2006). As elements of these were internationalized, most noticeably policies around 'zero tolerance' (Wacqant 1999), so the BID program, a la New York, began to attract the attention of various agents of transference, within the city and beyond. The Institute's *City Journal* provided the intellectual rationale for this program of restructuring, flanked by a small number of books on high-profile issues such as healthcare reform and welfare restructuring. Regular breakfasts, conferences and seminars brought people together. Columnists in the *City Journal* regularly critiqued city government, offering right-of-centre alternatives and pushing a pro-market, neo-liberal agenda (Peck 2006). The BID program appeared to resonate with the *Manhattan Institute's* and the city government's wider political project. As one of its writers noted:

[Business Improvement Districts] have returned to an earlier set of values

regarding public space. They understand that simply things -- such as keeping

sidewalks clean and safe -- matter enormously to the urban quality of life. A city

that has lost the will to control allegedly 'minor' offenses such as trash and

graffiti on invites further disorder (MacDonald 1998: 2)

Other local journalists were equally gushing:

Any discussion of BIDs must begin with a restatement of what they've

accomplished. They have cleaned up, almost alone, key areas of Manhattan

business districts. They have contributed to the drop in crime. Outside of

Manhattan, they have undertaken crucial commercial refurbishing and marketing

efforts. They have been able to do all this because they have *operated outside city*

government and with a fair amount of entrepreneurship (Lentz 1998: 4, emphasis

added)

It is perhaps not surprising then that in light of the favorable reporting of its

achievements the BID program in New York began to be looked at by all manner of

'policy tourists' (Ward 2007a).   The city's economic success was being attributed to in

part the role played by Business Improvement Districts. Figures such as Daniel

Biedermann were given an elevated status. He was the President of the Grand Central

Partnership Social Services Corporation (GCSSC) that oversaw three of the largest

Business Improvement Districts in the area -- Bryant Park, Grand Central Partnership

and 34th Street. He became dubbed locally as the 'mayor of midtown'. And, as over the

last decade, the program has emerged in cities in Australia, Japan, Serbia, South Africa

and the United Kingdom (in design if not always in name), so senior executives, such as

Daniel Biederman and Paul Levy, a past President of the down Philadelphia Business

Improvement District, have become international BID 'gurus', they have traveled

around the world, writing guidance documents based on their experiences and giving

practitioner and policy-maker presentations.

More generally, the diffusion of the Business Improvement District program has

taken place through a number of channels, some relatively formal, others less so. The

International Downtown Association – physically located in Washington but the centre

of a network of national downtown trade associations and convener of an annual

conference – has been at the centre of the BID program's internationalization.   As it

puts it:

Founded in 1954, the International Downtown Association has more than 650

member organizations worldwide including: North America, Europe, Asia and

Africa. Through our network of committed individuals, rich body of knowledge

and unique capacity to nurture community-building partnerships, IDA is a

guiding force in creating healthy and dynamic centers that anchor the well being

of towns, cities and regions of the world (http://www.ida-downtown.org)

In its view the BID program is one of the most successful ways of improving the

conditions of downtowns the world over. According to the current IDA President,

David Feehan, "the IDA is proud of the role it has played in the resurgence of

downtowns in the US and Canada. Now, through partnerships in Europe, the

Caribbean, Australia and Africa, IDA is expanding its resources and knowledge base

even more" (http://www.ida-downtown.org). Its partners include the Association of

Town Centre Management (ATCM) in the UK, Business Improvement Areas of British

Columbia (BIABC) in Canada, Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) in the West

Indies, and Central Johannesburg Partnership (CJP) in South Africa. Neil Fraser, the

Executive Director of the CJP describes the role of the IDA as "a true leader in bringing

together city practitioners and specialists from North America and around the world.

They provide essential support and assistance in all aspects of private urban

management." (http://www.ida-downtown.org). The CJP became a member of the IDA

in 1995, and its Executive Director was subsequently appointed to the board of the IDA

(Peyroux 2008).

Through regular conferences, institutes, seminars and workshops organised by the IDA, downtown practitioners have fed into and reinforced the general emphasis on creative and liveable cities (Florida 2002). Together with national partners and others with a stake in the expansion of the BID program, such as private consultancies, think tanks and government departments, the activities of the IDA have served to convince urban authorities of the virtues of the BID program. In 1995 the CJP and IDA organised a 'study tour' to the UK and the US for Johannesburg's public and private sector officials. The purpose was 'to visit … sites and learn from international experiences in order to set up practices and legislation for a CID [City Improvement District] in Johannesburg' (Peyroux 2008: 4). This type of activity is symptomatic of the means through which education occurs – a mixture of off-the-peg learning blended with real-life, in your face evidence (McCann 2008b; Peck 2003; Wolman 1992)

Less formally, but no less importantly in the program's internationalization, have been figures involved in the BID program in some of the largest east coast US cities (Ward 2006; Cook 2008). As already mentioned, Daniel Biederman and Paul Levy in particular, have worked hard to promote the BID program around the world. According to Peyroux (2008: 4), 'the North American BIDS were a strong reference for the Johannesburg CIDs.' They have presented in many countries, extolling its virtues, drawing on their own highly situated and quite specific experiences to 'market' the program and its benefits. Various exchange-making and information-sharing events

have been organised in cities including Canberra, Dublin, Johannesburg, London, and Newcastle [Australia]). At these, an ever-wider audience of different types of practitioners and policy-makers have been educated in the way of Business Improvement Districts. Not only development officers and planning officials, as might be expected, attend and participate at these events. Due to the financial and legal consequences of BID formation, accountants and lawyers are also selected into the web of mobilization.

When organising 'local' events, agents of transference have tailored 'general' lessons to the specific concerns of host countries or cities. The trick to the on-going global diffusion of this model of downtown governance has been of course to ensure that assembled audiences are convinced both of the virtues of the BID program in general and also of its capacity to attend to whatever issues a particular local representative may be facing. In England, the particular case to which this paper now turns, this has meant marketing the BID program in the context of an already extant town management system.

Territorializing Business Improvement Districts

Through our relationship with ATCM (Association of Town Centre Management), and the unique reciprocal membership scheme with the

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International Downtown Association (IDA) based in Washington DC, our BID network is the largest BIDs network in the world and our Knowledge Bank an unrivalled resource for information on both BIDs and partnership development. Building on our own experience from the National BIDs Pilot, the Knowledge Bank is growing all the time, as members exchange expertise in the BID Network Exchange and other partnership events across the country (www.ukbids.org)

In addition to the supply side, there needs to be a demand side for policy transfer to occur, although these need to be understood as mutually constituted and reinforcing. Locally dependent or embedded agents of transference play an important in the translating of a general program into something that makes sense to those with territorial remits. They act as intermediaries, directly in some cases through acts of translation such as conference talks or indirectly, through assembling, preparing and stabilizing knowledge. An example would be the Knowledge Bank established by www.ukbids.org. This is a virtual resource for those involved in the process of introducing the BID program into England. In it are assembled case studies from around the world, territorialized knowledge that is rendered both mobile and fixed simultaneously. 'Best practice' examples of different aspects of the BID program, from suggestions about how to establish a BID through to ways of marketing and promoting downtowns are assembled in the Bank, and can be withdrawn by interested parties.

In the case of the UK, the introduction of the BID program was first mooted in the early 1990s. As the latest in a long line of post-Second World War exchange of urban policies between the two countries (Barnekov et al 1989; Wolman 1992; Peck and Theodore 2001; Wacquant 2001; Jonas and Ward 2002) a report commissioned by the Corporation of London considered the lessons the city might learn from the BID program in New York City (Travers and Weimar 1996). Although this report argued for the program's introduction into London it reflected a clearer push amongst town centre practitioners to do something about the management of downtowns. This was a debate that was led by the Association of Town Centre Management. However it was not until after the election of the national Labour government in 1997 that a series of 'urban' policy documents of different sorts were issued, most noticeably Lord Rogers's *Towards an Urban Renaissance* (Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions 1999, 2005), and the Government's White Paper *Our Towns and Cities: the Future* (Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions 2000). These all focused political and practitioner attention on the role cities should be encouraged to play in driving national economic growth. All were informed by examples of policy tourism. Government ministers, such as John Prescott, and senior officials were regular visitors to New York and Philadelphia. They were keen to see the BID program in action. A series of other green and white papers were issue at the end of the 1990s and the

beginning of the 2000s to create the financial and legal conditions in English cities for

the creation of Business Improvement Districts. These included*

During this period there was a sustained creation of favorable 'importing'

conditions. Various agents of transference operating at and across a range of 'spaces of

engagement' (Cox 1998), such as national think tanks, regional development agencies

and local authorities lobbied on behalf the establishment of Business Improvement

Districts. A series of documents were produced and circulated. Reports appeared in

trade association magazines such as *Regeneration and Renewal* and *Town and Country*

Planning and on trade websites such as www.publicfinance.co.uk. As we have already

seen, a made to order website – www.ukbids.org – was established to oversee the

introduction of Business Improvement Districts into England. In its words:

> UKBIDs is committed to supporting robust and successful Business
>
> Improvement Districts (BIDs) in the United Kingdom. UKBID incorporates the
>
> National BIDs Advisory Service and is delivered by the Association of Town
>
> Centre Management, who led the government-supported National BIDs Pilot
>
> that introduced BIDs to England and Wales. Today we work actively with new
>
> and established BIDs across the country, and with strategic organisations such as
>
> the Regional Development Agencies. We lead the national BID Network

Exchange and are delivering the country's first BIDs Academy, as well as undertaking research, training events and seminars" (www.ukbids.org)

Jacqueline Reilly was appointed as the Project Director of the National Business Improvement Pilot Project (and subsequently to run its successor, the UKBIDs Advisory Service). She championed the BID program in England, acting as both expert and advocate (Rich 2004). The creation of English and Welsh Business Improvement Districts was finally announced in 2001, and the final piece of the legal framework was agreed in 2004. Scotland subsequently followed suit. Despite its Canadian origins, it was the US that was named publicly as the geographical reference point for the program, with Business Improvement Districts hailed as 'New York-style schemes' (ODPM 2003: 1):

> I can tell you today that we have decided to introduce legislation to create Business Improvement Districts. These will be similar to the successful US examples (DLTR 2001: 1)

> This approach [to the BID program] building on the very successful business model in the USA, will allow business to see precisely what they are getting for their money and will help to harness local business leadership (DLTR 2001: 2)

Of course, the BID program was not introduced into an institutional vacuum in England. Around the country many cities and towns had already in place some sort of governing partnership. Many hundreds had town centre management partnerships recognized by the Association of Town Centre Management (Reeve 2004, 2008). These shared many characteristics with the BID program bar an important one: businesses made their financial contribution voluntarily. This meant that contributions could fluctuate year on year, undermining the capacity of the partnerships to plan in the medium term (Cook 2008). Indeed the International Downtown Association's first annual conference took place in Coventry in England in 1997. So the experiences of some of England's cities were already present in the geographical imagination of international practitioners. In addition, the public finance system in England remains highly centralized. There are few examples of city government raising revenue through taxes. And, as Peck and Theodore (2001: 430) remind us, 'inherited institutional structures, established political traditions, and extant policy conventions and discourses all operate to ensure a degree of continuity in the policy development process.' In the case of the BID program this matters nationally and locally. The centralized system of central-local government relations affects the way something like the BID program would be introduced. And in different localities it is important that those involved in mediating and translating the BID program are aware of its particular issues. Put

simply, while there is much that unites Bolton, Brighton and Coventry there is much that distinguishes them.

Unsurprisingly, then, the English BID Program as established and as it has been enacted from locality to locality has been quite unique. In particular it differs in three quite fundamental ways in design from the US-derived model that has done the rounds internationally. First, this was a state-sponsored introduction of the BID program, an example of the role the nation state can play in co-coordinating, managing and regulating new modes of governance. In this context, 'the national level assumes responsibility for coordinating activities of local partnerships and program delivery systems and for establishing the rules of the game, while the local level – the scale of innovation and implementation – plays a decisive role in translating national policies and local lessons into practice' (Peck and Theodore 2001: 432-433). English cities and towns competed for a place on the National Business Improvement District Pilot Project. More than one hundred applied and twenty three were successful. These were pilot Business Improvement Districts that ran for a couple of years while cities prepared themselves for a vote. Since the ending of the pilot scheme, any city or town in England has been able to go to a vote. This takes us to the second peculiarly of the English BID program. In the US it is property owners that vote. In the UK it all non-domestic rate payers, i.e. those who rent properties, who vote in the BID referendum. This was the outcome of a long debate amongst vested interests – local and national government,

retail trade associations, property owners and so on (Cook 2008). Despite evidence of involvement by property owners in the activities of Business Improvement Districts, this does not stretch to getting a vote in their establishment. Third, a successful vote must past two tests. Firstly, more than 50% of the votes cast must be in favour of the BID and secondly, the positive vote must represent more than 50% of the rateable value of the votes cast.[1] So there is particular politics around the local dependency of businesses (Cox and Mair, 1988). Territory still matters. In some instances the first criteria has been met but the second one has not, as typically smaller, local independent businesses have voted 'yes', while multi-site chains, which are typically larger and hence have a higher rateable value have voted 'no'. As of the end of 2008 there are 70 Business Improvement Districts in England (Table 1.1). Five things are worth noting. First, there is no clear underlying geographical pattern to the establishment of English Business Improvement Districts. They have been created in cities and towns of all sizes and in parts of the country. Second, voter turnout has been consistently low. There have been exceptions of course, but in general terms businesses have not turned out en masse. In the majority of cases less than half the eligible businesses did not vote. Fourth, seventeen votes were unsuccessful first time around. Two have subsequently

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[1] In the US there is no federal or state wide voting system for the creation of a BID. It differs within states, and even within cities (Ward 2007b).

been established, although in the cases of Maidstone, Runnymede and Southport there have been two unsuccessful votes.

Table 1.1 England's Business Improvement Districts (December 2008)

BID	Ballot Date	Yes vote by number of businesses	Yes vote by rateable value of businesses	Turnout
Royston First	021208	61%	62%	39%
Preston BID	281108	73%	83%	25%
Newcastle BID	241108	67%	59%	52%
Hinckley BID	181108	64%	70%	39%
Bristol Broadmead (2nd term ballot)	311008	55%	55%	53%
Paddington BID (2nd term ballot)	301008	83%	90%	46%
Boston BID	221008	73%	83%	28%
Liverpool BID (2nd term ballot)	171008	64%	68%	42%
BID Leamington	310308	61%	63%	41%
Bathgate BID	140308	93%	82%	45%
Daventry First	130308	74%	80%	27%
Coventry City Centre BID (2nd term ballot)	290208	83%	85%	36%
Dorchester BID Company	290208	81%	84%	56%
New West End Company (London) (2nd term ballot)	211207	63%	73%	43%
Astmoor Industrial Estate	061207	72%	77%	65%
Halebank Industrial Estate	061207	72%	70%	50%
Derby Cathedral Quarter BID	281107	85%	74%	43%

Longhill and Sandgate BID (Hartlepool)	121107	80%	94%	29%
Nottingham Leisure BID	261007	75%	75%	33%
Kings Heath BID	280807	74%	53%	27%
Blackburn EDZ Industrial Estate BID	020807	89%	89%	40%
BID Taunton	310707	72%	67%	42%
Winchester BID	260707	54%	62%	45%
Worthing Town Centre BID	050707	57%	53%	31%
Truro	050707	71%	63%	51%
Sleaford BID	050707	69%	75%	40%
E11 BID	220607	95%	91%	42%
Argall BID	230507	86%	93%	TBC
Segensworth Estates BID (Fareham)	150707	73%	TBC	30%
Cannock Chase BID	300307	62%	68%	44%
Erdington	290307	74%	55%	31%
Croydon BID	280207	63%	70%	44%
London Riverside BID	260207	82%	68%	30%
Heart of London Business Alliance (2nd term ballot)	260207	86%	89%	62%
Angel Town Centre BID	230207	77%	83%	51%
Coventry City Wide BID	220207	54%	59%	33%
Cater Business Park	050207	90%	80%	56%
InSwindon	010207	69%	54%	41%
Oldham BID	061206	76%	56%	45%
Southern Cross BID	041206	94%	99%	72%

Retail Birmingham BID	091106	69%	62%	49%
Altham BID (2nd ballot)	081106	61%	70%	70%
Hull BID	181006	81%	76%	45%
Cowpen Industrial Association BID	051006	88%	87%	32%
Ipswich	240706	66%	70%	49%
Brighton	260506	64%	70%	46%
Swansea	040506	74%	65%	45%
West Bromwich BID	070406	79%	85%	48%
Hammersmith	290306	57%	70%	48%
Great Yarmouth BID	280306	82%	88%	44%
Ealing	280306	65%	64%	51%
Hainault Business Park BID	200306	85%	93%	52%
Camden Town Unlimited	010306	83%	84%	50%
Waterloo Quarter Business Alliance	010306	74%	92%	50%
Bolton Industrial Estates BID	011205	72%	84%	46%
Winsford Industrial Estate	191105	89%	71%	50%
Reading BID	191105	89%	71%	50%
London Bridge	171105	71%	78%	50%
Liverpool City Central BID (2nd ballot)	201005	62%	51%	56%
Rugby	300905	66%	74%	50%
Keswick	220905	55%	74%	50%
Blackpool Town Centre	230805	89%	74%	40%
Bristol Broadmead	300605	60%	56%	59%
Birmingham	260505	92%	97%	65%

Broad Street				
Lincoln	180405	79%	83%	44%
Bedford	300305	77%	81%	40%
New West End Company (London)	160305	61%	69%	53%
Plymouth BID	010305	77%	66%	58%
Paddington BID (London)	010305	87%	88%	51%
Coventry City Centre (BID)	240205	78%	75%	38%
Holborn Partnership (London)	110205	82%	77%	50%
Better Bankside (London)	240105	75%	67%	48%
Heart of London Business Alliance	311204	71%	73%	62%
Kingston First	161104	66%	66%	TBC

Source: http://www.ukbids.org/

Fifth, and finally, there have been successful second term ballots in Bristol, Coventry, Liverpool, and London (two). In these cases the BID was initially constituted for three years and the management committee sought a second term of office.

So, there have been a variety of issues around the introduction of the BID program into English localities. What this highlights is the complicated ways in which the BID program has been both moved around the world and embedded in existing territorially constituted social relations. It has been moved from one city to another through a myriad of formal and informal networks, via the procedural and technocratic

transfer of policy on the one hand, and the presentational performances of high-profile individuals on the other. Simultaneously and necessarily, the BID model has been embedded or 'fixed' temporarily in national and local contexts through the activities of a set of territorially entangled agents of transference. It is a policy model with necessary relational and territorial elements. These not surprisingly have produced a hybrid version of the New York 'model', itself a variation on the original Canadian example.

Conclusion

In a number of English localities BID votes are imminent. Royston will not be the last. According to Hoyt (2006: 433), 'policy entrepreneurs in countries around the globe continue to advocate the transfer of BID policy'. So, the same goes for other countries. A number of other examples exist of cities with quite diverse backgrounds adopting the BID program, in spirit if not in name. It has become the downtown revitalization of choice. In light of these, the paper has revealed how the Business Improvement District program has been moved around the world. It outlined its geographical and ideological origins. There is a difference. The program began its life in Canada. Its ideological origins have been manufactured as the US, as its cities, most notably New York have become the reference points for cities in other countries. The paper then turned to documenting those actors and institutions involved in the trans-

nationalization of the BID program. A range of agents of transference were revealed.

Some with little reach, overseeing its introduction in a specific city, such as the example

of Royston with which I began this paper. Others with a far longer reach, able to

influence policy reform at a distance, such as the program's US gurus whose trans-

Atlantic visits were important in facilitating the introduction of the BID program into

the UK. The paper then moved on to examine the ways in which the BID program was

introduced into England, reaffirming the extent to which urban development remains

shaped by path dependent forces. It reveals the ways in which a process of translation

is performed, both by those coming in from outside and by actors resident in each of the

contexts. In these moments – whether they are literally 'performed' at conferences or

workshops, or occur through circulated written publications – supply and demand

come so close as to be almost indistinguishable.

While these empirical details are important, this paper concludes by making

three conceptual issues that speak to the wider objectives of this edited collection. First,

this paper has argued for an appreciation of how cities are assembled by the situated

practices and imaginations of actors who are continually attracting, managing,

promoting, and resisting global flows of policies and programs. The bringing together

of policies and programs from around the world of today constitutes the path

dependency pathway of tomorrow. Second, it has advanced a framework that includes

a broad understanding of those involved in the mobility of policies, takes seriously the

transfer of inter-urban, trans-national programs, understanding 'transfer' as a socio-spatial process in which programs are subject to change as they are moved. The New York case is particularly revealing. The BID program that left New York for England was not the BID program that was introduced into New York at the end of the 1980s. By the mid 1990s, when it caught the attention of those with a stake in the sustainability of England's city and town centers, the program had been put to work by those in New York pursuing what Smith (1996, 1998) terms revanchist urbanism. Third, the approach developed in this paper has, at its core, sensitivity to both structure and agency. In the case of the BID program certain individuals did make a difference. This was not done under terms of their making, however. Rather there is a set of macro supply and demand contexts in which some are structurally advantaged. Some, more than others, are likely to have their ideas and policies made mobile. And, of course, there is an interaction of a range of differently scaled forces in and through which these agents mobilize, broker, translate and introduce ideas in such a way as to make the territorially embedding of policies and programs not just possible but probable.

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