Debates paper

Fifty years of Business Improvement Districts: A reappraisal of the dominant perspectives and debates

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Abstract

Originally created in 1970 by a small group of business people in Toronto's Bloor West Village, Business Improvement Districts (hereafter BIDs) have become commonplace urban revitalisation strategies in cities across the world. Many critical urban scholars have conceptualised BIDs as neoliberal organisations and have resultantly critiqued their role in contemporary urban governance. With BIDs now existing for over 50 years, the purpose of this paper is to provide an overdue reappraisal of the BID research and orient future scholarship. After describing key debates from early BID research, this paper analyses two distinct themes in more recent scholarship: (1) BID policy mobility, and (2) BIDs and social regulation. As the BID model has been transferred to new locations across both the Global North and South, its rapid mobility demonstrates the permeability, resilience and limits of neoliberal urban policies. Moreover, BIDs' social control tactics highlight how these organisations are shaped by a neoliberal logic that seeks to manage and control urban spaces in ways that attract desirable consumers and exclude the visible poor. This paper outlines the origins of both bodies of work and traces common patterns and variances over time. It concludes by highlighting gaps in the existing literature and offers suggestions for future work.

Keywords

Business Improvement Area, Business Improvement District, neoliberal urbanism, policy mobility, social control

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摘要

商业改善区（以下简称 BID）最初由多伦多布鲁尔西村 (Bloor West Village) 的一小群商界人士于 1970 年创建，现已成为世界各地城市振兴策略的通行做法。许多批判性城市学者将 BID 概念化为新自由主义组织，并因此批评了它们在当代城市治理中的作用。由于 BID 已经存在了 50 多年，本文的目的是对 BID 研究进行一项姗姗来迟的重新评估，并为未来的学术研究指明方向。在阐述了早期 BID 研究的关键辩论后，本文分析了近期学术研究中的两个不同主题：(1) BID 政策流动性，以及 (2) BID 和社会监管。随着 BID 模式被复制到全球北方和全球南方的新地点，其快速流动性证明了新自由主义城市政策的渗透性、复原性和局限性。此外，BID 的社会控制策略凸显了这些组织如何受到新自由主义逻辑的影响，这种逻辑寻求以吸引理想消费者和排斥可见的贫困阶层的方式管理和控制城市空间。本文概述了这两种工作的起源，并追踪了长期中的共同模式和差异。最后，我们强调现有文献中的空白，并为未来的研究工作提供了建议。

关键词

商业改善区 (Business Improvement Area)、商业改善分区 (Business Improvement District)、新自由主义城市化、政策流动性、社会控制

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Introduction

With the opening of multiple shopping malls across Toronto in the late 1960s, the Bloor-Jane-Runnymede commercial area lost many of its customers and family-run businesses as the malls enticed shoppers with a large selection of products, year-round climate-controlled buildings, quick access via the new subway line and an abundance of free parking. The voluntary Bloor-Jane-Runnymede Business Men's Association responded by asking Toronto's municipal council to design legislation that would ensure businesses in their neighbourhood pay a mandatory annual levy to fund urban revitalisation projects (Briffault, 1999; Charenko, 2015; Houstoun, 2003). Their efforts eventually paid off on 17 December 1969 when the City of Toronto crafted legislation to create the world's first Business Improvement Area (BIA) and, on 14 May 1970, the Ontario government passed Section 379g of the Municipal Act which legally formalised these organisations (Charenko, 2015).[1]

It has now been over 50 years since the inception of the world's first Business Improvement District (called Business Improvement Areas in Canada) in the Bloor-Jane-Runnymede commercial district (now called Bloor West Village BIA). Given its economic success, these organisations grew exponentially in Canada throughout the 1980s–1990s as federal and provincial governments encouraged their formation through various government grants and incentives (Hoyt, 2006). The first BIA in the US (called Business Improvement Districts) formed soon after in New Orleans in 1975 (Ward, 2007a) before they expanded across Europe, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Japan throughout the 1990s (Hoyt, 2003, 2006; Ward, 2007a). While these organisations originally focused on mundane tasks like garbage collection, upgrading street furniture and lighting enhancement, they now have a major influence over local urban development and take greater responsibility managing and controlling urban spaces.

These organisations have been a topic of interest to scholars in a variety of disciplines ranging from sociology, criminology, geography, urban planning and law, to public administration. Since these organisations have existed for over 50 years and have received academic attention for close to 30 years (see Mallett, 1993, for earliest documented work), the purpose of this paper is to highlight the key debates and perspectives that have dominated the Business Improvement District (hereafter BID) literature. While review articles have been published over a decade ago, this work was published as key debates were just emerging throughout the mid to late 2000s. These early reviews therefore lacked an engagement with the growing critical urban scholarship (see Garnett, 2010; Schragger, 2010) or merely focused on explaining BIDs' historical underpinnings and trans-national proliferation (see Ward, 2007a). Although Hoyt and Gopal-Agge (2007) provided a succinct review about whether BIDs are democratic and accountable, create wealth-based inequalities, produce spill-over effects and over-regulate public space, this review was done in the early stages of BID scholarship when, as the authors themselves acknowledged, the key debates were 'just beginning to materialise' (Hoyt and Gopal-Agge, 2007: 956). As BIDs continue to proliferate around the world and are taking on greater responsibilities to manage urban spaces, a reappraisal of the relevant literature is necessary to highlight more recent trends and debates within this growing literature and to orient future scholarship.

For the purpose of this paper, BIDs are defined as a group of business/property owners within a designated geographical area who pay an annual levy to provide supplemental services to their commercial district such as security and crime control, beautification upgrades and marketing campaigns. Given their geographical spread across the world, these organisations do not have a standard naming convention and go by many different names depending on the region (see Hoyt, 2003).[2] For the sake of consistency, this paper refers to these organisations as Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) given that this is the conventional name in the US and academic literature. As Morçöl and Karagoz (2020) note, the name BID has two different meanings: a designated area (the district) and the district management organisation that delivers supplementary services to that area (typically a board of directors). This paper therefore refers to BIDs as both urban spaces and a group of people representing the business community.

The first section of this paper provides a brief description of the key debates within the early BID literature during the 1990s and early 2000s before providing a detailed analysis of the two dominant themes within the post-2003 literature: BID policy mobility and social regulation. Both bodies of work are commonly rooted in discussions about neoliberal urbanism insofar as BIDs are conceptualised as private organisations that have been tasked by the state to manage contemporary urban spaces. In short, work on policy mobilities explains how, where and why the BID model was successfully adopted in new locations across the world, thereby demonstrating the permeability, resilience and limits of neoliberalism. The social regulation literature focuses on the particular strategies BIDs use to create marketable commercial spaces devoid of urban disorder and visible poverty, thereby demonstrating a form of neoliberal urban governance that regulates certain people's presence and behaviours. The conclusion of this paper summarises these two bodies of work and provides insights for future work in these respective research areas.

Early BID research

Despite BIDs being operational in North America since the 1970s, it took until the 1990s for BIDs to receive academic attention. Although these organisations originated in Canada, it was unsurprising that early studies were dominated by the American experience given their rapid expansion throughout the country (see Mitchell, 2001). This early research (roughly between 1993 and 2003) was fairly descriptive, anecdotal and based on examples from a few Northeastern US BIDs (mainly Washington DC, Philadelphia and New York City) which were deemed 'successful' models by its advocates. Some of the earliest studies simply examined BIDs' financing and oversight models, service provisions, formation rules and various state law and local ordinances that legally authorised BIDs (Briffault, 1999; Davies, 1997; Garodnick, 2000). There was, however, an emerging divide between sociologists, geographers and urban planners who criticised BIDs' social control tactics on the one hand, and economists, legal scholars and prominent BID advocates who supported BIDs on the other. As the BID model was slowly adopted in the UK by the early 2000s, the end of this early BID research also sparked discussions among UK scholars about the transferability of the BID model across the Atlantic. These critics, advocates and UK scholars laid the groundwork for future scholarly work. This section briefly describes each of their contributions before analysing the two dominant themes in more recent BID critical urban literature.

Much of the early criticism of BIDs focused on these organisations' use of private security guards. Critiques were often backed by the then emerging 'punitive turn' perspective in urban studies (see DeVerteuil, 2006) which argued that BIDs' security tactics privatised public space and exacerbated wealth-based inequalities (Mallet, 1994; Symes and Steel, 2003; Zukin, 1995). Using various examples of BIDs across New York City, Zukin's (1995) classic work argued that cities of post-industrial economies socially control citizens by symbolising 'who belongs' in urban space. The first two chapters of her book argued that BIDs are a reflection of the 'disneyfication' of urban space whereby a private organisation manages and controls spaces in order to create a public culture of civility and security devoid of unpleasantness (i.e. the homeless, dirt, disorder, etc.). Symes and Steel (2003) similarly argued that BIDs resemble heavily controlled, homogenised and policed gated communities that seek to eliminate non-consumers such as buskers, beggars, young teenagers and loiterers.

Mallett (1993), Mallet (1994) and Coleman (2004) were the first to argue that BIDs are a reflection of a wider political-economic shift towards neoliberal and entrepreneurial tactics that attempt to stimulate local economic development rather than protect the rights and social welfare of their citizens (see Harvey, 1989). Mallett (1993), for example, described BIDs as 'parallel local states' insofar as municipalities have expanded their powers through the private sector who are tasked with managing the state's failure 'to adequately maintain and manage spaces of the post-industrial city' (Mallet, 1994: 284). Simply put, early BID critics described the proliferation of the BID model, and specifically the security provision, as a reflection of new, post-industrial social control tactics supported by a growing neoliberal state.

BID advocates, on the other hand, argued that these organisations overcome the inefficiencies of the cash-strapped public sector by supplementing it with their own privately paid services. Advocates argued that these supplemental services are necessary to revitalise decaying post-industrial cities experiencing reductions to the local tax base and

increases in unemployment, crime rates and visible poverty (Levy, 2001; MacDonald, 1996). BIDs were praised for ushering in a 'New Urbanism' in urban planning that valued a strong sense of place, pedestrianism and the public realm (Davies, 1997) and for introducing a focused and flexible governance structure that could help encourage people to live and shop in downtown cores (Birch, 2002; Levy, 2001; MacDonald, 1996).

Some legal scholars downplayed BID critics by arguing that, using Briffault's (1999: 470) words, 'the privatization critique is overstated' because cities oversee, monitor and control BIDs to protect the public interest and that wealth-based inequalities are offset through an increased tax base which benefits services and programmes across the city. Similarly, Hochleutner (2003) rejected the notion that BIDs are 'unaccountable private actors' insofar as their accountability mechanisms are rooted in their formation process, governance procedures, annual reports and oversight by elected officials. BID advocates, in other words, argued that BIDs are accountable as long as their performance is continually evaluated.

Towards the end of this early phase of BID research, there were a number of 'pilot BIDs' established in the UK while legislation was progressing through parliament that would allow BIDs to be permanently established (Ashworth, 2003; Lloyd et al., 2003). The UK adoption was the first instance of the BID model being transferred from the US to another country. Although scholars cautioned that BIDs would be the beginning of an American model of manicured and privatised public spaces (Symes and Steel, 2003) and that its adoption would be complicated by the UK's different legal frameworks around taxation and negative attitudes about investing in localities (Lloyd et al., 2003; MacLeod et al., 2003), BIDs were eventually fully adopted throughout the country. Future critical urban scholars continued to focus on the transferability of the BID model by studying the process of 'policy mobility'.

This early BID work established the foundation for future debates and perspectives in the BID literature. BID critics continued to conceptualise BIDs as a form of neoliberal urbanism that aims to control and regulate 'undesirable' users of urban space, while other critical urban scholars expanded on the processes of 'policy mobility' as BIDs continued to form around the world. While not necessarily advocating BIDs, some scholars continued the 'BID advocate' tradition by developing more robust methods to evaluate BID performance. Compared with early BID work, this future work used more systematic research methodologies (mostly interviews and document analysis) on particular cases rather than what Symes and Steel (2003: 310) called 'anecdotal evidence' of early BID work. The following section provides a detailed description of the two main themes within the BID literature: (1) BID policy mobility, and (2) BIDs and social regulation. It should be noted that this paper does not have the space to analyse the literature focused on BID performance measurement. Rather, this paper focuses exclusively on the contributions made by critical urban scholars who forwarded discussions about BIDs' role in contemporary urban governance.[3]

Two dominant research themes

Both the policy mobilities and social regulation literature are framed within larger discussions about neoliberal urban governance. Drawing from critical urban scholarship (particularly Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Cox and Mair, 1988; Harvey, 1989; Logan and Molotch, 1987; Peck and Tickell, 2002), many studies of BIDs throughout the early 2000s were rooted in the debate about

'neoliberal urbanisation'. In the simplest terms, these studies conceptualised BIDs as a product of a neoliberal state that has given political empowerment to a coalition of business elite to manage urban spaces and enhance the flow of capital through a specific locality (see Cook, 2009; Ward, 2006, 2007b). Following the work of Larner (2003) and Leitner et al. (2007), later studies expanded this conceptualisation by providing a more nuanced, place-based assessment of neoliberalisation as a process. Rather than characterising BIDs as a coalition of business elite who enact their power from top-to-bottom, BIDs were increasingly viewed as more complex and 'networked organisations' (Morçöl and Wolf, 2010) comprised of myriad social actors, agendas and interests that territorialise based on the local political, institutional and social context (see Rankin and Delaney, 2011). This latter approach uncovers the vulnerabilities, nuances and incompleteness of neoliberalisation. Both the policy mobilities and social regulation literature generally followed these conceptualisations of neoliberalism over time.

BID policy mobility

As BIDs expanded across the world throughout the early 2000s (Hoyt, 2006; Morçöl et al., 2008), there was an emerging body of work arguing that the rapid international transfer of BIDs represents a 'policy in motion' (see Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996) which contributes to the materialisation and reproduction of neoliberalism itself. While early BID policy mobility work examined the dominance of international 'policy transfer agents' who legitimise the success of the BID model for international audiences, later work examined how BIDs were embedded and legitimised by local actors within their respective locations. More recently, some scholars started examining instances where

the BID model has been rejected. By conceptualising BIDs within the policy mobility perspective, these scholars seek to understand the ways urban policies are constructed, mobilised, mutated and rejected as they move from one place to another, thereby demonstrating the resilience, permeability and limits of neoliberalism.

Witnessing the proliferation of the BID model in the UK during the early 2000s, both Cook (2008) and Ward (2006) examined how London, England, became a key site where the American BID model was successfully transferred and remade to the UK context. Their empirical emphasis was on 'policy transfer agents' who advocated the spread of policies and information through various professional channels facilitated by groups such as the International Downtown Association (IDA), Association of Town Centre Management (ATCM) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). They were particularly interested in various informational exchanges (briefings, reports, conferences, etc.) between UK city councillors/business leaders and high-profile BID leaders from 'successful' Northeastern US BIDs (particularly Philadelphia, Washington DC and New York City) who presented digestible narratives, statistics and brief anecdotal examples of their successes. Simply put, Cook's (2008) and Ward's (2006) early work highlighted that the BID policy transfer process comprised a wide variety of actors and institutions within and beyond the formal state over multiple years and places and was the outcome of numerous processes of argumentation, negotiation and legitimisation.

Their later work provided more concrete conceptual and methodological tools to study BID policy mobility. McCann and Ward (2014), for example, argued that BID policy making is both global-relational and local-territorial; that is, simultaneously in motion and fixed in place. Rather than

studying 'up' (elites with power) or 'down' (the powerless and economically impoverished), McCann and Ward (2012) encouraged urban scholars to 'study through' networks and relational situations where policies are made mobile and mutable such as conferences, seminars, workshops, guest lectures, fact-finding trips, site visits, walking tours and so on. For example, focusing on the introduction of BIDs to Sweden, Cook and Ward (2012) encouraged scholars to study conferences as 'trans-urban policy pipelines' where policy transfer agents shape audiences' understanding and create powerful narratives about the experiences of 'successful' BIDs. These scholars started the tradition of studying transnational webs and relations that legitimise the use of the BID model.

Interestingly, rather than studying relational spaces where BIDs are transferred by policy agents to international audiences (the 'global-relational'), there was emerging work in Germany and South Africa focusing on how the international circulation of the BID model was locally embedded and legitimised by local actors (the 'local-fixed'). Despite Cook's (2009: 938) critiques of 'excessively localist reading' of BIDs, these studies employed a 'place sensitive' approach (Michel, 2013) and emphasised the linguistics and semiotic aspects at the micro level (Peyroux, 2012) to understand how BIDs were discursively positioned as legitimate models to local governments and constituents. The early 'problematisation stage' (before BIDs are legally adopted) was identified as a crucial justificatory period when local actors construct an 'urban crisis' that can be solved by adopting BIDs (Michel, 2013; Richner and Olesen, 2019). Many studies showed that the construction of an urban crisis differs based on the particular city. In Johannesburg, for example, local

actors legitimised the adoption of a 'corporate BID' by constructing BIDs as necessary for accelerating economic capital, decreasing crime and filling the needs of a failed public sector, while the adoption of a 'residential BID' was based on claims it would strengthen social cohesion among residents (Peyroux, 2012). In Cape Town, BIDs were justified by referencing Johannesburg as a 'bogeyman' where vacancy, decay, informal trade and crime had supposedly become rampant (Didier et al., 2012). BIDs were legitimised in Hamburg, Germany, by referencing the successful New York City model, emphasising the need for social order through 'zero tolerance policing', and equating property owner interests with the wider 'community' interest (Michel, 2013). The BID model is more recently being introduced to Copenhagen, Denmark, where local actors claim it will boost investment and property values in the name of public interest; thereby framing BIDs in a 'progressive cloak' which depoliticises the BID model as a non-controversial organisational framework (Richner and Olesen, 2019). Although the discursive strategies differ according to the particular city, these studies demonstrate how BIDs are 'fixed' into place by a coalition of local actors seeking to legitimise BIDs as the best solution for the area's social, political and economic woes.

In addition to describing the justificatory logics used to legitimise BIDs in particular cities, these studies argue that the adoption of the BID model in new countries demonstrates the resilience and permeability of neoliberal urban policies as it is made to fit local political, institutional and economic environments. In the German context, the adoption of the BID model in Hamburg demonstrates a drastic shift away from the country's state-led urban planning towards neoliberal entrepreneurial strategies that

empower the private sector; representing a new 'corporate democracy' (Michel and Stein, 2015) or 'informal constitutional state' where 'monied oligarchies' organise public spaces in a neocorporatist way (Eick, 2012). Although Hamburg BIDs are smaller in size, scope and resources compared with their American counterparts, they have nevertheless become powerful lobbying tools for local property owners because they gain easy access to city officials and public decision-making processes (Michel and Stein, 2015). The adoption of the BID model in Hamburg is not just another example of a neoliberal urban governance model in another country, but demonstrates the elasticity and resilience of neoliberalism as it transforms existing political-economic approaches into quick 'neoliberal fixes' to local urban problems (see Valli and Hammami, 2021). However, Kizildere and Chiodelli (2018) reject the notion that the adoption of neoliberal urban policies depends on transnational transfer agents insofar as Istanbul's Talimhane BID was formed through informal and piecemeal arrangements of hotel and business owners serving their contextual interests. They therefore suggest that the spread of neoliberal tools of urban governance can occur not only through international policy transfer agents but also somehow 'spontaneously'.

Lastly, rather than studying the successful adoption of the BID model in new locations, some recent studies have answered calls to study 'policy failure' (see Jacobs, 2012; McCann and Ward, 2015). Even Ward and Cook (2017) recently acknowledge that, using examples from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the introduction and evolution of BIDs is geographically uneven as some locations modify or reject the model outright. While BID policy failure has been previously acknowledged (see Hoyt's, 2006 examples of Boston and Rio de Janeiro), these recent studies now focus entirely on the factors that lead to policy failure. In some German cities, for example, the BID model was rejected at the local level because local actors failed to construct an 'urban crisis' that the BID could appropriately solve (Stein et al., 2017). In Accra, Ghana, BIDs have failed to be adopted because local property owners lack autonomy from the state who control local government finances and decisions and are also reluctant to use public–private partnerships because of prior failed attempts (Kaye-Essien, 2020). This recent work, in other words, demonstrates the limits of neoliberalism as local and state actors reject BIDs as appropriate solutions to their urban problems.

BIDs and social regulation

In contrast to the policy mobility work which focuses on the international transfer and local adoption of the BID model, there is a large body of work that examines BIDs as, using MacLeod's (2011: 2646) words, the 'new primary definers' of urban space by focusing on the strategies and logics used to regulate and control their urban environments. While early BID social regulation work described how their entrepreneurial strategies create local inequalities, later work specifically emphasised how various BID security tactics are 'revanchist' approaches that intend to create clean and manicured spaces devoid of visible poverty and urban disorder. More recent work on BID security provisions has moved beyond the revanchist perspective and focuses instead on explaining the scale and nuances of BID social control tactics, with the most recent work highlighting what appear to be more supportive, non-punitive approaches to managing visible poverty.

Early work argued that BIDs' entrepreneurial strategies and emphasis on creating a market-oriented atmosphere exacerbated tensions with various citizens. Drawing from Zukin's (1995) work, studies showed that

BIDs attempted to gentrify areas with young urban professionals through entrepreneurial strategies such as Florida's (2002) 'creative cities' agenda (Ward, 2007b, 2010) and, in the case of Toronto, by packaging and reproducing the area's ethnic history (Hackworth and Rekers, 2005). These types of BID strategies have been found to produce class and ethnic conflicts over claims of public space (Schaller and Modan, 2005), exclude artist communities from local networked relations among 'creative' firms (Catungal and Leslie, 2009) and regulate public protests, demonstrations and rallies by selectively invoking 'discourses of congestion' (Clough and Vanderbeck, 2006). In Cape Town, BIDs project an image of a highly orderly city and promising site of investment by regulating the presence of marginalised black citizens (mostly informal traders, unauthorised parking attendants, street kids and the homeless), thus continuing the state's apartheid policies through a 'neoliberal post-apartheid regime' (Miraftab, 2007). These cases show that BIDs' entrepreneurial strategies represent the 'neoliberalization of the city' (Ward, 2006: 55) insofar as these organisations shape 'appropriate' consumerist behaviour and systematically deny people's 'right to the city'.

The BID social regulation literature, however, is dominated by a focus on BID security provisions rather than their entrepreneurial strategies per se. As a mode of neoliberal urban governance, Ward (2007a, 2007b) argued that BIDs' security provisions represents a revanchist approach that reclaims downtown for the middle class while the visible poor are removed from the streets and their 'rights to the city' are withdrawn (see Duneier, 2000; Mitchell and Staeheli, 2006; Smith, 1996). Much of this early body of work (see Berg, 2004; Huey et al., 2005; Vindevogel, 2005) situated BIDs' security tactics as part of the pluralisation and fragmentation of policing (Bayley

and Shearing, 1996; Newburn, 2001) whereby the state has 'responsibilized' (Garland, 1996) BIDs to provide crime control and security functions in heavily controlled and monitored 'communal spaces' (Kempa et al., 2004). BIDs are therefore conceptualised as part of a wider governance assemblage with numerous actors, private and public bodies and technologies that seek to socially regulate urban spaces in hopes to attract customers and investors.

There was a particular emphasis on BIDs' enactment of 'broken windows policing' (Wilson and Kelling, 1982) and other situational crime prevention strategies (such as Jacobs, 1961; Newman, 1972). In short, these tactics prioritised the supervision of public space and deterrence of nuisance crimes in order to create clean and safe urban environments for consumers. This included the use of various strategies and technologies to monitor BID spaces, including private security guards, tourism ambassadors, loss prevention officers, parking attendants, closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) strategies. While some studies examined whether these tactics reduced crime rates (Brooks, 2008; Hoyt, 2004, 2005), many scholars argued that these supposed 'crime control' strategies are used to protect an image of a clean and controlled environment rather than actually apprehending criminals (Vindevogel, 2005). For example, Huey et al. (2005) argued that BIDs are a form of 'image-oriented policing' that attempts to enhance consumption activity by dispelling fears associated with urban disorder and homelessness.

Later work argued that BIDs' security provision operates at various scales and is more varied and nuanced than the previous 'revanchist' perspective portrayed. While Lippert (2010, 2012) cautioned researchers about giving primacy to 'neoliberalism' as the singular explanation of BIDs' security

provision because this neglected 'the contingency, nuances, and less celebrated or allegedly defunct logics of government' (Lippert, 2012: 168), Cook (2010: 456) argued that the emphasis on governmentality and modes of governance suffers from 'excessive localism' that ignores the vertical connections to actions and institutions operating at other spatial scales such as external funding streams, government regulations, contractual agreements and 'good practice' benchmarks. Arguing somewhere in between the local and translocal scale, some scholars describe BIDs as complex constellations of power that simultaneously operate 'above' (government officials, developers, the media) and 'below' (residents and business owners) the BID board of management (Kudla and Courey, 2019; Valli and Hammami, 2021). Kudla and Courey (2019), for example, argue that BIDs strategically perpetuate and resist territorial stigma at different points of the urban revitalisation process as they establish connections with actors at different scales. In the case of Gothenburg, Sweden, Valli and Hammami (2021) found that BIDs facilitate information flows and a privileged platform of communication between actors 'above' (urban planners, developers and politicians) to legitimise their enforcement power and gentrification over low-income residents 'below' (see also Lippert, 2007). In short, scholars connect BIDs' security provision to either local rationalities (Lippert, 2010, 2012), translocal relations (Cook, 2009) or both simultaneously (Kudla and Courey, 2019; Valli and Hammami, 2021).

Although some studies continue to use the revanchist perspective to describe BIDs (see Moss and Moss, 2019; Sanscartier and Gacek, 2016), many studies now acknowledge more nuanced, differentiated and less punitive modalities of governance and social control. Much of this work provides 'place-based' investigations to describe the lower level and less grandiose 'clean and safe'

rationality that ensures consumption environments are free of refuse and risk (Lippert, 2010, 2012; Lippert and Sleiman, 2012). Bookman and Woolford (2013), for example, argued that the BID brand is a source of policing that evokes a preferred spatial discourse and expectations for a place. Rather than controlling and regulating BID space in a top-down fashion, they argue that BIDs' security provision reflects a complex and contradictory form of governance produced and reproduced by various actors who, in interacting with the brand's definition of order, also participate in the co-production of the brand. Walby and Hier (2013) showed that BIDs have varied interests in implementing closed-circuit television cameras, with some being leading (supportive and in charge of CCTV operations), junior (supportive but not involved in day-to-day operations) or reluctant (critical of monitoring initiatives) partners in its implementation.

BIDs' less punitive approaches were exemplified by several North American case studies of BID-hired tourism ambassadors. Ambassadors are commonly described as the 'eyes and ears' for police that blend hospitality with security. Ambassadors 'anchor' other security provisions through their mundane observations during foot patrols, which are eventually made into data that is transferred to BID boards who use it to justify public funding, greater public resources, or more police patrols (Lippert, 2012; Lippert and Sleiman, 2012). BID-hired ambassadors are therefore 'knowledge brokers' that produce and circulate knowledge derived from street surveillance. Studies find that ambassadors employ non-coercive and indirect power through polite and friendly requests aimed at the homeless to 'move along' and subtly invoking the law to manage violators on the street (see Bookman and Woolford, 2013; D'Souza, 2020; Marquardt and Füller, 2012). In the case of BIDs in Los Angeles,

ambassadors actually tolerate some forms of urban disorder because it helps establish an edgy and authentic urban aesthetic which is an important selling feature of the area (Marquardt and Füller, 2012). Focusing on lower-level social control logics, in other words, demonstrates the variability and nuances of how BIDs manage and socially control their spaces. These studies describe BIDs as relatively autonomous organisations that activate context-specific social control tactics rather than a singular and punitive 'revanchist' approach.

Outside of managing and controlling their physical urban spaces, BIDs have also been found to lobby for the enactment of anti-panhandling laws and tactics that regulate the time, place and manner in which panhandling is deemed appropriate (Kudla, 2019; Ranasinghe, 2010, 2013). However, BIDs do not get such legislation passed easily or in a straightforward fashion. As Ranasinghe (2013) describes, while the downtown Vancouver BID lobbied for such legislation, its enactment followed a long 15-year period where the by-law was constitutionally challenged, was poorly enforced by police and later reconstructed a need for a new legal mechanism (provincial legislation). This eventually led to a hybrid law and order–social welfare approach that supported regulation but acknowledged the structural causes of poverty. Moreover, Ranasinghe (2013) also found that BIDs' showing concerns about visible poverty is a well-orchestrated and choreographed 'business voice' that masks the fractured and fragile nature of the business community, who have multiple different views on managing homelessness. While BIDs may lobby for anti-panhandling legislation, they do not quickly or easily get legislation passed insofar as local governments do not want to appear punitive towards the visible poor. In the case of South Africa and Ghana, state governments fear political backlash for

enacting BID social control tactics aimed at the informal trade sector (see Didier et al., 2012; Kaye-Essien, 2020).

More recent work highlights ways that BIDs are enacting alternative approaches by providing more supportive programmes for the visible poor. Glyman and Rankin (2016) argue that BIDs vary in the degrees to which they pursue displacement tactics; from heavy displacement (removing the visible poor), padded displacement (discouraging the homeless from being in the area, but offering programmes to provide or enhance some social services) and no-displacement (understanding structural failings of economic, housing and health care systems). Speaking to no-displacement BIDs, recent work in the US (Washington DC and Los Angeles) finds that some BIDs advocate supportive and permanent housing for the homeless, mediate between multiple agencies and institutions to provide homeless care, and provide direct services such as drop-in-centres, street outreach and job training (Lee, 2018; Lee and Ferguson, 2019). That said, D'Souza (2020) finds that, despite BIDs working closely with local shelters and outreach programmes, the homeless rarely agree to be referred to local agencies. In Los Angeles, BIDs regulate undesirables along a 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor dichotomy where those living rough on the street are managed by connecting them to social services and providing job training while those deemed 'service resistant' receive harsh repression through enforcement (Marquardt and Füller, 2012). Didier et al. (2013) argue that similar supportive programmes in South Africa demonstrate the plasticity of neoliberalisation insofar as BIDs adapt to the local context and have the capacity to thwart political resistance by accommodating its critiques. In their particular case, BIDs defused post-apartheid concerns about regulating street children, the homeless, sex workers and informal workers by partnering with

local charities and social services. The funding into this initiative was marginal compared with their security function, and their emphasis on job transition ignored salient concerns about adequate housing and racial prejudice. Taken together, while some recent work celebrates BIDs' seemingly supportive strategies aimed at the visible poor, others argue that they still enact neoliberal punitive tactics and that these programmes fail to address deeper structural problems that cause inequality and poverty.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to provide a long overdue reappraisal of the existing BID literature. The BID literature has significantly evolved from its early days when critics and advocates debated about these organisations' place in North America's urban governance structures. BIDs have since expanded across the world and play a major role in controlling and regulating contemporary urban spaces. Critical urban research on BIDs closely resembles key debates and trends in urban scholarship more broadly which (re)conceptualises the scale, scope, operations and power of neoliberalism. This undoubtedly reflects a shift in urban studies from what McCann (2017) argues to be a first wave of Marxist-inspired urban research focused on urbanisation and economic development to a more recent second wave focused on governmentality, the production of territorial relationships, varied geographical manifestations of neoliberalism, and empirical cases in the Global South. As key debates and perspectives change within critical urban scholarship, the BID literature will certainly soon follow.

Work on policy mobilities highlights how the adoption of the BID model is dependent on transnational relationships formed over multiple years and places. The scale of these relationships is simultaneously global-relational and local-fixed as 'policy transfer agents' attempt to justify BIDs to government officials and business coalitions around the world who, in turn, construct a local 'urban crisis' to legitimise the BID as an appropriate solution to local urban problems. Much of this work, however, has focused on the latter (the 'local-fixed') and has neglected possible new spaces where 'policy transfer agents' are shaping international audiences' understanding of the BID model. There is therefore a need to continue McCann and Ward's (2012) tradition that 'studies through' networks and relational situations where BIDs are made mobile and mutable in order to uncover new justificatory strategies that policy transfer agents use to legitimise BIDs. For example, do transfer agents continue to use the experiences of Northeastern US BIDs as 'best practices' or have new locations emerged as dominant models? To what extent are transfer agents discussing and constructing BID private security and tourism ambassadors as ideal practices to socially regulate BID spaces? Future work should also look beyond transnational policy transfer agents and begin to examine relationships that current BIDs make with global actors/organisations to aid in the revitalisation of urban spaces, including private security firms, private developers, construction companies, think tanks and consultancies, among many others. In other words, how do BIDs mediate relationships with global and local actors in the production of BID spaces?

In addition to highlighting the international transfer of the BID model, policy mobilities work also helps explain the resilience and permeability of neoliberalism insofar as it aligns existing state governance structures into entrepreneurial and market-oriented logics. This work, however, has been dominated by select case studies from Germany, South Africa and more recently Nordic countries. Little work (at least in

English-speaking journals) has documented the adoption of the BID model outside of these contexts despite BIDs being documented in countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Japan, France, Belgium and Holland (Grossman, 2010; Hoyt, 2003). Since the lack of research in these countries is likely due to the lack of a standard naming convention, future work should investigate similar organisations with different names that have emerged with or without ties to global policy networks (see e.g. Espinosa and Hernandez, 2016; Kizildere and Chiodelli, 2018). Doing so can help uncover whether BID-like models continue to be spread across the globe, transformed into different models, or if these organisations have reached their global limits. If the case in Ghana is any indication (see Kaye-Essien, 2020), state governments may be reluctant or outright resistant to implementing BIDs because it does not align with existing state structures and political-economic logic. It may also be the case that local actors fail to successfully construct an 'urban crisis' insofar as local government and state approaches to urban planning are perceived to be strong and able to appropriately respond to local political, economic and social issues (see Stein et al., 2017). More comparative, multi-scalar accounts of BIDs that cross the Global North–South divide will certainly reveal interesting spaces where neoliberal urbanism permeates into new contexts or, conversely, is blocked by local government and state actors.

Work on BIDs and social regulation has documented ways that BIDs' entrepreneurial and security strategies shape consumerist behaviour, exclude marginalised groups, and deny people's right to the city. Much of this work focuses on BIDs' security provision, which was characterised as a 'revanchist' approach where a pluralised and fragmented security arrangement regulates marginalised groups in public space. Later work discussed

the scale and nuances of BIDs' security provision to highlight the varied, less punitive ways they regulate and control urban spaces. More recent work documents seemingly more supportive BID strategies. Much of this work has been dominated by North American case studies that highlight BIDs' enactment of 'broken windows policing' and studies that document 'place-based' examples of BIDs' nuanced social control strategies. Research should examine social regulation tactics beyond 'broken windows' to see the extent that BIDs are part of new and emerging urban policing tactics, such as therapeutic policing (Stuart, 2016) and complaint-oriented policing (Herring, 2019). Researchers should also be attentive to BIDs' involvement in producing smart cities as this may be another tool to encourage people to behave in certain ways, thereby creating moral orders of acceptability and unacceptability in identities and behaviours (see Vanolo, 2014). There is also a need to examine the evolution of BID security tactics outside of the North American context to see if similar or different logics are being adopted in other locations. For example, given the presence of urban informal sectors across the Global South, BIDs' social regulation tactics may follow different justificatory logics and control tactics from those found in the Global North.

BID social regulation studies have mostly focused on particular marginalised groups (people experiencing homelessness and panhandlers) and have neglected social control tactics aimed at other actors from 'below' such as businesses and low-income tenants. While some research has documented how BIDs govern their own members (see Catungal and Leslie, 2009; Lippert, 2012), future work should examine the specific ways BIDs selectively manage which businesses should and should not be present as well as how they manage 'undesirable' businesses that interfere with 'quality

consumption conduct'. Also, while some work has found that BIDs help gentrify nearby residential areas in order to provide a more affluent customer base to their commercial districts (Hackworth and Rekers, 2005; Lewis, 2010; Valli and Hammami, 2021), future work should pay closer attention to the relationships BIDs establish with residential developers and the discursive strategies they use to justify gentrification strategies (see Kudla, 2021).

Work should continue to explore whether BIDs' seemingly supportive programmes aimed at marginalised groups are truly addressing the structural causes of poverty or, as Didier et al. (2013) found, whether these are merely attempts to temper local resistance against their social control tactics. This work should consider that any BID efforts to connect marginalised groups to local social services do not necessarily end their marginalisation but, as recent work in Canada shows (Dej, 2020), may contribute to a 'homelessness industrial complex' that individualises the causes and experiences of homelessness and perpetuates social exclusion. In other words, BIDs need to be contextualised within larger state social-welfare responses to homelessness rather than celebrating their seemingly 'supportive' efforts.

There is one central theme in both the BID policy mobilities and social regulation literature that future work should refine: the process of justification and legitimisation. Whether policy experts legitimising the BID model to global audiences, or government officials and business coalitions legitimising the need for BIDs to local audiences, or BIDs legitimising the need for stricter social control tactics, argumentation, justification and negotiation have received ample empirical attention in the existing BID literature. The process of legitimisation, as well as of contestation, needs to be analysed to highlight the specific ways that the merits of

BIDs and their organisational agendas are constructed as appropriate, right, good and so on (see Kudla, 2021). Doing so can help highlight how neoliberalism is socioculturally encoded during key situations where social actors meet to discuss and debate social action (e.g. city council meetings, global conferences, seminars, site tours, etc.). This work should not simply explain that a generalised neoliberal ideology structures BID spaces and its subjects in a unilateral, monolithic way but should highlight possible ambivalence, tensions and resistance among discourses, logics and practices.

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Notes

1. While there is some disagreement about the origins (see Morçöl and Gautsch, 2013), Toronto is often referenced as the birthplace of the BID model.
2. Rather than using the word 'business', other countries use words like economic, capital, commercial, general, municipal, neighbourhood, city, downtown, public and special (see Hoyt, 2003; Morçöl and Gautsch, 2013; Ward, 2007a).
3. There are many studies that examine BID performance. Many of these scholars find

that BIDs lack performance metrics and rely on anecdotal evidence of their success (see Donaghy et al., 2013; Hemphill et al., 2014). Based on a symposium dedicated to the issue of BID performance measurement (see Grossman, 2010), the consensus is that there is a need to measure long-term impacts through succinct and fully developed performance data. Other studies have measured the impacts of various markers of success across different BIDs in the US and UK, including property values (Ellen et al., 2007), income and investment potential (Hemphill et al., 2014), the impact of the recession on BID operations (De Magalhães, 2012), the impact on local crime and arrest rates (Clutter et al., 2019; Cook and MacDonald, 2011; Han et al., 2017; MacDonald et al., 2013), conditions under which BIDs form (Brooks and Strange, 2011; Lee, 2016; Meltzer, 2012), service provisions (Caruso and Weber, 2006; Gross, 2005) and consumers' perceptions of the area (Anderson et al., 2009).

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