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Book review

Germà Bel, Trevor L. Brown, Rui Cunha Marques. (Eds.), Public Private Partnerships: Infrastructure, Transportation and Local Services, Routledge, Oxford, United Kingdom (2015). ([£105] (Hardback). ISBN 97-1-138-82742-4)

In his autobiography published in 2002,[1] Sir David Attenborough recalls a conversation he had with the then head of commercial TV Company ITV in the 1970s regarding the perceived inefficiencies of the government funded BBC. Sir David explained that despite ITV receiving the same level of funding as the BBC and being in receipt of considerable funds from advertising revenue the BBC was able to provide two TV channels and four radio stations compared to the one channel provided by ITV. The rise in neo-liberalism and free-market economics has led to the view that the public sector is inefficient to prevail worldwide in terms of funding and delivering infrastructure and services. Bel, Brown and Cunha Marques' edited symposium provides a comprehensive overview of the different types of Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) that now exist worldwide. Two of these PPPs focus on transport issues: gritting of roads in France and the delivery of light rail in Portugal.

The book is based on an edited Symposium that was published in Local Government Studies, Issue 39, Issue 3 in June 2013, and as such lacks an overarching narrative that is provided in most books. This means the book does not include a concluding synthesis to draw together the common themes that can be drawn out of the nine chapters. The book is printed on request by the publisher, at considerable cost, so it is difficult to know who the market will be for this book, especially as most academics will be able to access each chapter online via the Local Government Studies website. Each chapter is a standalone academic journal article so it is difficult to see this book appealing to non-academic experts in local government or the general reader who has an interest in this topic. Despite these issues it is clear that this book provides a detailed overview of the differing challenges faced by municipalities entering into a contractual agreement with a private organisation. As the editors suggest in Chapter One, PPPs are often sold as win-win for both parties, as the municipality gets funding for something that it would not be possible to deliver otherwise, whilst the private company gains access to land or a market that otherwise would not have been available. They concluded however that in many cases the situation is not win-win as one or both parties can struggle, due to the rigidity of the contract signed, or changes to the prevailing markets that sit outside the control of either party.

The editors also highlight the varying types of PPP contract that exist and the different types and levels of risk that exist within these agreements. This discussion is continued in the second chapter, where Laurie Athias provides an overview of demand risk and why this should be imposed on the private sector partner in PPP contracts. Athias uses the example of school catering in the UK and salting of the highways in France to compare the importance of demand risk. In the UK, the school catering contracts could not be changed to adapt to demands for healthy meals, where as in France the private company had to respond to salting requirements of the highway network after a major delay caused by insufficient salt-spreading during a winter event.

In Chapter 3, Albalate, Bel and Geddes highlight that the rigidity of contracts highlighted by Athais means that in many cases PPP contracts are often renegotiated. Albalate, Bel and Geddes found that the average time for renegotiation in PPP contacts in the US water sector is just 1.7 years. They also found that there was little difference in the quality of service provided by PPP run water services and public funded services. Oliveira Cruz and Cunha Marques' evidence (Chapter 4) from the delivery of a light rail system in Lisbon, Portugal highlight that often the renegotiation is based on overly optimistic returns and that the renegotiation of the contract is generally in favour of the private entity, who need to make a financial return on the contract, rather than the alteration being in the public interest. Oliveira Cruz and Cunha Marques' chapter, also provides perhaps the most useful section of the whole symposium, as it outlines 18 different reasons that PPP contracts are renegotiated: including: the justice system, political stability and the regulatory environment.

In Chapter 5 Eoin Reeves provides an overview of how Eire introduced PPPs in 1999 and by 2013 had over 100 separate PPP contracts across the country. Reeves highlights how PPPs have weakened accountability for delivery, produced poor results and failed to speed up delivery of public services. Simões, Carvalho and Cunha Marques' review (Chapter 6) of the combined delivery of waste and water services in Portugal conclude that there is little financial benefit in providing these services together.

Chapters 7 and 8 focus on the reasons municipalities choose to enter PPPs, with Wassenaur, Groot and Gradus' interviews (Chapter 7) with Dutch municipality managers highlighting the pragmatic benefits of PPPs rather than ideological reasons being the primary driving force for entering these agreements. Bel, Fadega and Mur's (Chapter 8) review of intermunicipal contracts between small municipalities in Portugal concurred, as fiscal reasons for co-working appeared to be the primary driver of entering agreements. The authors also found that right-wing mayors were less inclined to enter agreements with other municipalities. The book's final chapter (9), provides the view of Martīnez-Lacambra, who concludes that good governance is essential for the success of any scheme, whether it is delivered by the public sector or in conjunction with the private sector, through a PPP. This concurs with Sir David Attenborough's comments of how effectively the money available is used by the delivery body.

The symposium provides a clear overview of the challenges faced by municipalities entering agreements with private companies and a range of differing methods are utilised to capture data. The primary limitation

[1] Attenborough, D. (2002) *Life on Air: Memoirs of a Broadcaster*, St Helier (Jersey): BBC Books, pp238.

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is that he majority of case studies are focused on European and US examples. PPPs are a worldwide phenomenon and their impact in developing nations would provide an interesting follow up to this excellent collection of PPP case studies and will provide transport geographers with an understanding of the challenges and opportunities that exist for local government officials within Europe and the US when delivering new infrastructure or a new service through a PPP arrangement.

David Williams
University of the West of England, Frenchay Campus, Coldharbour Lane, Bristol BS16 1QY, UK
E-mail address: David23.williams@uwe.ac.uk