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Comparing UK Community Enterprises with  
US Community Development Corporations**

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## ABSTRACT

### **Community Entrepreneurship in Deprived Neighbourhoods: Comparing UK Community Enterprises with US Community Development Corporations**

Through a review of the recent American community development literature, this paper tests the assertion that British community enterprises (CEs) are fundamentally similar to American community development corporations (CDCs), and therefore, that CEs can learn from CDCs. In the context of the current austerity regimes, CEs and community entrepreneurship are increasingly considered as a means to continue small-scale urban regeneration, not only in the UK but also in several other European countries. While the CDC sector has achieved a relatively successful record in affordable housing production in distressed areas, CDCs are fundamentally limited in terms of reversing the processes of community decline. Our comparison of CDCs and CEs reveals similarities, but also differences with regard to organizational characteristics, co-operation on multiple scales, comprehensiveness, targeting and community participation. Apart from outlining lessons that CEs can learn from CDS, we provide recommendations for further research that should cover the lack of empirical evidence in this field.

JEL Classification: L26, L31, R23

Keywords: community development corporations, community enterprises, neighborhood revitalization, entrepreneurship, regeneration, United States, United Kingdom

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## 1. Introduction

Both the United States and many European countries are in a period of austerity, leading to budget cuts in public policy. These budget cuts include neighbourhood regeneration policies, where many neighbourhood interventions of the past decades have either come to a conclusion or have been cut. Economic competition between cities is increasing, making further actions to revitalize and strengthen urban economies crucial, especially given the harsh economic times. Simultaneously, a new ideological discourse of active citizenship is on the rise in many European countries. The aim is to recast state-citizen relations and promote civil society and to help citizens to help themselves, especially in deprived communities (Kisby, 2010; Wells, 2011). In this context, resident-organized and social entrepreneurial activities are increasingly seen as solutions for deficiencies in public services and neighbourhood regeneration efforts. In the United Kingdom, previous regeneration strategies have been replaced by a 'localist' (DCLG, 2011b, 2012) approach to regeneration. Key to this 'localist' approach are the emphasis on local economic growth, community-led regeneration and reforms in public service provision by local authorities and other agencies, favouring private and community entrepreneurship (DCLG, 2011b, 2012). In the United States, this perspective on community-led regeneration has been around for a while and received a particular impetus by the writings of Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) on *Asset-Based Community Development* (ABCD).

Within a larger debate on financial austerity and state retrenchment, the 'localist' approach has been critiqued on both sides of the Atlantic. Minnery (2007, cited in Schatz, 2013, p. 103) notes that American localism has its "dark side" When neighbourhood groups are expected to carry out neighbourhood revitalization strategies with minimal funding this "marginalizes" the efforts financially and bureaucratically. Thus, this [type of devolution] implies "lessened commitment" (Beauregard, 2003, p. 241). Second, struggling Community Development Corporations (CDCs) in 'down-and-out' areas serve as "scapegoats for abdicated federal responsibility" (Scally, 2012, pp. 712-713). Many American politicians have been overoptimistic about devolution in that they have failed to realize that CDCs need external support, for example to attract professionals as CDC directors (Scally, 2012/2013).

As a result of the banking crisis and a major recession the United Kingdom's newly elected Coalition government in 2010 sought to reduce the economic deficit and thereby limit the role of the state. The Conservative-Liberal coalition as well as a number of right wing think tanks have advocated for measures to plug the gap left by the retreat of the welfare state. Community-based organizations are being asked to fill in the gap but central government is not providing either the funding or technical support to permit these organizations to play this expanded role. In fact, as of 2012, local authorities had

their budgets reduced by 4 billion (Bailey, 2012; Hastings *et al.*, 2012). The coalition's buzz word 'Big Society' soon gave way to the more illustrious term 'localism', in association with the 2011 Localism Act. This act contains a wide array of measures to devolve powers to councils and neighbourhoods and give local communities greater control over local decisions like housing and planning (DCLG, 2011a).

Until recently, there have been no substantial academic efforts to compare various forms of community activism in the context of (welfare) state retrenchment, devolution of responsibilities and the demise of large-scale neighbourhood regeneration programs. However, we are now witnessing a growing transatlantic interest in these matters. The impetus for our paper is an article by Nick Bailey (2012) on the emergence of community enterprises (CEs, see definition in section 3) in the United Kingdom. Bailey analyses both theoretically and empirically how CEs can contribute to local regeneration strategies, particularly in response to structural cutbacks in government funding of local authorities. Conservative Party officials assert that community-operated businesses can make up for these cutbacks while at the same time fostering a more self-sufficient and empowered citizenry (DCLG, 2011b, 2012). Bailey asserts that British community enterprises need to learn from the successes of American community development corporations (CDCs) since they are basically similar:

“... whilst the UK political economy is moving towards less state intervention and more community self-help [as is also the case in the US], the community development corporations in the USA provide an indication of the future direction community enterprises might take in the UK as part of a broad trend towards civic capacity building” (Bailey, 2012, p. 1).

The preceding claim raises two questions: First, to what extent are CEs and CDCs similar, taking into account substantial national context differences? Second, what can CEs learn from CDCs in terms of scope, aims, strategies, accountability, assets and partnerships with public and private actors? To answer these questions, we will analyse these two types of community organizations with respect to (1) definition and evolution over time, (2) key conditions for regeneration impacts, and (3) impacts on community revitalization. We will then offer some suggestions for British CEs. The aim of our paper is to assess the current potential of community entrepreneurship in neighbourhood revitalization in the United States and the United Kingdom.

Initially, our review of American CDCs focused on Bratt's extensive writings, along with Dewar and Thomas' 2013 edited volume, *The City after Abandonment*, as well as recently published CDC-related articles in major housing and planning journals. Through a “snowball” type process, we targeted other journal articles, reports and books. Our paper does not attempt to cover the entire community development literature (see for

example Glickman & Servon, 2003; Keating *et al.*, 1991). However, some are cited here because they were used in recent publications on CDCs. Nor do we attempt to fully cover reports on some well-known CDCs such as the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation (see Johnson, 2004), because the available material is highly impressionistic.

The next section on American CDCs first distinguishes the term “community development corporations” from related terms and describes the evolution of CDCs; identifies the key conditions for regeneration impacts and assesses the revitalization outcomes produced by CDCs. In the third section we examine the same issues in relation to British community enterprises but it is important to note that our review of the CE literature is based primarily on Bailey’s article. We conclude the paper with some lessons for British CEs based on our assessment of the American CDC literature and a set of recommendations for future research.

## **2. Community Development Corporations (CDCs) in the US**

### **2.1 Definition and evolution over time**

Apart from differences in welfare state arrangements, policy and population history, one of the problems involved in comparing British community enterprises with American community development corporations is the different terminology used on each side of the Atlantic. The terms “social housing” and “social enterprises”—widely used in the UK— are absent from American discussions. Bratt (2012, p. 439) tries to clear up this linguistic complexity by (1) reminding us that a social enterprise is “a business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the business or the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximize profits for shareholders and owners,” (2) that “non-profit housing” (an American term) is a type of “housing social enterprise”, and (3) that CDCs are a type of non-profit housing organization that develops and maintains affordable housing for a particular area using community-based leadership although many are engaged in economic development and social services. We do not discuss the other two types of non-profit housing in this paper: non-profits producing large volumes of low income units over large areas and non-profits that produce low-income housing for specific groups (e.g. homeless veterans).

Like British community enterprises, CDCs own a community asset, in this case low-income housing. Rather than profit maximization, the goal of the CDC is to provide low-income housing over the long course in areas of the city that for-profit developers have generally abandoned. American CDCs use income from rental properties as well as funds from other sources to develop and maintain these properties. Only a relatively small number of CDCs derive income from

leasing out commercial or industrial properties. CDCs emerged when the federal government launched the War on Poverty in the mid-1960s. Federal policy sought to empower the poor through ‘maximum feasible participation.’ Since 1980, the federal government has relegated increased responsibility to localities and communities while at the same time reducing levels of funding for such programs as Community Development Block Grants (CDBG, Accordino and Fasulo, 2013).

In contrast to the secondary role played by CEs in neighbourhood regeneration (see section 3), CDCs have played a key, primary role. That is, since the 1980s CDCs have sought to achieve comprehensive, bottom-up, redevelopment by empowering “whole communities through comprehensive treatment of social and physical conditions ... measuring success in terms of physical redevelopment and community regeneration, participation, and empowerment (Stoecker, 1997, p.4, cited in Cowan *et al.*, 1999, pp. 327-328). These CDCs have been expected to better relate to their local constituency while at the same time stimulating private investment in the inner city (Scally, 2012).

The most recent survey providing an estimate of the number of CDCs found about 4,600 such groups (NCCED, 2005, cited in Bratt *et al.*, 2012). CDCs have produced or rehabilitated more than 1,252,000 units of housing (NCCED, 2005). CDCs and the other large non-profit housing producers have provided affordable housing opportunities to nearly 1.5 million households, almost one-third of the social housing sector.<sup>1</sup> These positive results are counterbalanced to some degree by the fact that many CDCs have small staffs, produce or rehabilitate few units annually and that many eventually fail.

CDCs and other community-based organizations have been moving in the direction of increased comprehensiveness for several decades. The overwhelming majority of CDCs combine their physical and business development with other initiatives (NCCED, 2005; Dewar & Thomas, 2013). Over one-half report that they offer homeowner counselling, budget/credit counselling and education/training. So, in an important sense, CDCs are beginning to resemble CEs more over time. To pay for their broadened scope some CDCs have served as consultants to less experienced non-profit groups or have created real estate firms that generate commissions from sales). Other non-profits that have experienced difficulty accessing capital with which to purchase land and buildings (see for example, Mayer & Temkin 2006, cited in Bratt, 2008), have surmounted this obstacle by developing partnerships with land-rich entities, such as churches (Bratt, 2008, p.340).

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<sup>1</sup> The statistics in this and the next paragraph are from NCCED, 2005 and are cited in Bratt, 2008; see also Cowan *et al.* 1999.

## 2.2 Key conditions for revitalization impacts

CDCs vary in their capacity. The success of any particular CDC<sup>2</sup> is influenced by characteristics of the organization itself, characteristics of the surrounding neighbourhood, city and region, and indirectly by the influence of CDCs through state and national CDC networks. In general, relatively little is known about the relative importance of these four sets of factors (Cowan *et al.*, 1999).

### *Organizational characteristics*

CDC success has been linked to a high level of sophistication in packaging financing from multiple financial sources and savvy in dealing with other neighbourhood organizations, local government, and financial intermediaries (Accordino & Fasulo, 2013) as well as a clear focus and sense of purpose (Cowan *et al.*, 1999, p. 338). Cowan *et al.*'s 1999 study is one of the few empirical analyses of factors influencing success. They identified five factors that promoted CDC efficiency: (1) an average direct investment of over \$1.25 million over the study period (highlighting the existence of a threshold beyond which the CDC benefits from economies of scale), (2) executive director tenure (spotlighting the benefits of organizational stability), (3) staff size (implying that the relationship is non-linear, i.e. showing that the benefits of scale has limits), (4) formal training of staff, board members and volunteers (i.e. improved knowledge leads to better performance), and (5) the number of activities (suggesting that a broader scope may lead to greater name recognition and greater external funding). Unfortunately, Cowan *et al.*'s study failed to examine the impact of the board of directors including the influence of board's diversity on effectiveness. Furthermore, they failed to examine the role the board plays, relative to the director, in establishing the mission of the CDC, in governing the organization, and in establishing the importance of the relationship between the board and the executive director in influencing agency effectiveness. Motivation has also been a factor with CDC directors tending to place a higher value on altruistic benefits than on monetary rewards (Cowan *et al.*, 1999). However, because CDCs have become more business-like, this means that higher salaries will be needed to attract qualified candidates.

### *Co-operation on multiple scales*

Previous writings suggest that a CDC's prospects for success will be greater if (1) the neighbourhood has strong social networks since this would make it easier to recruit volunteers (2) if the neighbourhood is in the early stages of decline (see subsections on

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<sup>2</sup> Here we are limiting our definition of 'success' to the ability to produce or rehabilitate housing or to carry out related economic development and social service programs. The ability of CDCs to achieve a broader mission, community economic and social development, is discussed in the next section.

targeting and outcomes below),<sup>3</sup> and (3) if the neighbourhood contains significant assets and magnets, such as government facilities, hospitals and universities ('feds, meds and eds'). It is in the interest of the latter three entities to provide technical and financial assist to CDCs either directly or indirectly.

The track record of CDCs (in terms of housing production) in shrinking cities like Detroit has not been impressive. Low demand, a result of socially mobile families being pulled to the suburbs, makes it difficult if not impossible to find moderate- income renters and homebuyers for new or rehabilitated homes (Beauregard, 2013; Ryan, 2013; Thomas, 2013). However, CDCs in some shrinking cities do better than CDCs in other ones; as Erickson (2009) indicates, it is important, that CDCs become integrated into the stable networks of support for low income housing production.

Chicago's New Communities Program (NCP) highlights the importance of cooperative relationships on the scale of the city or metropolitan area. The NCP "support[s] relationships among groups, including CDCs, promote[s] their capacity, and help[s] ensure that they complete projects identified in plans." (Greenberg, 2010, p. 47, cited in Rich, 2014, p. 83) The federal government's Community Development Block Grant program (CDBG) acting through CDCs and other community organizations has the potential to shift from the old paradigm of discrete projects to one that emphasizes "collaborative, comprehensive community-based *initiatives*." (ibid. p.83)

Finally, CDCs have attempted to scale up beyond the locality by first, linking the local through a national network (National Congress of Community Economic Development), then expanding CDC spaces of engagement through state policy networks; and most recently by developing a new national network of networks, the National Alliance of Community Development Associations, NACDA (Scally, 2012). For CDCs that operate in politically contentious states, or within institutionally weak community development environments, national networks may be the most feasible opportunity for CDCs to shape their policy environment beyond the local (Scally, 2012).

### *Comprehensiveness and viability*

Since the early 1980s, CDCs have gone beyond producing housing alone and have emerged as leaders in providing "housing plus" services. This housing-plus approach to subsidized housing involves providing not only the bricks and mortar, but also job training, social service programs and economic development activities (micro-enterprise development) and so forth (Bratt, 2008, p. 101).<sup>4</sup> Thus, as mentioned earlier, CDCs seem

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<sup>3</sup> In general neighborhoods with fewer resources and more burdens (worse conditions, more crime, etc.) prior to investments and neighborhoods in cities and regions with weaker economies and housing markets are likely to require larger subsidies to reach their development threshold than do those initially in a better position to attract investment (Pooley, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Initially, CDCs focused on either people (i.e. their need for services), places (neighborhood revitalization), or projects (i.e. their financial viability). Now, increasingly CDCs recognize the need to focus on all three

to be moving closer towards CEs in terms of comprehensiveness (see section 3), “blending the roles typically associated with the public and market based for-profit sectors.” (Bratt, 2012, p. 447). CDC success increasingly depends on the ability to secure funding from outside sources including the federal government, state funded housing programs, private foundations, and national non-profit intermediaries. With their growing dependence on these sources, CDC directors and staff have had to develop sophisticated financial skills to apply for the complex Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program and to assure funders that they have the ability to measure their effectiveness based on social, cultural and environmental outcomes along with traditional economic ones (see Scally, 2012/2013). Trying to carry out a wider scope of activities in the context of decreased federal funding, CDCs face Rachel Bratt’s “quadruple bottom line”:

“... the financial viability of the development, the social and economic needs of the residents living in the housing, a sensitivity to the way the housing fits into the larger fabric of the neighborhood and contributes to neighborhood viability; and The housing should be environmentally sensitive and sustainable as possible, which involves minimizing the use of nonrenewable energy resources and striving to reduce transportation needs”. (Bratt, 2012, pp. 443-444; see also Bratt, 2008)

The quadruple bottom line creates three types of tensions. First, a focus on financial viability may work against meeting the needs of residents. If a CDC decides to offer social services how will it pay for them? HUD regulations prevent non-profits from using excess revenues from a particular development to subsidize ‘housing plus’ services (Bratt 2008, p. 107). Ironically, this is precisely how CEs are supposed to achieve a sound business model (see next section).

Second, a focus on economic development and environmental sustainability may undercut equity planning (meeting residents’ needs). Berke and Godschalk’s 2009 analysis of Baltimore, Buffalo, Cleveland and Philadelphia (cited in Schilling & Vasudevan, 2013) showed that in all four cities social issues took a less important role than environmental and economic development policies.

Third, raising capital from the private and public sectors may conflict with community organizing (e.g. fighting City Hall and financial institutions). Specifically, CDC directors dependent on bank loans or government grants may be less likely to participate in local protest movements (Stoeker, 1997, cited in Bratt, 2012). Similarly, the quest for greater CDC efficiency would favour the multi-local CDC approach advocated by Stoeker (1997, i.e. CDCs covering an entire city rather than a particular community). A risk is the possible decrease in neighbourhood input into CDC decision making. If one

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areas. “Professional nonprofit housing developers... came to acknowledge that their tenants might not be able to stay in their units without various types of [social] services.” (Bratt, 2012, p.445)

CDC serves multiple areas, residents in individual neighbourhoods may have less voice in setting policy.

### *Targeting*

Targeting implies a focus of subsidies on higher-capacity declining communities (i.e. ones with more effective CDCs, along with a concentration on specific subareas within these communities, in order to strengthen the prospects for neighbourhood improvement. Currently, there is widespread consensus among housing funders and housing researchers that geographic targeting will most likely lead to neighbourhood improvement. Existing research shows that concentrated CDBG funding contributes to neighbourhood improvement but this is most likely to occur in homeownership neighbourhoods (Rohe and Galster, 2014; see also Bostic, 2014; Briggs, 2014; Galster *et al.* 2004, 2006; Pooley, 2014; Thomas, 2013). Although community development funders are fond of the idea of targeting, “political expediency dictates that elected officials spread federal CDBG [and other revitalization] funds *like peanut butter on bread* [italics in original] mollifying all, but fixing none because of the lack of a critical mass of resources in any area” (Joice, 2010, cited in Accordino & Fasulo, 2013, p. 617; see also Thomas, 2013).

With two significant exceptions, housing scholars generally have not clarified whether communities with strong CDCs ought to be prioritized in the future. Ehrenfeucht and Nelson (2013, p.169; see also Beauregard, 2013) note that post-Katrina New Orleans provided a political environment supportive of strategic targeting i.e. where foundation funds went to externally endowed CDCs with demonstrated capacity rather than less experienced indigenous organizations. Brooks and Sinitsyn (2014) observe that if Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, the largest source of funding for CDCs, were allocated exclusively to the poorest parts of the poorest neighbourhoods without regard to community organizational capacity, the city’s CDBG program would lose critically needed political support from the more politically powerful CDCs located in the less distressed poor neighbourhoods. Hence, future research should investigate the best ways to achieve a balance between strategic targeting and needs-based targeting.

### *Community participation*

The growth of CDCs in America is due, in large part, to the presumed relationship between these organizations and the community. However, existing scholarship provides at best, weak support for assumptions about either levels of involvement or the benefits of participation to low-income residents in CDCs.

First, because communities are not monolithic entities, it is questionable whether CDCs can represent a “community.” They consist of residents (owners as well as renters, absentee landlords, small businesses, and larger commercial outlets. Consequently on any particular issue it is unlikely that all these groups can find common ground and be

represented by a CDC (Bratt, 2008). Because of this diversity within communities, community activists and CDC directors can hardly speak for “their community” (Fainstein, 2010).

Second, attaining high levels of citizen participation is more difficult than most practitioners and academics realize. The complexity of funding may discourage residents from participating (Bratt & Reardon, 2013). Although ideally, residents should be heavily represented on CDC boards, in reality resident participation in CDC boards is limited (Bratt & Reardon, 2013). In some cases, a majority of board members are outsiders (bankers, academics, city officials), a reflection of the CDCs’ need to access outside financial resources. CDCs can use community events as a tool for ‘involvement’.

Third, little empirical evidence exists to show that involvement in CDCs enhances individual sense of efficacy and as a result increases the prospects for social mobility (Bratt & Reardon, 2013). CDCs may succeed in helping some lower income renters to become owners but it is debatable whether this type of tenure change constitutes empowerment (Peterman, 1998). While some CDCs help to create stronger alliances within and outside CDC neighbourhoods (a measure of greater community empowerment) this may reflect the efforts of entrepreneurial CDC directors rather than the influence of poor residents.

Fourth, a high level of community participation (i.e. community control) does not necessarily translate into a higher quality of life. Some CDCs may become so preoccupied with community control that they lose sight of the need for economic development (see Scally 2012/2013). Furthermore, a community control focus can lead to resident frustrations because of an inability to achieve high expectations (Scally 2012/2013), as well as parochialism, corruption (Fainstein, 2010, p. 67) and anti-social attitudes (Bratt & Reardon 2013). Resident management in public housing is no longer trumpeted by housing advocates (Vale, 2013). Less radical approaches (e.g., partnership arrangements between CDCs, other non-profits like universities, private firms, and local government) may be preferable to community control (Bratt & Reardon 2013).

### **2.3 Impacts on community revitalization**

Can CDCs spur community revitalization? On the one hand, advocates believe that CDCs can promote overall community revitalization through the spill over effects of new housing or rehabilitation combined with public infrastructure improvements—especially if these physical improvements are supplemented with social services (i.e. ‘housing plus programs’, see Bratt, 2008). On the other hand CDC critics assert (1) that CDCs are almost unnecessary—that “the private sector could and would pick up the slack if CDCs faded into oblivion” (Scally, 2012/2013; see also DeFilippis, 2004; Fraser *et al.*, 2003; Husock, 2003; Lemann, 1994; Rusk, 1999), (2) that CDC efforts are so small and marginal that they are unable to counteract the effects of concentrated poverty (Newman

& Schnare, 1992), the interrelated processes of racial and economic decline (Varady, 1986), wasteful suburbanization (Briggs, 2014), gentrification (Fainstein, 2010) and globalization (the loss of inner city-jobs to the suburbs, the south, and overseas, DeFilippis, 2010), (3) that CDC programs (including housing-plus programs) could lead residents to define themselves as ‘welfare dependent’ thereby undermining their sense of self-worth and cause them to see deficiencies in themselves, their neighbours, and their communities (Bratt, 2008 based on Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993) and (4) that householders in CDC neighbourhoods who achieve mobility are likely to move out.

Because there has been so little empirical research on the impacts of CDCs and because it is difficult to separate the impact of CDCs from other community development programs, it is worth addressing the question of how effective America’s Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program has been in promoting revitalization. Existing writings offer conflicting results. Two Urban Institute studies (Galster *et al.*, 2004; Walker *et al.*, 2002) “found evidence of significant improvement in neighbourhoods where CDBG funding was concentrated. The authors found that tracts with above-average CDBG spending per poor resident over the three-year study period (1994-1996) had significant positive relationships between CDBG spending and neighbourhood outcomes, as measured by median home mortgage loan originations, mortgage application approval rates, and the number of businesses.” (Rich, 2014, p. 71)

Similarly Pooley’s 2014 article suggested the existence of a threshold of CDBG funding beyond which increases in public investment were associated with sharp increases in housing values. At the same time, a recent evaluation of the CDBG program concluded that it has demonstrated little effectiveness in revitalizing poor communities (Center for Effective Government, 2005, cited in Rohe and Galster, 2014).

Two recent high quality empirical evaluations of community development efforts with entrepreneurial elements highlight the challenges to revitalization in the inner city. DeLuca and Rosenblatt’s 2013 evaluation of the Enterprise Foundations’ Sandtown-Winchester Neighbourhood Transformation Initiative (West Baltimore) highlights the resiliency of social problems in high poverty and racially segregated neighbourhoods. Unfortunately, DeLuca and Rosenblatt do not discuss the efforts of CDCs so it is impossible to assess their role in the limited revitalization that took place. Clearly, it is important to assess the role of CDCs in future studies of this kind.

Monti and Burghoff’s 2013 article highlights the limited prospects for community revitalization when it is carried out in conjunction with public private partnerships. The authors tracked social and economic changes in five communities in mid-St. Louis between 1970 and 2000 — where redevelopment was undertaken by public-private partnerships involving like private corporations or major non-profit institutions (Washington University Medical Center) — and compared the progress of redevelopment areas against that seen in nearby ‘control sites.’ The effects of the public-private

partnerships were more apparent at some redevelopment sites as compared to others and the spill over effects of redevelopment were limited to the immediately surrounding sub-neighbourhoods. Equally important, redeveloped areas managed to retain many of their established low-income minority residents and/or replace them with people who were very much like them—in part because of the efforts of these large institutional partners to maintain a population mix. Finally, redevelopment efforts generally had no impact on distressed shopping strips. While Monti and Burghoff do not discuss CDCs explicitly, they conclude “that but for the companies, institutions, *resident groups*, and political leaders that made the redevelopment of these five areas possible 40 years ago, the middle part of the city of St. Louis would be much less vital than it is today.” (p. 529, italics added).<sup>5</sup>

The existence of hundreds of gentrifying communities across America (and in other developed countries) shows that decline is not inevitable; in some cases the process may be reversed, albeit with costs (as well as benefits) for long-term, low-income residents (Freeman, 2006). While it is impractical for CDCs to “stop” gentrification, they may address the problem of displacement by enhancing the stock of socially managed housing and by implementing programs promoting social interaction across class lines (DeFilippis *et al.*, 2010; Hymowitz, 2013). Unfortunately, few cases studies exist of CDCs attempting to create stable mixed-income communities in areas experiencing gentrification.

To improve the quality of CDC outcome research—to raise it to the level of sophistication of poverty de-concentration studies like Moving to Opportunity (MTO), will require advanced techniques aimed at assessing the extent to which CDC initiatives are responsible for any changes that take place. Improved understanding will also require qualitative research on the degree to which local community involvement and approval exists; and the ways in which partnerships are formed (and severed) between community organizations, state, local, and federal agencies (DeLuca & Rosenblatt, 2013, p. 11).

### **3. British Community Enterprises**

#### **3.1 Definition and evolution over time**

Like other social enterprises, community enterprises are not-for-profit organizations which operate commercially. The key distinguishing characteristics of community enterprises are owning and managing properties, retaining profits for the good of the community and being locally accountable. According to Bailey (2012), community enterprises receive income from their assets (i.e. property management) and then recycle

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<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Scally (2012, p. 716) asserts that “... ‘but for’ CDCs [neighborhoods would] be considerably worse off than they are today.

this income (rents, less management costs and contributions to reserves) into a range of social, economic or cultural programs or activities that address a certain need in a place-based community or tackle a perceived service deficiency, whether or not as a result of austerity programs. Bailey (2012, pp. 6-7) distinguishes between three categories of community enterprises:

1. Village halls (with approximately 10,000 spread throughout England);
2. Community development trusts involved in the provision of housing, workspace and training, retail, health and sports facilities and the delivery of contracts for nurseries and social services, and
3. Former partnership regeneration projects, such as the New Deal for Communities (NDC, see Lawless, 2011) or Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders.

The following four cases from Bailey's 2012 article highlight the broad scope of British community enterprises which are located in both rural localities and urban neighbourhoods.

- The Caterham Barracks Community Trust (Caterham, Surrey) played a major role in redoing a redundant army barracks in the middle of a small village, in a rural area within London commuting distance, into an "urban village" which was subsequently developed with 400 houses and flats, business premises and a range of community facilities. (p. 18);
- Creation Development Trust (Blaengarw, South Wales) "has developed a series of social enterprises [e.g. the Blaengarw Workmen's Hall, a 250-seat arts and community venue], projects and events that have made regeneration a reality for this mining town..." (p. 20);
- The Manor and Castle Development Trust, which serves one of the most deprived areas in Sheffield, a formerly industrial city, has two wholly owned subsidiary companies, one which operates a building containing serviced offices and another which manages land on which housing built with government regeneration funding was built;
- The Westway Development Trust (WDT) serves North Kensington, London, "by far the most deprived part of an otherwise very affluent borough in inner London. " The Westway Development Trust provides sports facilities on 9 hectares of land under the Westway Flyover [an elevated highway] land transferred to the Trust by "Transport for London" although it was originally owned by the Greater London Council abolished in 1986. (p. 26)

These case studies suggest that there is a niche for these community-based organizations in relatively affluent suburban locations, rural and sea-side villages, as well as depressed inner city locations with the more traditional array of social, economic and environmental

problems. Although some scholars (e.g. Thake, 1995 cited in Bailey, 2012) have argued that community enterprises could make a major contribution to community regeneration by forming partnerships between other organizations in the voluntary and community sectors and public sector bodies, community enterprises have generally not been seen as central to (government-initiated) regeneration processes.

### **3.2 Key conditions for revitalization impacts**

As with CDCs, four sets of factors influence the success of community enterprises in the context of urban regeneration: (1) characteristics of the organization, (2) cooperation on multiple scales, (3) comprehensiveness and viability, (4) targeting, and (5) community participation.

#### *Organizational characteristics*

Bailey (2012) identifies three key organizational characteristics. The first is the skill level and the level of entrepreneurship of the director and other staff. The social entrepreneur, who is most often the director "... needs the skills of the entrepreneur to identify opportunities and ways of exploiting them, they need a clear vision about the social, economic and environmental objectives of the organization, and an ability to motivate staff, the directors and the wider community in order to sustain the organization and to ensure it prospers" (ibid. pp.14-15). Some trusts are much more entrepreneurial than others and create complex developments involving cross-subsidization. For example, Coin Street Community Builders (CSCB, London) is already well known for their mixed use Oxo Tower development which was completed in 1996. The commercial residential development funds most of the capital cost and all of the revenue subsidy required for leisure and recreational programs (ibid. p.29; see also Fainstein, 2010, pp. 124-125).

The second factor is the level and quality of voluntary efforts. Generally, "the best outcomes arise where individuals take on responsibilities and play roles which generate satisfaction and a sense of achievement for themselves" (ibid. p. 18; see also Smith, 2012). The third factor is the size of the community enterprise. Larger organizations tend to have larger capacity and greater potential for success. "Sources of funding and resources vary enormously between organizations. Some exist on very small donations and other sources, the bigger enterprises gain revenue funding from their own assets which may be let on commercial terms, or from other surpluses (p.28)."

#### *Co-operation on multiple scales*

As in the US, the success of CEs is dependent on cooperation on multiple levels, from the neighbourhood to the nation as a whole. Bailey (2012) emphasizes the importance of social capital in the neighbourhood or locality:

“The primary strength of community enterprise is that it can harness the social capital evident in local communities and use it to achieve positive outcomes through mobilizing volunteers, board members and paid staff. The commitment to the locality and the ability to exploit the tacit knowledge of residents gives the organization added strength and the ability to represent it in other forums. Thus community enterprises are aware of the positive benefits of engaging local communities in order to build capacity and to promote bridging, bonding and linking social capital” (ibid. p. 30; see also Smith, 2012).

Unfortunately Bailey does not provide empirical evidence to support the above assertions, e.g., that communities able to mobilize volunteers are more likely to achieve positive outcomes (however these positive outcomes are defined). In addition the likelihood of success is dependent on neighbourhood social and economic conditions. Take for example Bailey’s example of The Steel Inn operated by the Manor and Castle Development Trust, Sheffield. This was a pub which developed a bad reputation and which experienced a high incidence of anti-social behaviour. The Trust’s ability to work with local authorities to produce a young people’s resource centre clearly was undercut by the concentration of poverty and related social problems.

The effectiveness of a community enterprise is also dependent in part on the CE's participation along with other groups in city-wide planning processes and neighbourhood forums.<sup>6</sup> As an example of this type of partnership arrangement, the Lyme Regis Development Trust works closely with the town council and District Council in building on the Lyme Forward Community Plan when opportunities and funding become available (Bailey, 2012, p.22). A similar example is offered by the Caterham Barracks Community Trust, of which a later chairman was not only a local resident, but also a district councillor, and therefore important in creating relations between governmental institutions (the District Council and District administration), the local community and the private developer (Van Meerkerk *et al.*, 2013, p. 1649). According to Bailey, if community enterprises are to achieve the same level of growth as American CDCs then the UK needs to replicate national intermediaries such as the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) which allocate resources and provide technical support to CDCs and related organizations (Bailey, 2012, p.13). In the UK, over six hundred community enterprises are joined in Locality, a leading nationwide network of development trusts, community enterprises, settlements and social action centres. Its vision is “is to make every community a place of possibility – through social action, community enterprise and community asset ownership” (Locality, 2014). For this purpose, it offers expert guidance, a range of free tools and further support to community enterprises. Presumably CEs that

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<sup>6</sup> As mentioned earlier, in a parallel manner, some of the more successful American CDCs participate in city-wide housing partnerships.

belong to Locality are more successful in accessing external funding and technical expertise although this hypothesis has not been empirically tested.

### *Comprehensiveness and viability*

Most community enterprises aim to achieve the ‘triple bottom line’ of economically viable operations (being able to meet the payroll), social benefits (including but not limited to more jobs for the unemployed) and high environmental standards (more parks and open space, buildings which reduce energy consumption (Elkington, 1998, cited in Bailey, 2012). Achieving this triple bottom line creates tensions. For example, acquiring vacant buildings may necessitate costly repairs undercutting the agency’s financial viability.<sup>7</sup> There exists considerable variability among community enterprises in terms of their ability to achieve the ‘triple bottom line.’ Some community enterprises such as Coin Street Community Builders (London) are fortunate in securing assets from the beginning. They are especially privileged if these assets can be acquired at below market value; this may be through transfer from a local government or other public body or as part of negotiations arising from the planning system. Other community enterprises struggle to acquire assets and often find it difficult to obtain commercial loans for acquisition and development if the full market price has to be paid. Accessing capital funding at reasonable interest rates remains one of the major limitations on the growth of this sector. (Bailey, 2012, p. 32). All Bailey’s case studies emphasize the financial challenges facing community enterprises in terms of funding and financial risks.

In order to put together complex financial deals necessary to accept the increased responsibilities assigned to them by government, community enterprises have to upgrade their financial skills. Specifically, community enterprise directors “and their boards [need] to identify an opportunity, produce a business plan which works financially, identify possibly multiple funding sources and then to implement the project within budget” (Bailey, 2012, p.28).

### *Targeting*

In section 2.2, we explained that geographic targeting in the USA context implies that a focus on higher capacity declining communities, along with a concentration on specific subareas within these communities, will improve the prospects for neighbourhood improvement. (Thomson, 2013; see also Galster *et al.*, 2006, Ryan, 2013). In the UK context, the changing policy context creates a double loading to the concept of targeting. A key aim of the 2011 Localism Act is to pave the way for a wide transfer of powers to communities, neighbourhoods and individuals, for example by a ‘Community Right to

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<sup>7</sup> As indicated earlier, Rachel Bratt uses the term “quadruple bottom line” (she added economic development) to describe the three other sets of goals sought by American CDCs. We suspect that this term applies equally well to British community enterprises.

Buy' (CLG, 2011) that should facilitate the transfer of important private or public assets with a 'community value' to community groups. Citing Kisby (2010) and Lawless (2011), Bailey (2012) identifies several problems of this power-devolving strategy, which are important for the issue of targeting:

“... Second, there is no apparent targeting of the most deprived neighbourhoods which require most assistance in addressing issues of asset transfer. Third, it clearly favours the better organised and generally more affluent areas which already have the skills, knowledge and resources to run community enterprises which can exploit opportunities. Fourth, the reduction of funding for voluntary and community organisations since 2010 has been substantial and therefore the sector is less able to take advantage of new opportunities” (ibid. p.12).

In other words, the government approach seems to be moving away from targeted support to the most deprived areas (often those with limited capacity and also disproportionately hit by austerity budget cuts, see Hastings *et al.*, 2012) to a do-it-yourself strategy in which the better equipped community groups have more opportunities to take hold of assets (which are key to the prospects of community enterprises). In fact, this can be considered as an implicit targeting strategy that resembles the US situation in the sense that resources or assets will go to 'areas in need' where the expected 'return on investment' is highest. And the remains of 'traditional' government targeting are hampered by the reduction of funding for voluntary and community organizations. As a result, the key challenge lies with CEs in deprived areas where government sponsoring is about to disappear and where social and cultural capital and abilities are low (compared to middle-class communities).

### *Community participation*

Community enterprises need to be viewed in the context of earlier neighbourhood regeneration projects. Although participation has usually been stressed as a goal, “there [has] often [been] confusion and uncertainty about who should be involved in community participation and how this would contribute to the achievement of regeneration objectives (Evans, 2008, cited in Bailey, 2012, p.9) Even though these earlier neighbourhood regeneration programs emphasized community involvement, national evaluations demonstrated that, even with additional resources, the proportion of residents directly involved remained limited.” (p.9; see also Lawless, 2011). Rather than rely on direct means such as 'town halls', most community enterprises use informal mechanisms, such as volunteers and word of mouth, in order to encourage greater involvement in the organization. Involvement is also achieved through events and festivals, community cafes and training, or through day-to-day informal influence and persuasion.

A key issue for community enterprises is the representativeness of the boards. With some exceptions noted by Bailey (2012, p. 15), many CE boards are dominated by white men, many of whom are retired. While such boards are clearly not fully representative of the community they may be better connected to the private sector than would be the case if the board were more demographically diverse. “In essence, the organization needs to be able to attract members with a range of appropriate skills, engage the wider public and other stakeholders, and establish systems which are flexible and sustainable in the longer term” (ibid.).

### **3.3 Impacts on community revitalization**

Bailey (2012, p. 33) asserts that “the impact of community enterprise is very difficult to assess because it operates on so many fronts, works on different timescales, and delivers social, economic and environmental benefits. In many ways, recording outputs, rather than outcomes, and the perceptions of those directly involved and users is more meaningful but still raises methodological difficulties.” This explains why much of the ‘evidence’ he presents is rather anecdotal. Another example shows that it has been easier to report on CE outputs than outcomes. The Caterham Barracks Community Trust “used its funds to establish a range of economic, social, educational, cultural and sports facilities, such as an indoor skate park, a centre for arts and recreation, a cricket field, a children’s play area, a nature reserve/community farm, a centre for enterprises and a football club. The Trust functioned as a platform or ‘springboard’ for these user groups to run certain community facilities and it holds an open attitude towards potential user groups” (Van Meerkerk *et al.*, 2013, p.1642). Nevertheless, Bailey is optimistic about the future of community enterprises as long as they adopt a new regeneration model, one “that accentuates the people and their assets as the starting point, rather than negative measures of ‘need’ and one that builds up the organizational skills of residents. His new regeneration model depends on achieving a high level of citizen participation, something that has been extremely difficult to achieve in distressed neighbourhoods in the UK. The rise of facilitating legal frameworks such as the Localism Act (2011), may support this new model of regeneration, but it is too early to establish the validity of this claim.

## **4. Conclusions and Future Research**

Nick Bailey’s 2012 article on British community enterprises (CEs) provided the impetus for this paper. He asserted that CEs fundamentally resembled American community development corporations and consequently that CEs could learn a great deal from CDCs. In this paper, we have analysed the extent to which CEs and CDCs resemble one another

with respect to their evolution, factors affecting success, implementation dilemmas, and their track record in promoting community revitalization

Although both CEs and CDCs are non-profits with a geographic focus and both have attained growing importance due to devolution of responsibilities from the national to the local and community levels, they exhibit significant differences. CEs are best known for managing properties transferred to them by government and other entities; to date, they generally do not play a central role in neighbourhood revitalization efforts. In contrast, CDCs emphasize housing construction and/or rehabilitation and CDCs are key actors in neighbourhood revitalization efforts. However, CEs and CDCs are becoming increasingly similar. Some CEs (i.e. Community Development Trusts, former partnership regeneration projects) are involved in housing provision. On the other hand (like CEs) some CDCs are leasing space in commercial and industrial facilities while accepting donated property from land-rich entities like churches. Similar factors affect the prospects for success of CEs and CDCs: agency size, the level of training and motivation of the director, neighbourhood social capital (which affects the ability to draw volunteers), neighbourhood social and economic problems (inversely); community assets (such as universities, hospitals and government offices), and membership and participation in local, state and national networks. There is one organizational key difference in the determinants of success. In the US but not the UK, there is consensus about the need to pay professional-level pay salaries to attract qualified directors.

CEs and CDCs are experiencing some of the same dilemmas concerning implementation. First, in both countries there is considerable scepticism about the value of devolution. CEs and CDCs are being given increased responsibility but without the funding needed to carry out these responsibilities. Second, in both countries community-based organizations face a series of trade-offs related to the quadruple bottom line; maintaining financially stable operations (developments), offering needed social services, promoting community economic development and maintaining high environmental standards. Third, although both CEs and CDCs prize community participation, the desired levels of participation and the presumed benefits (e.g., ‘empowerment’) usually have not been achieved or cannot be substantiated by research.

On the other hand, British and American discourse concerning targeting differs. In the UK, the national government now implicitly targets high capacity communities through the power devolution, do-it-yourself discourse regarding community self-help and the associated guidance that is now being developed, e.g. regarding asset transfers through a Community Right to Buy. Many academics from the UK object to this form of targeting (e.g. Kisby, 2010; Lawless, 2011; Bailey, 2012). In contrast many American practitioners and academics advocate “strategic geographic targeting”: focusing on high-capacity lower-income communities (within the population of lower income communities eligible for help) and by concentrating projects at the block and neighbourhood subarea

levels. However, targeting (whether strategic or equity-based) rarely occurs because politicians prefer to spread limited funds over all eligible communities.

The very scarce scholarly empirical work on the impact of CEs and CDCs on community revitalization has generally produced optimistic conclusions but little ‘hard evidence.’ The lack of information on changes in socioeconomic indicators resulting from CDC activities is understandable. Because information on housing production is more readily available than data on other non-housing objectives such as ‘community empowerment’ CDCs generally find it easier to show success by focusing on housing production (Scally, 2012/2013). Two recent American studies — DeLuca & Rosenblatt (2013); and Monti & Burghoff (2013) — highlight what is hopefully a trend toward more sophisticated community development research. However, considerable room for improvement remains until scholars will be able to tease out the role that CDCs play in revitalization efforts and to transfer the lessons of CDC successes or failures from one community to another. The available empirical research —much of it based on the larger CDBG program — suggests that community development programs have generally not been able to counter the forces of decline. To conclude, British CEs could benefit from American CDCs by:

- Importing the model of national financial intermediaries such as LISC;
- Initiating a serious discussion about the need to pay directors professional-level salaries and the implications involved;
- Making greater use of strategic targeting while at the same time raising the capacity of CEs in distressed areas, and by
- Replicating sophisticated community development studies (see DeLuca and Rosenblatt, 2013, and Monti and Burghoff, 2013).

Based on the review of CDC and CE literature, our paper raises a number of questions that can guide future research. First and most obvious, the very scarce empirical work on the outcomes of CDCs and CEs clearly needs extension. As Bailey (2012, p. 33) has mentioned, these impacts are very difficult to assess because they operate on many fronts, on different timescales, and deliver various social, economic and environmental benefits. Moreover, the impact of CDCs/CEs is in itself difficult to “flesh out” as part of larger community revitalization efforts. To overcome such methodological challenges, the quality of outcome research has to be raised to the level of sophistication of either quasi-experimental studies like Moving to Opportunity (MTO), or a comprehensive Theory of Change (ToC) approach combined with in-depth fieldwork. In brief, the latter approach meticulously analyses the assumptions behind a certain (policy) intervention and subsequently studies to what extent these underlying assumptions (*theories of change*)

are realistic (Weiss, 1995; Pawson & Tilley, 1997).<sup>8</sup> Improved understanding will also require qualitative empirical research on the degree to which local communities are actually involved in CDCs and CEs and the ways in which (new) partnerships are formed (and severed) between community organizations, state, local, and federal agencies (DeLuca & Rosenblatt, 2013, p.11).

Second and related, research should reveal how community enterprise can harness social capital in local communities (including ones experiencing gentrification or becoming immigrant enclaves) and how it can be used (more effectively) to achieve positive outcomes through mobilizing volunteers, board members and paid staff.

Third, in terms of management, research should examine in more depth the role that is played by CDC/CE boards, relative to the director, in establishing the mission of the CDC/CE, in governing the organization, and in establishing the importance of the relationship between the board and the executive director in influencing agency effectiveness.

Finally, future research should investigate the relative importance of the benefits and costs of strategic targeting versus needs-based targeting. More insight in these issues will surely advance the knowledge on the potential of community entrepreneurship in the context of neighbourhood revitalization.

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<sup>8</sup> In the words of Weiss (1995): “The concept of grounding evaluation in theories of change takes for granted that social programs are based on explicit or implicit theories about how and why the program will work. The evaluation should surface those theories and lay them out in as fine detail as possible, identifying all the assumptions and sub-assumptions built into the program. The evaluators then construct methods for data collection and analysis that track the unfolding of the assumptions. The aim is to examine the extent to which program theories hold. The evaluation should show which of the assumptions underlying the program break down, where they break down, and which of the several theories underlying the program are best supported by the evidence”.

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