

<b>Institution: Manchester Metropolitan University</b>		
<b>Unit of Assessment: C17 Business and Management</b>		
<b>Title of case study: Transforming the Vitality and Viability of the UK's High Streets</b>		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2000-2020</b>		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Cathy Parker	Professor of Marketing & Retail	1995-present
Simon Quin	Professorial Fellow in Practice	2012-present
Steve Millington	Reader in Place Management	1996-present
Nikolaos Ntounis	Senior Research Associate	2013-present
Gary Warnaby	Professor of Retailing and Marketing	1991-2001; 2016-present
Dominic Medway	Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Business and Law	1996-2006; 2016-present
Chloe Steadman	Research Associate	2017-present
Gareth Roberts	Projects Manager	2012-present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014-2020</b>		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No</b>		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>The Institute of Place Management (IPM) is the international professional body for place managers working with practitioners and policy-makers to support town, city and district centre change. Research undertaken in partnership with the UK Government, communities and local authorities resulted in:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The UK Government's creation of the GBP1,000,000,000 Future High Streets Fund in 2018 to support 72 areas across England;</li> <li>2. Leadership of the Government-funded High Streets Task Force (HSTF) that is transforming struggling High Streets and town centres;</li> <li>3. The development and establishment of The BID Foundation, an industry body providing specialist support and strategic direction to 95 UK Business Improvement Districts.</li> </ol>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>UK town centres are experiencing a period of turbulent change. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Centre for Retail Research (CRR) forecast a continuing decline, predicting the closure of approximately 31,000 stores over three years, with an estimated 552,500 job losses (CRR, 2019). Yet, as pressures on town centres intensify, place stakeholders responsible for managing them, do not know how to respond effectively to such changes, nor typically how to anchor their decision-making within research evidence. The long-term trends underpinning these forecasts, and the subsequent negative impacts on the social and cultural fabric of UK towns, have been investigated by academics at Manchester Metropolitan [1-6] since the late 1990s.</p> <p><b>High Street UK:</b> In 2014, IPM received ESRC funding (G1) for the project, <i>High Street UK 2020</i> (HSUK2020), which aimed to understand better how <i>vitality</i> (i.e. how lively a centre feels) and <i>viability</i> (i.e. centre sustainability) of the High Street can be enhanced and sustained over time. Led by Professor Parker, the research team adopted an engaged scholarship approach enabling research and knowledge exchange between stakeholders, including academics, practitioners, and policy-makers. Working collaboratively with ten UK towns and 250 stakeholders, they identified the 'Top 25 Priorities' for vitality and viability [1,2]. The findings from the research resulted in the development of the '4Rs Framework' (<i>reinventing; repositioning; rebranding; and restructuring</i>), which now provides an evidence-based model to deliver expert advice to town centres on how to implement the most effective place interventions to enhance their vitality and viability [2]. Building on this project (in partnership with Cardiff University, Springboard and technology providers, MyKnowledgeMap), IPM researchers conducted the <i>Bringing Big Data to Small Users</i> (BDSU) project, funded by Innovate UK (G2, 2016-2018). An extensive quantitative analysis of footfall data collected from 150 UK cities and towns, led to the development of four footfall signature types: <i>comparison towns, holiday towns, speciality towns</i> and <i>convenience/community/multifunctional towns</i> [3]. In 2018, a state-of-the-art dashboard product</p>		

was developed with funding from Manchester Metropolitan University's Strategic Opportunities Fund (GBP100,000). This was tested and refined alongside stakeholders in seven UK towns and is now in use by the HSTF. In 2020, IPM researchers updated the 'Top 25 Priorities' as part of the development of the HSTF, identifying 36 new factors.

**The BID Foundation (TBF):** Building on earlier research into retailer involvement in, and funding of, town centre management (TCM) [4], IPM researchers recognised the importance of implementing a formal and more financially-sustainable place management infrastructure across the UK. Consequently, IPM was amongst the first to undertake research into Business Improvement Districts (BIDs); regarded by many as a means of overcoming some of the inherent problems arising from the essentially 'voluntary' nature of stakeholder participation in TCM. BIDs play a significant role in regenerating areas by providing businesses with a single collective voice. They have been a key tool in the development of local leadership and growth in High Streets and town centres since 2004. The most effective BIDs reflect critical success factors identified in [5], such as strong leadership, a genuine desire for change, and support from the local authority. In 2007, further research, comprising interviews with UK town centre managers and US BID managers, compared and contrasted performance measurement in terms of concept, design and use. This provided further critical reflection on practices, such as the lack of evaluation inherent in many schemes [6]. In early 2018, TBF, increasingly acknowledged as an industry 'voice' for BIDs, commissioned IPM to produce an in-depth 'State-of-the-Art' Review [G] of BIDs, to set an ongoing agenda for UK policy, practice and research. Subsequently, the Scottish Towns' Partnership and the Welsh Government commissioned IPM to evaluate the current position of BIDs in 2018 and 2020 respectively.

### 3. References to the research

[1] Parker, C, Ntounis, N, Quin, S, and Millington, S. (2016) Identifying factors that influence vitality and viability (produced for the ESRC-funded HSUK2020 Project)  
<https://people-places.net/wp-content/uploads/HSUK2020-End-of-Project-Report-compressed.pdf>

[2] Parker, C, Ntounis, N, Millington, S, Quin, S, and Castillo-Villar, F. (2017) Improving the vitality and viability of the UK High Street by 2020: Identifying priorities and a framework for action, *Journal of Place Management and Development*. 10 (4): 310-348  
 DOI: [10.1108/JPM-D-03-2017-0032](https://doi.org/10.1108/JPM-D-03-2017-0032)

Link to the full HSUK2020 special issue (6386+ downloads, as of Sept 2020):

<https://www.emerald.com/insight/publication/issn/1753-8335/vol/10/iss/4>.

[3] Mumford, C, Parker, C, Ntounis, N, and Dargan, E. (2020) Footfall signatures and volumes: Towards a classification of UK centres. *Environment and Planning B Planning and Design*, 1-16  
 DOI: [10.1177/2399808320911412](https://doi.org/10.1177/2399808320911412)

[4] Medway, D, Warnaby, G., Bennison, D. and Alexander, A. (2000) Reasons for retailers' involvement in town centre management, *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 28 (8), 368- 378, DOI: [10.1108/09590550010337436](https://doi.org/10.1108/09590550010337436)

[5] Hogg, S., Medway, D. and Warnaby, G (2003) Business improvement districts: An opportunity for SME retailing, *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 31 (9), 466-469, DOI: [10.1108/09590550310491432](https://doi.org/10.1108/09590550310491432)

[6].Hogg, S., Medway, D. and Warnaby, G. (2007) Performance Management in UK Town Centre Management Schemes and US Business Improvement Districts: Comparisons and UK implications, *Environment and Planning A*, 39 (6), 1513-1528, DOI: [10.1068/a38105](https://doi.org/10.1068/a38105)

### Funding:

G1.High Street UK 2020: Transferring knowledge to facilitate the repositioning, reinventing, rebranding and restructuring of sustainable retail centres (HSUK2020), ESRC (ES/L005182/1), 2014-2015 (GBP111,935), PI: Parker

G2.Improving the Consumer Experience in Retail: Bringing Big Data to Small Users, Innovate UK (102549), 2016-2018 (GBP149,665), PI: Parker

G3.Establishment and Management of a High Street Taskforce, Dept of Communities and Local Government, 2019-2024 (GBP8,689,505), PI: Parker

G4.Vital and Viable District Centres Project: MCC, 2016-2020 (GBP105,244); Stockport MBC, 2019-2020 (GBP65,208); Salford City Council, 2020-2021 (GBP50,000), PI: Parker

G5.Area Based Collaborative Enterprise (ABCE), Interreg 2018 – 2022, (GBP150,231) PI: Millington

#### 4. Details of the impact

##### Shaping and Informing National Government Policy

Evidence from IPM research continues to have a direct impact on Government policy around the UK's High Streets and town centres. Findings from the HSUK2020 project (G1), underpinned evidence (jointly produced with the Association of Town Centre Management and TBF) submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) High Street Inquiry in 2018. Parker also provided oral evidence [A] to the Inquiry, and IPM's recommendations are cited several times in the final report [A]. Evidence from the 2016 Innovate-funded BDSU project was also cited in the influential 2018 *Grimsey Review 2* [B] and both together led to The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (on behalf of former High Streets Minister, Jake Berry and Sir John Timpson) commissioning IPM to collect evidence to inform the Government's Expert Panel on the future health of the High Street *directly*. Key findings from HSUK2020 and BDSU played an integral role in the facilitation of evidence-gathering workshops carried out by the IPM with local High Street users in Holmfirth, Altrincham, Bristol, Shrewsbury and Aldershot, and at the Teenage Market in Bolton.

The IPM also collected evidence from place management stakeholders involved in the leadership of change in their town centres, including community volunteers, local authority members; small and medium-sized enterprises (SME)-owners and BID managers. In December 2018, IPM presented the findings from these activities to MHCLG in the 'High Street 2030' report [C] that fed into, and was subsequently cited throughout, Sir John Timpson's 'The High Street' Report [C]. In this way, IPM's research has had a direct impact on the Government's decision to create the GBP675,000,000 Future High Streets Fund (FHSF) [C] and in 2019, IPM research [1,2,3] underpinned their successful bid to lead the [Government's HSTF](#) [D]. The (former) Deputy Director of Regeneration and Investment at MHCLG underlines the links between IPM's research and these significant policy impacts: *IPM's work has directly contributed to actions in and policy on town centres... through both providing insight to the department's Future High Streets Forum and Expert Panel and through the delivery of the £8.6m High Streets Task Force... As part of the Future High Street Forum, the IPM presented to ministers and key stakeholders on the importance of place in high streets policy. The work of the panel and of IPM supporting them, was instrumental in the development of a package of support for High Streets that included the £675m Future High Streets Fund (later expanded to £1billion) and the establishment of the High Streets Task Force* [E]. In 2020, the UK Government [announced that 72 areas across the country were receiving £830 million of investment](#) from the FHSF underlining the importance of the implementation of this policy in supporting places to recover from the pandemic, and in the creation of thousands of jobs.

##### Transforming Place Management Practice

IPM research has delivered a measurable impact on the vitality and viability of city, town and district centres across the UK. On a **regional** scale, research findings have directly informed the *Vital and Viable Neighbourhoods Project*: a collaborative initiative (2016–2019) between IPM and Manchester City Council. IPM research [1-3] shaped the content of workshops conducted with residents, councillors, local traders and neighbourhood officers, providing research-informed evidence upon which decisions about future activities could be made. For example, Northenden District Centre organised a community Christmas event in December 2018, informed by recommendations about the use of entertainment and leisure activities; this led to a 109% increase in footfall compared to the previous week. In 2019, Withington used IPM evidence around the importance of *activity hours*, to encourage businesses to extend opening times collaboratively. This resulted in a 30% increase in footfall compared to averages over the previous 52 Fridays, in addition to record takings for retailers, and led to further late-night events [F]. The *Vital and Viable Project's* recommendations [F] have been endorsed by the District Centres Sub-Group and embedded in Manchester City Council's Local Plan and District Centres Policy: *The robust approach taken, drawing on IPM's High Street UK 2020 and Bringing Big Data to Small Users projects...will I believe contribute to the academic understanding of District Centres. One of the aspects of the IPM research was to identify quick wins for District Centres through local stakeholders working in partnership...which has already had significant impact on*

*district centres across Manchester* (Cllr. Mandie Shilton Godwin, District Centres Sub-Group) [F]. **Nationally**, the research has helped local agents of change in partner towns within the HSUK2020 and BDSU projects. For example, in 2016, Ballymena responded to the research by strengthening its retail offer, which led to an 8.1% increase in footfall compared to 2015 [F]. Using footfall patterns from the BDSU project, Wrexham focused on 'restructuring' and fostering more collaborative place-making by changing its governance structures. In 2017, there was an average weekly footfall increase of 6% to 77,000 pedestrians per week in the town centre with a record 100,000 visitors recorded in August 2017 [F]. A technology-enabled dashboard, created as a result of the BDSU project, is now offered as an HSTF product revolutionising the way in which stakeholders, such as local authorities and BIDs, understand their towns and cities based on activity levels. Research findings are also impacting on **international** place management practice. The ABCitiEs project (G5), is embedding the learning from IPM's work in Manchester into European cities (<https://www.interregeurope.eu/abcities/>). ABCitiEs investigates the role of collaborative partnerships in understanding place, and building local capacity. Five European urban regions are involved: Amsterdam, Athens, Manchester, Vilnius and Varazdin-Cakovic (Croatia). All the partner cities have drawn up action plans to increase their growth, cooperation and cohesion [G]. In 2019, Millington was invited by the Victoria State Government in Australia to share IPM research with over 100 businesses, local government representatives, and the Ministers for Small Business Development and Suburban Development. The Senior Policy Officer for Business Programs within the Victoria State Government Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions stated: *The two-day workshop held by Dr. Millington following the conference was highly successful ...one local council in particular had reserved a significant portion of their budget for place-based activation as a direct result of participation in the workshop* [G].

#### **National BID 'Industry' development**

In 2018, The Bid Foundation (TBF) was established in response to a consultation that revealed the need for an independent body to provide an authoritative voice for the BID industry to maximise policy influence and impact. In 2018, IPM won a competitive tender to act as TBF's research, quality assurance and accreditation body, assuming a broader advocacy role: *The Institute of Place Management was selected by leading industry professionals...to establish 'The BID Foundation' in 2018. One of the fundamental reasons for this was the track record of the IPM in delivering quality research. The independent nature of the IPM and its academic credentials, means research with our industry is more transparent, informative and deeper, as its only objective is to show the state of play and drive up standards* (Andrew Cooper, Inaugural TBF Chair and CEO, LeedsBID) [H]. Evidence from IPM's 2019 BIDs Review [H] underpinned the development of new industry standards, developed in consultation with BIDs, MHCLG, Scottish Towns Partnership and the Welsh Government [H]. TBF has used these standards to encourage transparency and responsible governance in the sector.

The IPM provides TBF members with access to research-informed professional development and the opportunity to participate in IPM research programmes. This enables BIDs to draw on the very latest research insights to inform their own individual business plans. A significant benefit that is underlined by the current Chair of TBF, Bill Addy: *This partnership [between the IPM and The BID Foundation] provides our membership with unparalleled access to international networks, influence – and – very importantly the outcomes of its substantial research activity, which forms an essential knowledge base that can be used to inform policy initiatives and adaptations to BID legislation in the UK* [H]. The IPM has also helped TBF to draw down additional Government investment to help the sector. In May 2020, TBF and IPM worked with partners to lobby UK governments, helping to secure a [GBP6.100,000 funding package in England](#).

**COVID-19 recovery:** As a lead partner of the HSTF, the IPM has responded to national priorities pivoting to support place leaders and local authorities throughout the crisis. IPM has designed a COVID-19 Recovery Framework [I] based on their insights into the key drivers of vitality and viability, which offers a model to support places through crisis, pre-recovery, recovery and transformation stages of the pandemic. It enables place managers and other stakeholders



to develop a coordinated and systematic approach for recovery and improvement: *All Council teams are using the IPM Framework as a template for completing their own recovery plans, not just the Place team. This means we should end up with a cohesive plan across the Council as a whole. The advice and resources shared by the IPM / High Streets Task Force team are proving to be invaluable to us in engaging our teams in a cohesive and measured way* (Tourism Manager, Worcester City Council) [I]. In May 2020, the Government provided GBP50,000,000 to local authorities and advised them to draw upon IPM's framework in their recovery strategies [I].

**Professional development:** IPM has established professional standards for place managers, initiated in response to research findings [6] that identified a need for career development. Manchester Metropolitan delivers the UK's only MSc in Place Management and Leadership taught by IPM researchers, based on ongoing research. Work-based learning approaches have changed the professional development of over 40 place practitioners, equipping them with specialist knowledge and strategic skills: *The MSc in Place Management and Leadership provided me with new insights and skills to tackle a broad range of place related challenges from factors that influence the vitality and viability of towns through to stakeholder management and place marketing* (Director, Eutopia Strategy Ltd Place Marketing Consultancy, UK) [J]. The long-standing research partnership between IPM and The National Association of British Markets (NABMA) has led to the Diploma in Market Administration, which has become the standard benchmark in the industry. It has had an impact on the professional practice of 155 market managers in the UK and internationally. Other programmes, such as 'Developing Place Analysts', are being delivered to local authorities, place managers and BIDS through the HSTF.

**Raising public awareness of the challenges facing the UK High Street:** Since 2014, IPM has generated significant media coverage reaching a potential audience of 80,000,000. Parker, Millington and Quin have discussed IPM's research and raised awareness around High Street regeneration across a range of national and regional media outlets (e.g. *BBC Breakfast; BBC News; BBC Radio 4; ITV Tonight; Channel 4 News; Sky News; and Radio 5 Live*). In January 2020, Parker appeared on *BBC One's Panorama* discussing High Street challenges to an audience of 5,000,000. In September 2020, Millington discussed new footfall research published by the HSTF with the BBC on Radio 4's *You and Yours*, BBC Breakfast (24,000 online views), BBC News and 16 regional/local BBC radio stations [K].

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- [A]. 1. Parker's [oral evidence to Parliament](#) (10 September, 2018); 2. High Street and Town Centres, MHCLG Select Committee Final Report (February 2019)
- [B]. Grimsey Review 2 Report (July 2018) (p 50-51 BDSU project findings)
- [C]. 1. High Street 2030: Achieving Change, *Report: Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government*; 2. Sir John Timpson: The High Street Report (2020) (pp7,9,15); 3. IPM's HSUK2020 report cited in Government's Announcement of HSF.
- [D]. 1. Government announces new HSTF (April 2019) with IPM as lead partners and High Streets Taskforce Framework, citing IPM evidence (25 priorities and 4Rs)
- [E]. Testimonial: Former Deputy Director Regeneration and Investment, MHCLG
- [F]. 1. Testimonial: Manager, Withington Regeneration Partnership; 2. IPM Report prepared for MCC (2020) Vital & Viable Manchester District Centres; 3. Testimonial: Councillor, District Centres Sub-Group, (17 March 2020); 4. Testimonial: Economic and Tourism Development Manager, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council; 5. Ballymena Chamber of Commerce (January 2017); 6. Wrexham Council News confirming Manchester Metropolitan impact (September 2017)
- [G]. 1. ABCitiEs Action plans/INTERREG reports <https://www.interregeurope.eu/abcities/library/>; 2. Ignatius Ong (Victoria State Government) testimonial.
- [H]. 1. Testimonial: CEO LeedsBID; 2. State of the Art Review (2019); 3. TBF Industry Standards; 4. Testimonial: Chair of TBF Council confirms significance of IPM/TBF partnership
- [I]. 1. IPM and HSTF COVID-19 recovery resources (2020); 2. Testimonial: Tourism Manager, Worcester County Council; 3. Government's 'Reopening High Streets Safely' advisory document citing IPM's Covid-19 Recovery Framework (May 2020)
- [J]. Testimonial: Director, Eutopia Strategy Ltd Place Marketing Consultancy
- [K]. Media Coverage (full evidence portfolio with circulation figures 2014-2020)