INVESTMENT

On the last of the four key dimensions, investment, there are significant differences compared to the state-centred model. Resourcing here is not exclusively about securing a slice of the public services budget, although very often this will still be important. One of the main elements of the rationale for privatisation of service provision is precisely the ability to draw resources, financial and technical, from outside the public sector. In some circumstances, resourcing decisions will imply determining whether or not private money and expertise are likely to be more effective at delivering a public space service, for example because there might be cost savings, better use of existing resources or access to particular skills. In others it may imply determining who has a stake in the fortunes of a particular public space and therefore a direct interest in its management in order to engage them financially in the process.

This may simply encourage contributions to a public-run pot of money to be spent on basic services. Alternatively it may allow private stakeholders to take over full responsibility for the management of such spaces. An example of the former are the sponsoring arrangements for parks and public gardens in which private organisations contribute to the costs incurred by local authorities in maintaining them. An example of the latter are BIDs through which a consortium of private organisations effectively takes over the public space management of an area of direct interest to them, and coordinates and supplements public sector expenditure in that area.

At the same end of this spectrum are the public spaces produced as part of development agreements through the planning process which remain in private ownership and are managed separately from the surrounding publicly owned spaces. In these examples, even through private management may supplement public funds and/or free up public resources to be spent on other areas, it also raises issues of the disparity in expenditure and levels or service between places. Moreover, as the willingness of private organisations to maintain public spaces is rarely dissociated from at least a degree of private control on how those spaces are used and by whom, it raises questions of freedom and exclusion. This last issue returns the discussion to questions of contract and agreement drafting and whether issues of control and exclusion can be adequately controlled by such instruments.

The community-centred model

The third model is perhaps the least developed of the three, although not necessarily the most recent. It constitutes another form of devolution of responsibility for the provision and/or management of public spaces and related services, but this time to community organisations, including associations of users of public spaces, interest groups organised around public space issues, and so forth. A fundamental difference from the previous model is that the organisations to which public space management is devolved are in principle not structured according to market principles of profitability and competitiveness. They do not exist to provide public space services for a fee or to maximise economic returns on investment in or surrounding public space, and instead have a direct interest in the quality of the public spaces and related services primarily for their use value.

In these cases, the 'public interest' dimension that characterises public services is not confined to one side of the devolved arrangement, although this coincidence of interests might be very localised. In real life these distinctions are more nuanced, and communities residing around a public space might have an interest in its quality also because it affects the capital value of their homes. However, this is unlikely to be the main or only purpose of the organisation, and even if it were, it would not operate according to market rules. These organisations do not belong either to hierarchical (the state) or market (private-sector) modes of social governance, and are more closely linked to 'network' governance (Rhodes 1997) in that they exert influence and pursue their objectives by developing formal and informal horizontal linkages with other similar organisations and with the public and private sector.

As with the previous model, this approach can be seen as a result of the retreat or 'hollowing out' of the state (Rhodes 1994), weakened by the reshaping of the economy and society since the mid-1970s It can also, and perhaps more positively, be explained by the trend towards the co-production of public services with their users (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002, DTLR 2001). The need for flexibility to match services to a variety of needs, for local knowledge to understand very localised demands, coupled with the effort to redefine the relationship between the state and citizens in mature democracies has led to an erosion of the separation between provision and use. Co-production (i.e. user engagement in the provision of public services) has been seen as the most effective way to tackle diversified and complex demands brought fourth by the increase in wealth and the variety of lifestyles and associated needs (Goss 2001). This applies to a whole gamut of public services, from health and education to social housing and urban renewal, as well as to public space management.

This model is also a rediscovery and extension of a long-established tradition of involvement of charities and the voluntary sector in welfare delivery, which pre-dates state provision and was never fully replaced by it. Charitable organisations have long been associated with the provision and management of public services. In the UK, for example, the recent