

Town centre management development through partnership

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This research introduces the topic of Town Centre Management, as a recent approach, widely adopted on the international level to serve the goals of urban development and revitalisation of urban centres. Town Centre Management, also abridged as "TCM", aims to enhance and sustain the vitality and viability of centres, through working in partnership with the public, private, and voluntary sectors. The objective is ultimately to provide and implement a focused and balanced strategy which adds value to the existing urban mechanisms operating within central districts. This paper presents a review of the key issues involved in the field of promoting city centres, shopping districts and central open spaces, in addition to some thoughts on the application of TCM principles. It consists of three main parts. First, the concerns about urban centres are discussed. The second part reviews the key issues involved in the concept of Town Centre Management, and a synthesis of different approaches for application. Also in part two, the scope of impact is explained in the five fields of : Urban Functions, Circulation, Economy, Public Spaces, and Culture. The research concludes in part three with an outlook for overall regeneration, and a brief recap on the TCM context and core activities in the domains of Development, Administration, and Promotion.

يتناول هذا البحث موضوع " إدارة مركز المدينة "، كمدخل تخطيطي مطبق بصورة واسعة دوليا ، ليحقق تنمية و إحياء لمراكز المدن . تهدف إدارة المراكز أساسا إلى التحسين و الحفاظ بصورة متواصلة على حيوية المركز ، عن طريق خلق نوع من الشراكة بين مختلف القطاعات العام منها و الخاص و التطوعي . من الأهداف أيضا إيجاد و تنفيذ استراتيجية واضحة و متوازنة للارتقاء بنظم التحكم المتبعة في المركز الحضري ، و تأكيد قدرته على التطوير الذاتي و تحقيق كافة التطلعات الخاصة بالمستخدمين . يستعرض البحث المواضيع الرئيسية المرتبطة بمجال تنمية المراكز الحضرية و التجارية ، بالإضافة إلى بعض الأهداف و الاعتبارات التطبيقية لمبدأ إدارة مركز المدينة و التي يتم تبنيها من قبل المخططين و المصممين الحضريين سعيا وراء استراتيجية شاملة للارتقاء بالبيئة الحضرية . كما يؤكد البحث على الحاجة إلى توفير المجال الملائم حضريا و اقتصاديا ، و ما يلزم لذلك من توجيه لسياسات التطوير و الخطط المستقبلية لتحقيق تنمية متواصلة . يتكون البحث من ثلاثة أجزاء ، الأول هو تعريف بالاهتمامات و المشاكل الخاصة بتنمية مراكز المدن . الجزء الثاني يقدم شرحا للنقاط التي يتكون منها المدخل التخطيطي : إدارة مركز المدينة و تحليلا لمبادئه و أهدافه مقسمة إلى خمسة مجالات هي : الوظائف الحضرية ، الحركة و النقل ، الاقتصاد ، الفراغات المفتوحة ، و النواحي الثقافية . أخيرا ، يختتم البحث في الجزء الثالث بالخلاصة ، وبموجز للمقترحات الخاصة بالإدارة الحضرية للمراكز ، مقسم إلى ثلاثة محاور تتضمن التنمية ، التحكم ، و التسويق .

Keywords: Town centres management, Urban centres regeneration, Urban management, City centre revitalisation.

1. Urban centres: current challenges

Town Centre Management is a recent approach that has been developing within the broad field of urban management. As generally utilised in the town planning and urban design literature, this paper adopts the term "town centre" to refer to any urban centre, regardless of its size, be it within a large or small-size city. Since its onset as part of the studies of urban management, in the past few decades, the simple and immediate

definition of the term has considerably expanded. No longer with a limited scope, TCM has been spreading to encompass all mechanisms of management and control of almost every component of the physical environment of urban centres. These components currently include the buildings, streets, open spaces, functions, public amenities, and outdoor activity support.

In the present time, the urban quality of central districts has become a chief concern on a global level. There has been several

indicators that this quality is being eroded. Many reasons and problems are underlying the process of change, often leading to the visible decline in value and loss of positive aspects [1]. What has drawn attention to the subject of management, is that decline and degradation sometimes happen despite the presence of valuable physical components such as historic buildings, open spaces, and other assets, which should have supported the quality of life in the centres.

Given this view, arguments were developed that attention solely to the physical conditions, fabric, and buildings, is no longer enough or adequate. What should complement that, in order to create and maintain high quality centres are primarily management aspects [2]. The latter have been increasingly commended as simple, direct and less-costly measures, yet highly effective in improving the urban environment, and providing favourable conditions for thriving and continued use.

Two processes of change which take place within cities equally lead to urban decline. The first process is that of rapid growth, overcrowding within older cities with a "traditional nuclear core". Congestion, over-use of highly centralised facilities often result in the centre gradually failing to play its role efficiently. Another process, which is not linked to growth in population, is the loss of vitality and economic base, due to continual shift of uses and change of functions, needed to sustain the particular geo-economic cycle of certain cities. Either type of change, or process, has seriously affected almost every city centre world-wide, drawing attention to the importance of the role these centres have traditionally played. To reverse the trend, redevelopment and revitalisation are currently seen as top priorities in the field of urban studies, theories, and professional practice.

According to the wide body of studies and research in the field, the present challenge has multiple facets. Town centres are facing several problems which could be classified as follows [1]:

- Conditions of the built-up stock, especially older buildings;

- Traffic-related problems, and conflicts between users of open space;
- Structure of urban functions, diversity, compatibility and conflict;
- Support for outdoor activities, opportunities, and restraints;
- Disintegrated image, weakening sense of place and belonging;
- Difficulties in sustaining economic vitality, patronage, demand, attracting new enterprises, and land value; and
- Overall administration and co-ordination between role groups, such as local authorities, shop-owners, and landlords.

Each of the above-mentioned problems constitutes a major concern, and has drawn wide debate and research. Due to the difference in nature among them, and the diversity of operating bodies, or actors responsible to deal with them, it has been hard to consider them in conjunction. However, a synthesis of them reveals shared and common lines, which strongly support the argument for a joint approach. Such an approach will attempt to apply the potential of management science, in addressing current urban challenges simultaneously [OBU].

2. Town centre management: concept overview

Town Centre Management is a mechanism for managing the change in town centres, as to halt their decline, and for identifying an action plan to ensure such centres have a future role to play. Central to this perspective is the notion of "Partnership-Making" [2 and 3]. TCM is a mechanism for bringing together representatives from different parties and bodies who are involved and/or have an interest in the quality of their towns.

The practice of town centre management has rapidly expanded over the last few years. Particularly in Europe, a great number of towns and cities have established town centre management schemes. In Britain alone, the number is approaching 200 examples of successful application [4]. Elsewhere in the world, notably North American, Scandinavian, and mainland Europe, similar initiatives are also flourishing. It often takes the form of an

"Initiative" by one group/body or the other, which thus prompts a whole dynamic process for improvement.

Almost all town centre management initiatives are based upon the bringing together of public and private interests, roles, and contributions. The role of leading and coordinating the tasks of managing, promoting and developing town centres within their local, regional, or even national contexts is a challenging one, requiring a broad range of knowledge and skills. This task is often assigned to a group of energetic and active professionals, who share the following:

- An attachment, sense of belonging, and optimistic view of their town/city;
- A clear understanding of its problems and opportunities; and
- A clearly set agenda for action to achieve transformation.

Members of the management board are headed by the "Town Centre Manager", a post with a key role and multiple responsibilities, which are still developing and expanding. Managers often come from retailing, local government, or other management, professional, or administrative backgrounds. They are selected, or sometimes elected, according to their skills, knowledge and qualifications, all relevant to the field or urban management and operation. Several courses are currently provided by schools of architecture and planning, to develop and support the role of a Town Centre Manager. Founded on the principle of "Continued Professional Development", such courses are constructed in a way that they enable potential managers, and board members, to develop knowledge, understanding and skills that are immediately relevant to the workplace. They are encouraged to reflect positively, and critically, on their programmes and approaches. Reflection in action is recognised as one of the most effective approaches to professional development [4].

The task of the management board directly touches on a wide range of interests and actors, and their own roles differ depending on a variety of factors - most obviously with regard to the size of cities. The

nature of town centre management itself is also developing rapidly [5]. Thus, it has been regarded as vital for the current practice to carry out diverse tasks relating to the urban centres in full coordination, and through somehow responsive, concerted and complementary efforts.

Town centre management is usually viewed as a collective initiative to promote, manage, and further develop the urban centres. The aim is to draw together all the aspects and resources available, and accordingly, to formulate a coordinated strategy for the future. Such a strategy would hence focus on the following broad objectives as a general intent (refer to Table 1):

- Functional Organisation and Coordination of Uses;
- Circulation and Accessibility Improvements;
- Economic Development and Marketing;
- Public Space Improvements; and
- Cultural Promotion and Events.

Underlying such initiatives is normally an awareness and understanding of the importance of central areas, and their vital role in securing the health and prosperity of their communities. Such an awareness constitutes the foundation for all subsequent action, and most importantly partnership formation. Based on this common perspective, different groups or actors from the public and private sectors could come together, and play an important role in planning and managing the town centre [2]. The members of the partnership are generally all committed to working towards overall improvement, in order to achieve their common goal of maximising the vitality and viability of the centre as a whole. In order to adopt an effective, corporate approach, a "Town Centre Manager" is appointed, as head of the group. As well as being the partnership's representative on the ground, the town centre manager compiles a preliminary list of main aims [3] such as:

- Help improve the day-to-day management of the centre;
- Promote and market the town centre effectively, on a local, regional, and perhaps on a national level;

- Satisfy the aspirations of all town centre users; and
- Help retain existing businesses, and to encourage new investment.

This list of initial aims could be further expanded and elaborated depending on the level of participation, capacity and willingness to induce change in the existing conditions of the area. Partnership is viewed as a continuous coordination between two parties or more, towards achieving common goals, sharing both interests and risks. On a broader level, management will be viewed as the act of controlling certain aspects of urban performance for the welfare of most actors involved. The following is a brief overview of the potential of Town Centre Management practices to achieve positive change, and real enhancement to the urban quality of centres. The discussion is classified under four categories, according to the envisaged area of impact: Urban Functions, Circulation, Economy, Public Spaces, and Culture.

2.1. functional organisation and coordination of uses

This is the first and primary task of the management team. Directly linked to the urban design and planning professions, the coordination of functions represents a core practice within the urban management approach. A considerable part of the problems which currently exist in the central business districts, is caused by the continual change of land use, and shift of functions. The management body is usually responsible for carrying out surveys and field studies with a view to identify these problems, and to establish their extent and possible causes.

Once land-use related problems are revealed, it becomes easier to deal with them at various levels. As often the case, the town centre management body will not be able to change conditions swiftly on the ground. However, it is in the body's capacity to spread awareness about such problems, and help establish a general understanding among different groups regarding possible remedies.

Thus, the body and its manager could propose to the authorities to initiate an ambitious plan or strategy which addresses existing functional problems in the centre, and also a set of measures which guide future change as to prevent similar situations. Such a strategy should stress the following:

- Functional distribution to ensure compatibility among adjacent functions, and hence less conflicts, reduced obstruction and hampering of some uses, especially the vital ones within central areas;
- Efficient operation of single and multiple urban functions, lying fully inside the centre, or operating jointly with remote off-centre locations;
- Flexibility and robustness of the central premises to accommodate businesses, and potential changes in nature and scale of urban functions traditionally located in the centre;
- Coordination of activities to prevent mutual impediment or harmful contest;
- Stability of the functional structure, which has evolved over time, particularly the framework of inter-dependent or related uses and activities;
- Regular review of functional structure and assessment of performance; and
- Continued interest in investment, and the centre's ability to attract and assist new development.

2.2. Circulation and accessibility Improvements

Another considerable set of problems within town centres is incurred by motorised traffic. Ever-increasing volume of vehicular traffic, and car-oriented policies and interventions, which have long been adopted by local authorities, are currently exacerbating the congested situation, typically found in larger cities. Mostly eminent in such centres, the streets, open spaces, and whole networks are no longer capable of accommodating all types of problem, by allowing more vehicles to travel freely through central streets.

| TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT (TCM) KEY OBJECTIVES | I. FUNCTIONAL ORGANISATION & LAND-USE COORDINATION | II. CIRCULATION & ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS | III. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & MARKETING | IV. PUBLIC SPACES IMPROVEMENTS | V. CULTURAL PROMOTION & EVENTS |
|---|---|--|--|--|---|
| <p>BROAD STRATEGY GUIDELINES</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functions Compatibility • Efficient Operation • Flexibility & Robustness • Activities Coordination • Stability of Functions • Regular Review • Continued Interest in Investment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programming of Street Use • Emphasis: Pedestrian Use Patterns/ Amenities • Traffic Restriction • Flexible Car Parking • Public Transport Interface • Liaison with Public Transport Agencies • Parking & Deliveries Scheduling • Financial Support from Private Sector • Advocacy: Publicity & Participatory Design | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong-Market Profile Programme • Retail Development Integrated Scheme • Publicity & Marketing • Stable Economic Image • Commercial Database • Entrepreneurial Skills • Contributions from Private Sector & NGOs • Innovative Use of Resources • Coordination of Visual Aspects & Aesthetics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reclaim Existing Space for Pedestrians • Primary & Secondary Activities • Safety, Security & Accessibility on Foot • Positive Physical Image • Better Street Design • Public Amenities • Indoor-Outdoor Activities Interface • More New Enterprises • Regular Surveys & Participatory Design • Review of New Development Impact | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban-Forum Profile Programme • Vision of Town Centre: <i>Living & Vibrant Place</i> • Sponsorship for Cultural Events • Diary of Events • Work with Local Institutions: Education Entertainment & Information • Regeneration Strategy for Historic Heritage • Market Cultural Activity • Public Presence, Participation & Interaction |

Figure 1. Table : Conceptual Overview of *Town Centre Management* - Five Key Objectives in the fields of: Functions, Circulation, Economy, Public Domain, and Culture, with Broad Strategy Guidelines set out against each category (Source: by Author).

In the recent years, there has been growing awareness of the problems, and of their impact on the overall quality of urban centres. Several measures were undertaken to segregate conflicting modes, and increase pedestrian safety. These measures primarily depended on separating vehicles and pedestrians, a practice whose limited applicability is due to the insufficient space/alternative routes within the circulation network. It has been gradually shown that physical alterations will require relatively long periods of time and high costs. Over-segregation between different modes has also proven to create other problems, for instance with regard to deliveries and servicing.

Based on this argument, a more viable course to solve the circulation problem is through management procedures [6]. Management adopts a more dynamic theory of space available for movement as "one whole resource". The use of such resource is planned in a flexible manner, based on scheduled allocation to various types, which is changeable over time, day or season, according to actual needs and variable conditions. For this purpose, several cities have initiated management programmes, and developed local organisations for transportation management.

In this field, a town centre management plan seeks to achieve the following:

- Programming street use: Temporary and adaptable transfer of street space to pedestrians over set periods of time or seasons;
- Emphasis on pedestrian use patterns and amenities [7];
- Timed restriction of unnecessary traffic travelling through the centre;
- Flexible car parking provisions, in terms of location, validation, type, timing of use and duration of stay;
- Prohibiting parking and deliveries during rush hours;
- Support for city-wide public transport schemes, and their interface with the central area (as a destination point);

- Liaison with public transport agencies to ensure a coordinated approach to town centre transport issues [8];
- Developing systems of slow-speed "movers" for the public along pedestrians streets;
- Encouraging investment and financial support by involving the private sector more comprehensively in the programme; and
- Advocacy: Spreading publicity, and participatory design, to generate wider public support among the community to be served.

2.3. Economic development and marketing

The traditional town centre is experiencing considerable decline in its physical and economic conditions, which threaten its acquired position as a premium shopping location. In addition, it is under threat from the growth of outlying shopping facilities, and the increased mobility of users [5]. There has been some lessons to be learned from the marked success of fully-managed private shopping centres. Several reasons can explain their continued success, and capacity for competition. The administration and management applied in these developments represent an exemplary practice, which is primarily balanced and well-poised to serve the exigent needs of shoppers, and the ever-changing shopping patterns and habits. A key effect of this competition has been to encourage town centres to take a critical look at what they offer to their customers and what can be done to improve it.

Through joint initiatives with local authorities, tradesmen associations, private sector groups, and local communities need to tackle the issues which challenge the economic vitality and vibrancy of town centres [9]. In the quest to support the economic viability of the central district, the town centre management task could focus on the following:

- Developing a strong-market profile programme: with competitiveness, diversity and choice as main attributes;
- Formulating a retail development scheme: to accommodate recent development,

integration of ventures, activities, and new retail patterns;

- Publicity, advice and marketing in order to maintain high demand and attracting new investment and business;
- Building a strong and stable economic image which identifies the city as a thriving and prosperous place [10];
- Establishing a database for the central area: to provide accurate and updated information on local retail uses, office space, facilities, construction, rental rates, real estate value, employment, tourism, and other pertinent information;
- Encouraging entrepreneurial skills of shopkeepers and owners;
- Attracting contributions from the private sector and NGOs [8];
- Innovative use of resources such as open spaces and vacant lots, and private-sector contributions towards better streetscape; and
- Coordinating Visual aspects and aesthetics, particularly with regard to storefronts, advertisement, and display of merchandise.

2.4. Public space improvements

The quality of public spaces has been the most eminent indicator of general decline in town centres. Almost every problem suffered by the urban centre did reflect on the qualitative aspects of public spaces and hence the use pattern within them [11]. The role of public spaces as chief support for central functions was thus under serious threat.

Such role has traditionally been founded on a set of diverse qualities, which have evolved within urban cores over relatively long periods of time [12]. Especially in developing countries, such vital qualities are being eroded, due to rapid change, overcrowding, shift of land uses, decay of physical fabric, and conflicting modes of movement and functions.

Management of town centres and design improvements to public spaces go hand-in-hand. As has been described, management programmes are often developed specifically in response to the need for major urban

improvement. In this respect, a TCM organisation can take primary responsibility for encouraging improvements to the design of public spaces [6]. Under a comprehensive public space management scheme, the organisation will attempt to coordinate the efforts and roles of the public, private, voluntary sectors, and the community to work in partnership for the benefit of their public realm.

As a strategy for overall revitalisation of the public spaces, the management group should address different means to achieve the following:

- Reclaim existing public space for pedestrian use and activity;
- Accommodate primary use (i.e. circulation on foot) as well as secondary use (i.e. leisure activities and recreation), in a new flexible manner as to serve progressive patterns of use [11];
- Promote safety, security, and accessibility on foot to all users;
- Create a positive physical image through regular maintenance, repair, upkeep of vegetation, and street furniture;
- Improve street design, and provide guidance on materials selection, harmony, integrity, and visual aspects;
- Introduce public amenities within spaces, for prolonged use, convenience, outdoor activity and street life [7];
- Provide an attractive and dynamic interface between indoor uses, and outdoor activities, with particular emphasis on the treatment of blank walls and unused properties;
- Encourage new development and enterprises which bring more people and induce activity in the centre;
- Undertake regular surveys, participatory studies, and opinion polls, for users and concerned actors, in order to identify real needs and to provide evaluation and feedback into the process [2]; and
- Review of new development and proposed buildings, with regard to such issues as character, massing, height, and overall impact on public space.

2.5. Cultural promotion and events

A fourth category of broad objectives, as envisaged by the town centre management concept, could be classified under the topic of "cultural promotion". It is rightly argued that cultural profits are a consistent and integral part of any management scheme aiming to revitalise town centres. Besides physical and economic improvements, emphasising the socio-cultural side of development will yield positive results in terms of strengthening the sense of belonging and pride among the community.

Within this quest, the intent would be to promote town centres as the focus for civic pride and to encourage active citizenship [3]. A management body or group can encourage events and activities which will raise the image of the city and promote it as an attractive, lively place where people are offered a rich and diverse range of leisure options. The city centre streets and squares can thus attain an extra role as a public forum for a very wide range of direct communication and cultural exchange, and as a meeting place and exchange point for the people of a city [11]. It is therefore important to take advantage of such potential role in order to build up stronger bonds between a community and their urban centre.

In addressing the culture issue, all those with a vested interest in the cultural well-being of their towns need to combine their know-how and, where appropriate their resources for the common good. Furthermore, whatever they seek to achieve must be "sustainable" and have regard to the need to combine progress with heritage [9].

To this end, an active management board needs to operate in full partnership, and structured approach to carry out their task of cultural uplifting, and achieve the following:

- Develop an "Urban Forum" profile programme: with public spaces as an open venue for multiple activities, and a cultural destination;
- Promote the vision of town centre as a "living and vibrant" place, where people can go for leisure, education, entertainment, and recreation, a place

which meets the aspirations of the whole community [10];

- Encourage sponsorship for cultural events, support and ongoing contributions from local businesses;
- Arrange a programme (and diary) of street events according to local special occasions, seasons, as to create a *continuous* festival ambience;
- Work with local institutions to develop programmes for entertainment, public education and information [8];
- Coordinate a strategy for regeneration which enhances the historic heritage, and re-interprets its value to residents and visitors;
- Publicise and market cultural activity and resources, ensuring all events are effectively promoted; and
- Encourage public presence, participation and interaction, through activity support and amenities for added convenience [7].

3. Conclusion: urban management in town centres—an approach for overall regeneration

Since its onset in the early eighties, TCM or "Town Centre Management" has been widely adopted by many cities, and is increasingly being accepted as an effective way of facing future challenges in urban centres. It tackles the issue of urban development comprehensively, and brings together both public and private sectors into joint action. As a partnership, they address the commercial, social, environmental and management aspects to continue to make successful urban centres.

The concept and practices of "Town Centre Management" should be comprehensively viewed as an *overall approach* towards making urban centres better and more prosperous places. The ultimate aim is not only to enhance the urban quality of central areas, but also to sustain the vitality and viability of town centres. From the diverse experience, as implemented by cities throughout the world, the primary practice here is to support partnerships (Fig. 1), and mutual

collaboration, between the public, private and voluntary sectors, all concerned with the welfare of their community.

Initiating a town centre management programme is a complex task, and the more comprehensive the approach, the more complex it becomes. As has been indicated by this research brief review, it is important to encourage all concerned local groups to recognise themselves as "actors", with common concerns, goals, and vision of their city centre. Based on shared motivation and shared interests, a wide range of participatory programmes and action could be initiated, where such actors will be taking an active and aspiring role in improving the management and operation of urban cores.

While there has not been a single course of application for the concept of TCM, several processes have been developed where management organisations / bodies can become substantial forces in the improvement and development of central districts. Based on the above discussion, it is concluded that *three core areas of activity* are recommended for a prototypical town centre partnership, organisation, or management board: Development, Administration, and Promotion (refer to Fig. 2).

3.1. Development

As mentioned above, the "Town Centre Management" initiatives should be perceived as a partnership of representatives from all actor groups. These actors are usually already involved in the control of the urban environment such as local authorities, councils, and police departments. In addition, the initiatives should involve further actors engaged in the production of urban environments, and those with financial interests related to the central district, such as landlords, funding agencies, and shop-owners. They should be invited to participate, and undertake an active role in guiding and energising the process. A communication programme could initiate lateral dialogues, reduce typical divides, with the objective of enhancing motivation on the part of each group, based on a premise that "If the town

centre thrives, then so too does their individual tasks and businesses".

The management scheme should seek a sustainable process as to create a positive environment that enhances the town centre development prospects, and secures investment to ensure the area's long term success and future plans. Of particular relevance here is the work, and communication, with developers and producers from very early stages in the planning process. This has many advantages, in the sense that it can save time and cost, and spread awareness about the actual needs and constraints of the central area.

Thus, the concept of town centre management stems from an organisational standpoint. It should be developed in such a way that brings together different points of view, in order to identify the real strengths and weaknesses of the central area, and accordingly what needs to be done. Work in conjunction can then attempt to implement or support the planning-related development at hand: urban development, land use planning, functional organisation and management of public spaces.

One next step should follow, which is to undertake regular review, and provide planning guidance and feedback on the functional distribution within the centre. The review should address the issues of efficiency, flexibility, stability, and conflict-resolving measures. Above all, the management will closely observe the performance of central functions, in order to assess and help maintain the centre's ability to attract new investment and accommodate continued development.

3.2. Administration

The second key role of a management board should be to coordinate different tasks and responsibilities, normally carried out by remote authorities. Through the TCM members and representatives, connections will be established and cooperation / collaboration pursued. Joint action and conformity are encouraged as basic tools to

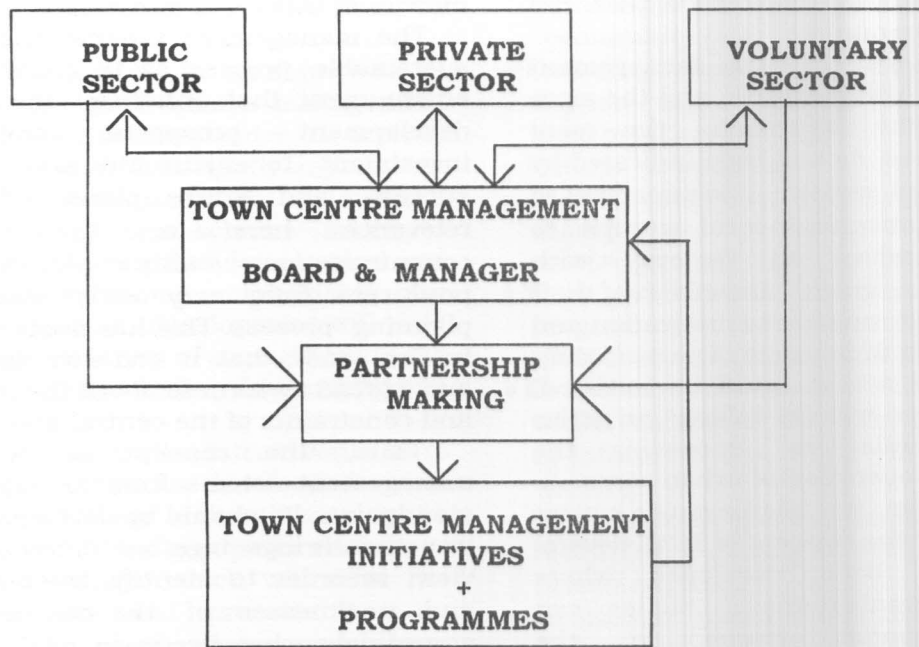


Fig. 1. The primary practice in the concept of "Town Centre Management" is the formation of partnerships, collective responsibility, and mutual collaboration, among different sectors concerned with the improvement and future of urban centres.

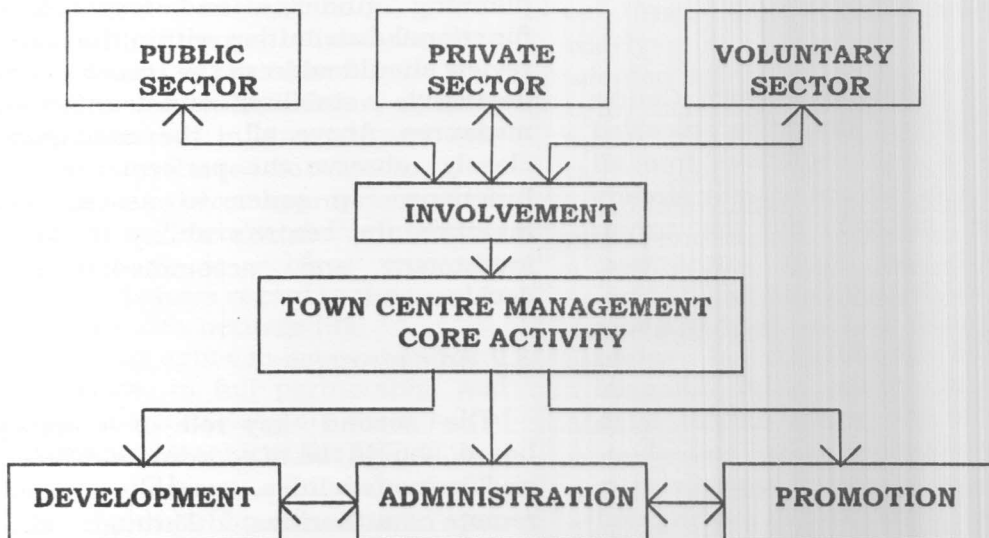


Fig. 2. Three "Core Areas of Activity" are recommended for a prototypical town centre organisation or partnership. They could be broadly categorised under the topics of: Urban Development, Urban Administration, and Urban Promotion.

improve the operation of municipal duties, as well as urban development.

A town centre management group should also be regarded as a multi-disciplinary board for administration. Though independent as a structure, it represents a joint venture between public and private sectors, working for the overall benefit of the urban centre. It should provide an "arena" for discussion, exchange of ideas and experiences, and at the end, devising of collective action. Its job will be to guide, facilitate, and supervise regular activities, and provide valuable assistance for, and feedback into the decision-making process. For example, a direct role of TCM is to ensure that regular maintenance and upkeep functions operate effectively and efficiently, and a safe and clean environment is available for all town centre users.

In addition to administering physical improvements to the built environment, public spaces, and their regular maintenance, the role of TCM should also encompass developing a dynamic programme to induce activities. Efforts should be devoted to further support the use of public spaces, and encourage cultural events within the central district. The TCM board should identify possible projects and viable events which will enhance, and add to the vitality of the centre, in a way that makes it a focus for socio-cultural interaction. A successful administration of such events could gradually but effectively turn the centre's spaces into a public amenity and attraction which people will visit and want to return to.

3.3. Promotion

Promoting the town centre as a lively place and a valuable asset for everyone is the third and most recommended area of activity, which should be placed right at the core of any TCM scheme. This is an area which requires particular vigour, strength and management skills on the part of the town centre manager as well as members of the board. It should be highlighted that their responsibility is to promote the centre in two ways simultaneously, first for more use by the public, and second for more interest among

investors, developers, and sponsors. It is thus a complex duty to promote and publicise the town centre, and to ensure that the right message is delivered to the right people at the right time.

With regard to the first track, which addresses public use, the managing board should promote not only the physical image of the centre, since this has proven to evoke no further interest among users. Rather, a dynamic social image of the downtown must reach the community, illustrating how rich and varied is the experience offered, in terms of activity, leisure, entertainment and cultural events, all intermingled with the prime shopping locations and public amenities. Public advice and various media must be utilised to build up the perception of town centre as an attractive, lively place where people will want to shop, work, visit and enjoy themselves.

On the second track, concerned with economic promotion, management skills should be gainfully applied with a view to market the centre as a prime location for business, investment, and sponsored activity. Through various channels and media, the manager or TCM board should advocate and "sell the centre". This implies fostering a climate for new investment by professionally advertising the true potential, possibilities, and advantages of the town centre. A liaison part must be considered and carefully planned as to provide useful information, assistance for queries, and support for new enterprises.

The main aim underlying promotional activity is that town centres should remain a visible and attractive places both for users and for investors. New management skills should therefore be employed to create an increasingly competitive environment, and to maintain its positive assets.

Finally, Town Centre Management is a trend which is still developing, yet properly placed within the progressive context of urban studies. It must be viewed by those involved as a long-term process, and one of self-adjustment for continuous improvement. Based on the concise discussion presented in this research, and recap of main features,

TCM represents a valuable approach, which will continue to be adopted in order to achieve positive change in the urban centres. In conclusion, the key to successful management lies in a dynamic, focused, and balanced strategy, and most importantly in the growth of a strong partnership between the public, private, and voluntary sectors.

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