TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

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REF: 2007/No.1

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This paper was presented in World Planning Schools Congress, 2006, Mexico City
Abstract
This paper examines the capacity of Town Centre Management (TCM) to contribute towards the social enhancement of local places and communities in the English context. Much recent literature has highlighted the effectiveness of TCM, referring to the same objectives as those of recent regeneration programmes: place marketing, retail and leisure development, surveillance measures and evening and night time economies. However, these aspects of urban regeneration favoured by TCM are mainly concerned with consumption-based economic revitalization and physical upgrading, while little attention has been paid to social dimensions of regeneration issues. The key to the examination of the TCM’s roles in social regeneration may lie in questions of pursuing social equity: how does TCM plays a role in redistributing some of the benefits brought by physical and economic regeneration into the development of local communities? Out of the pilot study and twelve case studies, only three cases (Wigan, Doncaster and Wood Green) have demonstrated positive impact of TCM in pursuing social equity of the regeneration premises, while two (Birmingham and Reading) have provided counter evidence. Utilising the data from these five case studies, this article discusses the roles and potential of TCM in redistributing the regeneration benefits over the communities from different social strata.
1. INTRODUCTION - TCM AND URBAN REGENERATION

The concept of TCM has been rapidly adopted throughout the UK since the 1990s, and there are currently over 450 TCM initiatives among over 1000 town centres in the UK (Hollins, 2004).

The origin of TCM derived from a North American concept of centralised retail management that was implemented in cities such as Chicago, Seattle and Wisconsin (Page and Hardyman, 1996). In the UK context, the definition of TCM has been discussed by a number of writers since Spriddell of Marks & Spencer’ (1980: 38) used the term ‘TCM’ for the first time in 1980. He defined the purpose of TCM as ‘the enhancement of the quality of shopping in our town centres’. The initial concept of TCM was based primarily on the retailing perspective. Since the mid 1980s the development of regional shopping centres and retail makes had further strengthened the attractiveness of out-of-town shopping centres by offering consumers an ever wider range of food, DIY goods, along with leisure activities such as large cinemas and sport facilities, which are beyond the capacity of the high street (Guy, 1994; Evans, 1997, Karski, 1998). Baldock (1989: 50) argued that TCM was a necessary response to competitive pressures from the fast spreading phenomenon of the out-of-town shopping centres during the 1980s, and defined TCM as a useful mechanism for development, management and promotion of town centres. At about the same time Wells (1991: 24) argued that TCM could be of benefit beyond the retailing sector by extending TCM’s territory to ‘both public and private area within town centres, for the benefit of all concerned.’ Wells provides the first instance in the literature of including ‘all users’ such as residents and tourists, and all other town centre activities in addition to shopping. As Ennen et al. (1998) suggested, Wells’ definition implies that TCM should aim at not only economic, but also social goals. Furthermore, Warnaby et al. extended Wells’ notion of TCM, seeing it as an activity which can involve all stakeholders as actors:

Town centre management is the search for competitive advantage through the maintenance and/or strategic development of both public and private areas and interests within town centres, initiated and undertaken by stakeholders drawn from a combination of the public, private and voluntary sector. (Warnaby et al., 1998: 17)

 Whilst early definitions of TCM implied a sole focus on retailers’ interests, the more recent understandings also embrace the physical and socio-economic contexts of town centres as the ‘public realm’ and as the territory of TCM. In some locations such as Reading, the issues dealt with by TCM have already been extended from janitorial matters such as services, maintenance and ‘policing’ to wide ranging problems related to long-term physical and economic improvement which is concerned with regeneration remits for a whole city or town.

Several researchers have discussed the evolution of TCM in the context of town centre regeneration (Ennen et al., 1998; Oc et al., 1998; Woolley, 2000; Peel, 2003; Stubbs et al., 2003; Warnaby et al., 2005) and the opportunities for TCM to be assisted by major government regeneration agencies (i.e. Regional Development Agencies) and the European Structural Funds (ATCM et al., 1999). In spite of the fact that many researchers have recognised TCM as a mechanism for the regeneration of urban centres (Whyatt, 2004), the current roles of TCM and its potential in delivering regeneration in town centres remained unclear. The doctoral research completed by the author (Otsuka, 2004) attempted to establish a theoretical framework for understanding the role of TCM in town centre regeneration within the overall picture of ‘urban regeneration’. Roberts (2000: 17) provided a definition of ‘urban regeneration’ as:

comprehensive and integrated vision and action which leads to the resolution of urban problems and which seeks to bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of an area that has been subject to change.

While this definition is concerned with three strands of improvement (economic, physical and social) in the urban environment, the regeneration issues per se tackled by TCM appear historically to be largely limited to improving the economic and physical aspects of town centres, in order to attract more shoppers. As Ennen et al. (1998) stressed, TCM is generally short-term and retail-led. This is the most commonly noted difference with ‘purer’ urban regeneration
approaches which tend to have long-term ambitions, and are exclusively state-led, attempting to
tackle the urban problems of disadvantaged communities.

The work reported here focuses solely on discussing the capacity of TCM to contribute towards
the social enhancement of local places and communities beyond its generally acknowledged
commercial and business objectives.

2. TACKLING SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Among various regeneration themes such as physical deterioration and deindustrialisation
discussed since the World War II period in the UK (Colquhoun, 1995; Robert et al., 2000;
Schoon, 2001), social deprivation and social exclusion are key concepts which are utilised to
address inequality between Britain’s poorest places and the rest of country within the urban
environment.

The government policy statement, *Policies for Inner City* (HMSO, 1997) explicitly revealed for
the first time a high concentration of disadvantaged communities within the inner city areas and
placed social deprivation as the principle issue in the urban regeneration agenda. Disadvantaged
groups, who are vulnerable to unemployment, low pay, ill health, disability and
discrimination, have often found many difficulties in adapting to the rapid socio-economic
changes since the post industrial period. As a consequence they have been trapped living in
the declining urban areas such as inner city areas of former industrial cities with few incentives
for higher education, employment and quality of life. These problems tend to appear within the
disadvantaged minority groups such as immigrants, ethnic minorities, disabled, elderly people
and single parent families (Hall, 1981; Lawless, 1989; Colquhoun, 1995).

According to Burgess *et al.* (2002), about one in five Britons in 1998-9 were in poverty defined
as where the total income of the household had become less than half the national average
household income. The authors considered poverty as the main causative factor of social
exclusion and identified it as a major economic and political issue in the late 1990s. Furthermore, Walker (1997) maintained the recent tendency in academic and policy debate for
poverty to begin to be replaced with the term social exclusion, and provided a definition:

A more comprehensive formulation which refers to the dynamic process of being
shut out, fully or partially, from any of the social, economic, political and cultural
system which determines the social integration of a person in society.

(Walker, 1997: 8)

The New Labour governmentii saw that the gap between the worst housing estate and the rest
of the country was the most critical issue to be tackled as a priority and set up the Social
Exclusion Unit (SEU) in 1998. SEU has provided sophisticated analyses of the causes of
poverty and people’s disconnection from mainstream society, and social exclusion has become
one of the key government agendas of the policy statements, 2000 Urban White Paper and the

Moreover, a strong political awareness of social exclusion is demonstrated within the latest
regeneration concept, *urban renaissance*. The Urban Task Force (UTF)iii identified that the
main cause of long-term urban decline was that people had lost their ownership of towns and
cities thus allowing urban areas a long period of decline; as a result people have developed
negative feeling towards cities. According to Lees (2003: 66), *urban renaissance* is the new key
phrase in urban policies endorsed by the New Labour government, and goes beyond physical
environmental objectives to include concerns for social inclusion, wealth creation, sustainable
development, urban governance, health and welfare, crime prevention, educational opportunity
and freedom of movement, as well as of environmental quality and good design.

Subsequently, as the formal response to the UTF report, the UK government’s Urban White
Paper on urban policy, *Our towns and cities – the future: delivering an urban renaissance was
published in 2000 (DETR, 2000a). The ultimate aim of both the UTF report and the White Paper is to recommend practical solutions to bring people back to major urban centres based on ideas of creating sustainable urban environments. A number of recently produced policy statements emphasise the improvement of the urban environment in conjunction with public-private partnerships of local stakeholders, including community representatives. The principal approach proposed by the UTF report and the White Paper is to reshape urban life based on the explicit notions of citizenship and participatory governance formed by various urban stakeholders, and ‘diversity’ and ‘community’ are used as pivotal key words in regaining control over cities and in creating a shared vision for ideal urban living (Lees, 2003). Attractive urban centres mean different things to different communities, thus requiring sensitive policy responses which would ensure greater inclusivity of diverse communities according to local circumstances. Healey (2004) maintained that urban policy lacks a recognition of the diversity and mixed nature of urban life as crucial factors in promoting what DETR (2000a) terms ‘well being’ in cities. Healey also emphasised the potential of local elites to capture control of governance cultures and operate in mono-cultural ways at the material and cultural expense of the diverse cultural communities living within a local government’s formal jurisdiction (Healey, 2004:169). The object of Healey’s concern has already been observed in current regeneration projects completed in some major cities in the UK. For example, Loftman and Nevin’s critique (1996) of regeneration of Birmingham city centre in the 1980s and 1990s questioned the exclusivity of the spaces created by the ‘prestige development’ that was paid for at the expense of other sectors such as education and housing; yet the regenerated premises neither generated enough well paid jobs for most disadvantaged local communities nor resulted in substantial economic opportunities ‘trickling-down’ to these communities. As frequently observed by many researchers, the image of liveable cities is often based on middle and upper class views as well as on the ideas of high spending young adult of what desirable urban living is like (e.g. Raco, 2003; Lees, 2003; Brownill, 2004). Despite New labour’s focus on social exclusion related issues, there is a critical absence of any real mechanism within urban policies for addressing particular inequality issues such as gender and racial discriminations (Brownill et al., 1998; Brownill, 2004). In this context, it is problematic for local partnerships to involve fully all strata of the populations in the process of developing regeneration strategies.

3. TCM AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Having provided overall pictures of the concept of TCM and of social exclusion within the current government policy scene, this section discusses what kinds of challenges TCM would face in contributing to the social aspect of regeneration.

The importance of promoting and managing the town centre in the revitalisation of urban centres has been emphasised through the 2000 Urban White Paper (DETR, 2000a) and the latest planning policy statements (ODPM, 2005). In light of increasing policy and research awareness of urban centres as spaces for social, historic and regeneration value, the significance of TCM has been acknowledged in improving the standards of services and quality of town centres (DoE, 1996; ODPM, 2005) and in encouraging the co-ordination of partnerships between the private and public sectors (Evans, 1997; Paddison, 2003; ODPM, 2005). These suggest TCM has the potential to offer an appropriate and comprehensive approach to accommodating the trends and satisfying needs of the latest phase of several urban regeneration programmes.

While usefulness of TCM is acknowledged, its contribution to urban regeneration has been evaluated predominantly within the physical and economic aspect of regeneration (Peel, 2003). For tackling social exclusion within the town centres, TCM would face considerable challenges. The following reasons are among those offered for TCM’s contentious role in managing town centres towards achieving socially inclusive places. Firstly, concerning the nature of TCM, it was originally understood as a positive response to business and retail sectors and their customers whose priorities would not necessarily represent expectations from all strata of populations. Historically, issues dealt with by TCM initiatives were: poor accessibility to town centres both for pedestrians and motor vehicles; environmental deterioration; lack of safety; negative image; and low level of evening activities (Oc et al., 1998; Stubbs et al., 2003; Figure 1), and all of these can be considered as direct causal factors which may deter people from
visiting town centres for shopping and the private sector from making capital investments. For the purpose of providing clean and safe environments to particular users, many TCM initiatives have tended to identify some social groups such as homeless people, beggars and street traders as threatening and damaging images of centres (Raco, 2003; Otsuka, 2004). Like crime and uncleanness, these non-profitable users are considered to be a deterrent to profitable users in using the town centre; as Raco put it in his paper concerned with the current trend of ‘securitising’ and ‘sanitising’ urban spaces, ‘safe and aesthetically pleasing spaces require the removal of social pollutants’ (Raco, 2003: 1871).

While some of TCM’s agendas such as physical improvements and marketing promotion are indeed overlapped by those targeted by other regeneration initiatives (Figure 1), TCM was considered to be ‘firmly on the retail agenda’ (Pal and Sanders, 1997: 70). However, since the late 1990s, urban centres have been widely nominated as priority brownfield sites for regeneration and urban renaissance. The expectation that town centres should provide a mix of functions has been sharply increased; thus TCM’s role should be extended beyond the traditional competence of solely managing urban centres as shopping destinations. These new functions include accommodation, shopping, 24-hour leisure, business, transport hubs and tourist destinations that make town centres potential places of conflict due to the diversity of users. In this context, how town

and city centres are being valued and whose interests are being promoted are the prominent questions concerning TCM (Peel, 2003). Furthermore, the critical question being raised here is how TCM can represent interests of all the town centre users which generally include not only well-heeled and high spending populations, but also poorer sector of communities.

Secondly, there is a question of whether a typical form of governance selected by many TCM initiatives is adequate to take into account social inclusion. TCM has been primarily based on the idea of public-private sector collaboration, which is the most appropriate governance structure in delivering urban renaissance according to the recent regeneration policies. However, the members composing TCM partnerships are dominated primarily by people from business sectors and local authorities; there is an absence of community groups and voluntary sectors (Otsuka, 2004). There is an urgent need for TCM to include further diverse users on their boards concerning the recent diversification of town centre facilities. For example, residential communities have become a prominent group of users for consultation on town centre regeneration as city centre living became an important aspect of regeneration policies which is evident from increasing number of converted housing from offices and warehouses as well as new housing allied with flagship retail and office developments (Bromley et al., 2005).
The rest of this paper discusses how TCM has been responsive to social inclusion in the regenerated premises by comparing five case studies in the UK.

4. METHODOLOGY

The research which this article summarises is based in part on the empirical findings from selected case studies in England. Among 450 towns which currently employed TCM schemes twelve locations were selected for detailed case study work and one for a pilot survey (Figure 2). The method for selecting these towns and cities consisted firstly of identifying appropriate criteria through which the characteristics of each location could be interpreted. Towns were selected so that the sample could represent a reasonable cross section of towns in England - geographically, in size, economically, politically, and socially, but also in terms of the style of TCM in place (from janitorial to strategic), and other forms of urban regeneration such as Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) and City Challenge. Then, using The Lockwood Survey (Lockwood, 1999; 2001) as the sampling frame, over 200 locations throughout England were sieved using these characteristics.

![Figure 2. Selected locations for the field survey](image)

The qualitative approach was selected as the consistent and dominant paradigm for the research design since the research required a more exploratory and inductive examination identifying the significant roles of TCM in regeneration in comparison with other forms of regeneration initiatives. The data were gathered from various primary and secondary sources. The primary data of the field surveys were principally derived from a set of semi-structured interviews with town centre managers, other urban regeneration representatives, and/or local authority agents. Two or three respondents were identified in each location and, in total, thirty interviews were conducted. The discussion of the interviews was based on questionnaires, which were pre-structured with reference to research variables (e.g. types of town centre regeneration, funding and government policies encouraging the regeneration, key issues and strategies for the regeneration). In addition to the interviews, field observation was carried out with the intention of identifying physical characteristics of the town centres and clarifying the information provided by the interview respondents. The secondary sources with reference to local contexts (e.g. local planning framework, evaluation documents and the Internet homepage of each local authority) were used to complement the primary information obtained through the interviews and field observation. The data were collected from April 2002 to October 2003.
5. CASE STUDIES

Out of the pilot study and twelve locations, only three cases (Wood Green, Doncaster and Wigan) have demonstrated a positive impact of TCM in pursuing social equity of the regenerated premises, while two (Birmingham and Reading) have provided useful counter evidence. The characteristics of these five case studies are summarised in Table 1 which include population, proportion of socio-economic groups (social class) and types of TCM and other regeneration programmes as well as scale of deprivation. The discussion of these case studies begins by presenting the local context, specific regeneration issues and key characteristics of regeneration programmes (up to 2002) in these locations. Following the explanation of each context, regeneration outcomes and TCM’s contribution to social inclusion are discussed with reference to two distinctive regeneration contexts: 1) socially exclusive regeneration that represents consumption-led regeneration based on business objectives, placing less priority on needs of disadvantaged communities; and 2) socially inclusive regeneration that pursues community-led approach based on social objectives (Otsuka, 2004).

Table 1. Key characteristics of five case studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City or Town</th>
<th>Pop .000</th>
<th>Social Class</th>
<th>When TCM started</th>
<th>Type of TCM</th>
<th>Other UR programmes</th>
<th>IoD</th>
<th>Other characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wood Green Suburban centre</td>
<td>217 65 33</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>janitorial and strategic work</td>
<td>Haringey Regeneration Partnership (single team)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Inner London high rate of ethnic minority (45%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doncaster Market and industrial town</td>
<td>286 48 50</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>janitorial and strategic work</td>
<td>various initiatives such as SRB, ERDF, NRF, NDC</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>closure of coal mining</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wigan Market and industrial town</td>
<td>85 49 50</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>secretarial and strategic work</td>
<td>Economic Regeneration Office (single team)</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>closure of coal mining</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Industrial town</td>
<td>143 67 37</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>strategic work for creating future vision</td>
<td>large private investments large flagship projects SRB</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>growing place IT industries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham Metropolitan centre</td>
<td>977 51 47</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>janitorial and strategic work</td>
<td>various initiatives many large flagship projects</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2nd biggest city in the UK high rate of ethnic minority (55%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social Class: M for middle class and W for working class (%). Source: Norton (2001); OPCS of each county (1993)
IoD: Indices of Deprivation – rank of average of ward ranks. Source: DETR, 2000b
Other information sources: Otsuka 2004
SRB (Single Regeneration Budget); ERDF (European Regional Development Fund); NRF (Neighbourhood Renewal Fund); NDC (New Deal for Communities); OPCS (Office of Population Censuses & Surveys)

5.1. Wood Green

Wood Green is one of London's ten largest town centres (DoE and URBED, 1997), and the largest town centre in the London Borough of Haringey. Haringey is located six miles north of Central London and has a population of 217,000. Approximately 55% of the population are white, while the rest came from ethnic minority communities—new groups of refugees and asylum seekers. These ethnic minorities and disadvantaged groups tended to live on the east side of the Borough where the unemployment rate was over 10% of the working population in 2000 (Haringey Regeneration Partnership, 2000). In Indices of Deprivation 2000 (DETR, 2000b) Haringey was identified as among the most deprived local authority districts being ranked 20 out of 356 on ‘rank of average of ward ranks’ (Table 1). The town centre is located in the middle of the borough between the west (affluent) and east (deprived), and was described as ‘a downmarket centre’ (regeneration manager, interview, 2002) for attracting more disadvantaged people from the east side. There are two key characteristics of Wood Green’s regeneration over the last decade: 1) environmental enhancement projects (e.g. new paving, a
new cinema complex); and 2) social regeneration aiming at equalising the residents’ opportunities between the west (affluent) and east (deprived) sides of the borough.

5.2. Doncaster

With a population of approximately 286,000, Doncaster had been a thriving market and industrial town. However, during the 1980s through to the 1990s it suffered from a rapid decline in employment due to the closure of coal mining and manufacturing industries. Retailing in the town centre underwent a severe recession due to competition from the out-of-town shopping complex Meadowhall which is located only sixteen miles from Doncaster, and from other neighbouring town centres such as Barnsley and Sheffield. Visual observation suggested that town centre users mostly were local people, a majority of whom belonged to the lower socio-economic groups (Table 1). The market, which is one of the largest in the north of England, offered cheap consumables and bulk goods and attracted many elderly shoppers and lower socio-economic groups. In terms of the town centre’s regeneration the key strategy was environmental enhancement through the Quality Street Initiative which employed pedestrianisation, traffic control and townscapeing.

5.3. Wigan

Wigan has a population of approximately 85,000. There are good transport connections to Manchester, Leeds and other northern towns. Like many towns in the northwest, Wigan had suffered from severe de-industrialisation with the closure of coal mining, engineering industries, and cotton mills resulting in massive unemployment that persisted through the 1960s to 1990s. During the mid-1990s, however, Wigan embarked on a series of regeneration schemes and has since experienced rapid economic growth. Following a transformation of the Wigan Pier into a tourist attraction, the old industries outside the centre had been replaced by new office based businesses and warehouses - such as the headquarters of JJB Sports plc. The currently developed licensed premises boosted the evening economy and started to attract people from neighbouring regions. The key strategy employed in Wigan’s regeneration over recent years was public realm improvement and environmental enhancement through pedestrianisation and conservation of the shop-fronts of historic buildings.

5.4. Reading

Reading has a population of 143,000. It is located in the middle of the Thames Valley and is served with good transport connections to London as well as international access. The town is currently considered to be one of the most economically prosperous and fastest growing in the UK and represents key trends of the South East Region (Reading Borough Council, 2001). Reading’s traditional economy based on trading and manufacturing had been replaced with IT and service sector based industries since the late 1970s, many of which are located in business and industrial parks developed on the edge of the town. Reading has attracted a large proportion of highly skilled workers resulting in a low rate of unemployment (2.0% in 2004), which is evident by the large proportion of middle class residents (Table 1) and by observing town centres users such as young affluent adults. There are two key characteristics of Reading’s regeneration over the last decade: 1) public realm improvements and environmental enhancement projects centred on the pedestrianisation of the main shopping streets; and 2) flagship projects such as the Oracle shopping centre.

5.5. Birmingham

With a population of 977,000 Birmingham is the second largest city in the UK after London. Due to the decline in manufacturing industries from the 1960s, the unemployment rate had remained extremely high (7.5%) in even 2002, compared with the national average (3.1%) (Birmingham City Council, 2002). The concentration of social, economic and environmental deprivation continued to be very high in the city’s inner areas, compared to the relative affluence of many of its outer suburbs. When the field observation was carried out, a number of national-chain retailers occupied premises in the central shopping areas such as New Street, Victoria Square and the newly redeveloped Bullring shopping centre. The users in these areas were generally a mix of socio-economic groups. In contrast, other newly regenerated sites in the city, such as Brindley Place and the Mail Box, provided high-end shopping, with designer outlets, upmarket restaurants and exclusive living accommodation. Users here appeared to be generally more affluent than elsewhere in the city centre. In terms of city centre regeneration, Birmingham
presents two distinctive strategies: 1) public realm improvements through the provision of a series of public spaces and bridges over the inner ring road; and 2) flagship projects (e.g. International Convention Centre; Brindley Place; Mail Box; Millennium Point; Bullring shopping centre).

6. DISCUSSIONS

6.1. Socially exclusive regeneration and TCM

Despite the drawbacks inherent in post-industrial locations, it seems that the current town centre regeneration projects of both Birmingham (e.g. Brindley Place, Mail Box and Bullring) and Reading (e.g. The Oracle) has contributed greatly to the transformative improvement of the physical environment (Figure 3). These urban centres have currently appeared to be very vibrant with many shoppers and visitors.

However, the case of Birmingham provided clear evidence of the divisive manner in which newly regenerated core consumption sites were redesigned to provide predominantly for the business and retail sectors that target the wealthy, while marginalising those sectors that served the needs of the poorer populations and the elderly. Traditional markets within the city centre have been relocated and replaced by the Bullring shopping centre (Figure 3), which has been developed as privately owned ‘public’ spaces for the high street and highly selected retail such as designers’ floors in an upmarket department store, Selfridges. Joe Holyoak, a community activist and an academic in the regeneration field, stated in an interview in 2002 that the redevelopment of the Bullring transformed the traditional socially inclusive function of the city centre into an exclusive realm and fostered a greater disparity between the different socio-economic users. He claimed that these regeneration outcomes had generated ‘Social Apartheid’. According to him, ‘Birmingham is a poor city’ and that historically the Bullring figures very highly with the working class profile’. The new Bullring, however, does not have anything that can offer experience to these lower working classes since they do not have the disposable income that the new city centre requires. The question that arises, according to Holyoak, is:

Whose city is it? ...Of all the people who commute into the city centre to work such as offices, shops and business, half the people live outside Birmingham, in fact, more than half come from outside the boundary. So they are the people who have considerable amount of vested interest in what the city is like, but they’re not Birmingham people. (Holyoak, interview, 2002)

Birmingham city centre has not been regenerated for Birmingham people but rather for potential customers from outside the city. Holyoak’s testimonies demonstrating social polarisation...
brought by the current regeneration programmes (i.e. Bullring and Brindley Place) are strongly collaborated by the aforementioned Loftman and Nevin’s critiques (1996) which claimed that economic success brought by the first phase of regeneration projects during the 1980s (i.e. International Convention Centre and National Indoor Arena) did not bring direct economic benefits to disadvantaged groups, but generated only insecure and poorly paid jobs such as cleaning, catering and security occupations. Furthermore, the field observation of the present research has identified a brutal visual boundary between Brindley Place and the run-down council estate of Ladywood in an adjacent location. When the author visited the site in 2002, it appeared that the views from the designer balconies of many luxurious apartments overlooked the dilapidated council estates of Ladywood (Figure 4). Nevertheless, the planning officer, who was an active participant in the regeneration of Brindley Place, stressed that some benefits of regeneration projects have been brought to residents in Ladywood:

Although the people of Ladywood may never utilise – say the International Convention Centre, it’s too high profile – they can still walk through it, they can still feel a sense of ownership. These are very inclusive facilities and they are not exclusive to rich persons.  (interview, 2002) (Italics added)

Since the completion of the present study, marked improvements have taken place in this area. These neglected estates including several old tower blocks have been pulled down and people living there have been re-housed while new accommodation is under construction, and a new regeneration scheme, Park Central, has launched for the purpose of creating modern inner city living and attractive environment which includes retail and leisure facilitiesvi. However, as people in Ladywood have already experienced, ‘walking through’ the newly created attractive facilities does not necessarily provide a better quality of life to locals. It should be stressed that there could be a danger of generating another wave of gentrification here unless the Ladywood people fully utilise the newly created attractive environments and economically benefit from them.

Figure 4. Footpath from Ladywood to Brindley Place.

Source: the author

Compared to Birmingham, the deprived communities in Reading are all located outside the town centre. In addition, these disadvantaged communities, such as ethnic minorities, are relatively small. For example, less than 15% of the population is made up of ethnic minorities in Reading compared with over 55% in some areas of Birmingham and 45% in Wood Green (National Statistics, 2001). The author would, of course, not wish to argue that all ethnic minority communities are socially excluded or deprived, but they do provide a proxy measure of deprivation as noted by other researchers (Hall, 1981; Lawless, 1989; Colquhoun, 1995). The need for social regeneration is more urgent in some of Reading’s outer communities than it is in
the town centre where physical and economic regeneration schemes are taking priority. However, according to research by Raco (2003), minority residential communities in Reading have perceptions of being excluded from certain regenerated premises in the town centre because of the application of security policies. Comments from some local community representatives illustrate the social-cultural exclusion appearing in Reading:

Policy was being made which ‘ignores social values in the pursuit of commercial profit’, with security arrangements showing ‘little or no thought to the community’. In particular, the emphasis on middle-class (primarily White), high-spending young adults had, according to some, succeeded in marginalising the elderly and teenagers. (Raco, 2003: 1878)

Behind the prosperity of Reading, negative impacts of consumption-led regeneration (Otsuka, 2004) have been strongly felt by some disadvantaged communities living outside of the centre. Even though the segregation between the affluent and socially excluded in Reading is not as obvious as in Birmingham, the effects of consumption-led regeneration may be a factor in generating some forms of social exclusion. This approach to regeneration risks creating an exclusive ‘ghetto’ for better-off while excluding disadvantaged people from the regenerated districts. It would seem that people who have no choice or lack incentive and opportunities for upgrading their life have been side-lined behind in the process of town centre regeneration in Birmingham and Reading.

The town centre manager of Birmingham (interview, 2002) stressed that the most pivotal role of TCM in urban regeneration was to create a ‘clean and safe’ environment for only in this way would the town centre be in a position to attract town centre users as well as potential investors in retailing and business. A safe and attractive environment was seen as a key element in sustaining a city’s economic vitality and leveraging further investment from the private sector, which seems to be, ultimately, the goal of urban regeneration in Birmingham city centre. In the same manner, the town centre manager of Reading specified the key areas of regeneration activity that TCM were proactively involved in as ‘creating quality environment and quality investment’ (interview, 2001). Regarding investment, Reading TCM was topmost in its strategic coordination role, which aimed at bringing together retailers and businesses that would contribute towards the ‘onward renaissance of the town centre’ (interview, 2001). In this context, TCM’s liaison role between private and public sectors was considered to be the most crucial role in regeneration.

Both Birmingham and Reading TCM initiatives were clearly intended to co-ordinate the various stakeholders that is a prominent role of TCM highlighted by Paddison (2003). The interests of these stakeholders tended to be a decisive influence in the decision-making and construction process of the flagship regeneration projects. However, Holyoak maintained that TCM was a form of investment programme tended to attract certain sorts of customers and businesses rather than the population as a whole (interview, 2002). That is, the research strongly suggests that TCM as a form of regeneration concentrated mainly on strategies intended to enhance the quality of town centres for shoppers and leisure consumers. In essence, TCM initiatives in these urban centers adopted the same goals as the town centre regeneration initiative which focused on economic regeneration and in turn; this effectively involved the removal of low-income working-class groups as potential users of these prestige developments. It seems that the quality of life was designed for only relatively affluent communities and in fact these flagship projects have brought greater benefits and opportunities to these well off, while they have not much contributed to improving conditions for the poorer and disadvantaged communities through these investments.

In this context, TCM was contributing significantly toward supporting on-going regeneration projects and enhancing the quality of currently regenerated flagship premises as well as promoting future development opportunities, all of which were strongly concentrated on the physical and economic sides of regeneration. Concerning the nature of TCM, to create modern marketable urban centres, there is no doubt that the targets of TCM and consumption-led regeneration have complemented each other. TCM is certainly answerable to the needs of particular types of town centre users who have already largely benefited from these prestige
regeneration projects. Following the trend of other regeneration programmes, it seems that TCM has played a part in creating a new form of social exclusion within urban centres. Under this circumstance, it is almost impossible for TCM to provide drastic solutions to tackling social exclusion related to consumption-led regeneration projects (Otsuka and Reeve, 2004).

6.2. Socially inclusive regeneration and TCM

The primary concern for revitalising the town centres of Wood Green, Doncaster and Wigan was to reverse the run-down derelict image of towns. Unlike Birmingham and Reading, these three towns were not able to launch large flagship projects due to a lack of initial interest from the private sector, but kick-started with a modest scale of environmental enhancement projects such as pedestrianisation and townscapeing (Figure 5).

The improvement of the environmental quality is a matter of paramount importance for these town centres that in the past suffered from derelict sites, vacant shops, persistent vandalism and stigmatised images. Physical regeneration which improved the buildings and environment had direct impacts on upgrading the profile of a place which in turn was conducive to attracting inward investments and sustaining businesses, according to head of the regeneration team of Haringey (interview, 2002). Doncaster and Wigan had also provided crucial evidence of the success that ensured the economic benefits brought by physical improvements. While the money spent on the initial environmental enhancement projects was a very modest amount (Doncaster: £3.5 million; Wigan: £2.5 million), both locations subsequently succeeded in attracting private investment on a £100 million new bus station and shopping centre, Frenchgate Interchange (Doncaster) and a £55 million new shopping centre, the Grand Arcade (Wigan). Following the initial physical regeneration, projects related to crime prevention such as accommodating CCTV and street wardens and environmental cleanliness through street cleansing were undertaken in order to maintain the newly regenerated public realms that resulted in attracting the private sector and businesses.

![Figure 5. Quality Streets (left) in Doncaster (left) and Pedestrianisation of the main shopping streets in Wigan (right).](image)

In addition to generating these economic advantages, the physical improvements also created psychological benefits in that a visually pleasing environment created a ‘feel good factor’ and a sense of pride for the residents enjoying the use of their upgraded centre, according to regeneration manager in Doncaster and town centre manager in Wood Green (interviews, 2002). Unlike Birmingham and Reading, the focus of regeneration here was not to improve the town centre economy by importing advantaged groups from outside the city and regenerating urban centres with reference to their desirable quality of life, but the objectives of regeneration were set to fulfil primarily the needs of local communities, who belonged to the lower socio-
economic classes. These are evident from the following comments made by regeneration managers of Doncaster and Wigan:

All our initiatives have their own criteria and their own targets, but the sole aim is to deal with the deprivation of the borough. If you can increase any part of the borough, it has a knock on effect for the town centre. If the core is heating up and looking prosperous, and if that can raise it out from the town centre, that is a benefit [for the whole borough]. (interview, 2002)

Providing facilities locally means people don’t have to spend time and money travelling in order to get facilities. It enables residents who haven’t got a high-income level to still lead a quality of life which is becoming expected in Great Britain. (interview, 2002)

The town centre regeneration projects carried out in the above three cases were aimed at raising the quality of life of local town centre users and local communities in the borough as a whole. As is evident from these testimonies from the interview respondents and the field observation, it seems that the environmental quality of these centres as well as accessibility to various facilities, especially in the last decade, has increased so greatly as to produce a considerable improvement in the general standard of living for wider strata of the population.

The roles of these three TCM initiatives in social regeneration were highly recognised in the whole picture of urban regeneration.

The case of Wigan provided TCM with a socially beneficent image. The regeneration team and TCM worked together and were a successful entity even though their roles in the regeneration of the town centre were wholly different. TCM here functioned within its traditional role, in other word, janitorial tasks along with its long-term strategic activities. In fact this janitorial role was by no means underestimated by the regeneration manager who maintained that the key function of TCM to ‘make business thrive’ would provide positive impact on social regeneration (interview, 2002):

We expect the town centre manager to do activities in the town centres rather than being out and about further a field for doing urban regeneration activities. The focus of his activities must be shops in the town centre and businesses in the town centre, making that thrive. … some of the other benefits (employment and education) almost come as a consequence of TCM’s activities. (interview, 2002)

The local authority clearly recognised the indirect yet important part that TCM’s focused on generating a healthy town centre economy played in the overall picture of a healthy community.

In Wood Green, the head of the regeneration partnership gave an account of the role of TCM in social regeneration and maintained that TCM played a part in community improvement which reinforced a sense of positive identity through providing a vibrant town centre. He stressed that having a viable and lively town centre was the key ingredient to encouraging the local people to spend their disposable income and raising their awareness of the environment, thus TCM’s current marketing and promotion were especially concurrent with his aims. Furthermore, the head of regeneration partnership stated that TCM initiative would play a crucial part in ‘community stabilisation’ which encouraged locals to identify with and patronise their town centre (interview, 2002).

The town centre manager of Doncaster attested that the TCM initiatives played an extensive role in the process of urban regeneration, and with the social aspect very much included since she acknowledged that ‘the economic and social side fall hand in hand because obviously a lot of our schemes have got to address the social issues because we have got such massive social issues here’ (interview, 2002). In terms of TCM’s role in social regeneration, the regeneration (SRB) manager (interview, 2002) especially pointed out the benefits of TCM’s capacity in
consulting with local communities ‘by messaging out to the community from the community’ during the various regeneration programmes undertaken.

Beyond doubt, although the focus of the above three TCM initiatives lay within its traditional role in providing safe and clean urban centres, they had already been recognised as worthwhile and even the establishment of TCM was itself counted as one of the regeneration outputs. Considering the socio-economic level of the town centre users, it was not possible for TCM initiatives to select the particular types of customers they would target when the majority of the population, including the population living in the surrounding communities, belonged to the lower socio-economic classes. The main focus of regeneration programmes here was on improving the quality of the environment in conjunction with improving the socio-economic level of local users rather than on bringing in ready-made affluent people from elsewhere. In this regeneration context, that is termed as ‘community-led concerning social objectives’ (Otsuka, 2004), TCM to some extent is demonstrating its capabilities in contributing toward creating socially inclusive urban centres.

7. CONCLUSION

This paper has shown a number of new insights in the TCM’s roles to social aspect of urban regeneration. Although there are operational boundaries between TCM and other regeneration initiatives in certain political and economic context, two contentious conclusions are summarised in this article. On the one hand, there appears to be potentially worrying trends in which TCM may be a factor in some circumstances for widening the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged communities. This should not be put any more strongly at this point than the fact that the research has revealed some evidence with reference to only Birmingham and Reading. The degree to which TCM has this effect would need to be tested through more case study examples. However, the case study analysis conducted for this paper suggests that where there is a possibility that TCM may contribute to the reinforcing of a degree of social elitism and space exclusivity unless countered by strong policy responses which address inequality issues emerging in the regenerated premises. Absence of any real mechanism within urban policies for tackling these issues has been pointed out by many researchers, and indeed, TCM, as an area-based regeneration programme, is not capable of providing solutions to tackling social exclusion generated by the state-led flagship regeneration projects. On the other hand, in contexts where this opportunity for reinforcing the spatial dominance of middle class and other advantaged groups is not present, TCM should be seen as a complementary mechanism in relation to achieving social inclusion within their urban centres. The essential contribution TCM could make toward creating socially inclusive urban centres relates to the particular needs of the places, the characteristics and values of the institutions and organisations funding the regeneration programmes, and their consequences in terms of who wins and who loses. Defining the detailed socio-economic and political conditions that determine TCM’s contributions to social inclusion within urban centres is an interesting topic for future research.

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i Marks and Spencer is a leading multiple retailer which has occupied major premises on the high street (the main shopping street) in the UK.

ii Labour party led by Tony Blair came to power by winning the 1997 election after 18 years of Conservative governments.

iii The UTF was led by the New Labour’s Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott. Under the chairman, Lord Rogers, the members of the Task Force were chosen for a range of expertises in many key elements of urban problems including social exclusion, sustainable development, affordable housing, urban regeneration and urban design.

iv There are 8414 wards in England and 354 local authority districts in England. Each ward has been given a rank of deprivation (the most deprived: 1 and the least: 8414) by combining the data of six domains (income, employment, health, education, housing and access). Average of ward ranks is presented by the average of all the wards’ ranks in a district. See the details of methodology and data in DETR (2000b).
These ethnic minority groups include Black African, Black African-Caribbean, Chinese, Greek-Cypriot, Turkish, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Irish, Jewish and Kurdish communities. In 1998, more than 140 languages were spoken by pupils at school (Haringey Regeneration Partnership, 2000: 13).


References

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