

Geography – Managing Cities

“There are no simple solutions to reversing the decline of the popularity of the CBD in MEDCs”

Firstly, the CBD is the central business district of an urban area, typically containing an intense concentration of office and retail activities.

The CBD acts as the main perhaps the most important part of a city, where the centre of a city's business is found together with its commercial activities, forming the core. Large cities such as London may have more than one CBD and may have experienced a decentralization of offices and relocation of retailing. However many large cities do suffer many problems particularly on the trade front even in the pollution point of view. It has the greatest concentration of traffic which in acts as a major problem. However there are other issues acting as just of importance, especially to people most affected. It is quite clear that there is nowhere near as much trade as there used to be in certain towns mainly due to the 'outer town shopping centres' for example in Canterbury - much of its trade is taken away by stores such as PC World or Curry's, even the supermarkets which are becoming a regular occurrence in almost all cities. However the larger cities are not affected as much, but trade still isn't at the levels that it used to be, because we still see how packed with shoppers both London and Manchester get.

The shopping centres, for example Lakeside, draw people in from the nearby towns, the trade is now concentrated there and not in the CBD where it should be. Offices are built on the urban fringes, which act as a problem in terms of trade and as well as a loss in their economic wellbeing. Many people prefer the city centre to the nearby super stores, but there is very little they can now do about it. The huge companies have 'stolen' their trade leaving the smaller ones little to do or make a come back with. The shops or the Central Business District (CBD) on the whole, are left with relatively little money and this leads to its eventual breakdown or failure of that particular trade/shop. The people's money is spent in shopping markets in Tesco's and Asda for example, not in the city, as they are located in places easy to get to e.g. near Trafford centre, so drastic changes have to be taken in some cases. Perhaps the main problem that shops face in the CBD is the fact that there is little way to compete with the bigger shops/stores. Larger shop which are situated in the CBD, for example Marks and Spencer in Canterbury, do bring trade in. Because of this, more of the larger shops are encouraged to develop in particular cities in order to combat the problem of the outer town stores and to keep up the competitive relationship with the other businesses.

Combating the problems

Many cities today face the problems listed above, and the news of new commercial shopping areas such as the Trafford centre for Manchester can only bring bad news for their level of customers. Canterbury is a good example, like many other cities around Britain as it is trying to solve a similar problem. As I have said before, up until recently trade in Canterbury hasn't been too bad until the recent opening of new shops e.g. Curry's

and even a new McDonalds. Despite this problem, the council is setting up the 'White Friars' plan which tries to help the problem of lack of trade. Even at the moment, the plan is under action, redeveloping the areas particularly to the north of the city (i.e. near to Ricemans). It hopes to do away with Ricemans completely, redesigning it like many other shops nearby who suffered the post war development. That was another problem many cities faced. After the war, when many commercial areas were destroyed, poorly built, yet substantial buildings were built to replace the damage which occurred. This did not only happen to Canterbury but all over Britain, post war development took place. The look of the buildings is generally very poor quality and they are not very desirable, something that a city does not want, and this is why most cities re-develop, apart from Manchester, as this was massively due to the bomb that went off in 1997. Continuing, the White Friars Development scheme, will demolish nearly all those affected by the previous development, instead building shops, which on the whole look nicer. By doing this, the cities should restore the trade which previously they had once lost. The plan also hopes to leave the shopping stores on the outskirts of the city improving the actual CBD, therefore drawing people in. The old look has once again come in fashion. The shop Gap is an example, especially in Canterbury, where it was only recently built. The scheme hopes to make the redeveloped shops look like this, which will be a great improvement to that previously. The redevelopment of cities is also apparent in other countries such as in San Francisco and New York, as both these have undergone massive re-developments to help with levels of trade taking place.

The cities across Britain were originally all designed for the people, however now it is for trade. Lots of schemes have been set up all around Britain, so that they make their areas more attractive, in some cases far more so than at present. Even the new shops hoping to get built have to pass the criteria of the Council, and if they don't look right then the offer is turned down. People just want to make the city a better place, not allowing it to become run down. Even the shops that are open now will have to pass the certain criteria's. Another problem that the cities on the whole hope to overcome, is the problem of crime, which plays a big part. More police obviously have to be included in the problems which are apparent. Success has been shown in the new Park and Rides that have been built in certain areas. These rides are able to take people to almost any places they want at a relatively cheap price which seems very fair. Not only does it encourage people to come to the city but it also prevents traffic congestion which is quite a big problem in many areas. The congestion sometimes puts off people coming to a city, so by removing this problem, more people will visit, and this will add to the trade. Traffic also won't come in so will once again prevent the pollution problems which are gradually destroying the overall appearance of the cities and towns. Business's suffers because of traffic so by carrying out these schemes people will be doing it a great favor. However most of the Park and Ride's that have been developed tend to be on the outskirts, away from where congestion can take place. Perhaps a slight problem that cities may be faced with is the fact that more and more offices that are being built further away. Because of this it may mean that there may be less trade, fewer people could be attracted to coming to the city, for example – Pedestrianisation, which takes traffic away from the CBD. Obviously all cities have undergone some sort Pedestrianisation, helping it in many points of view.

Streets in many CBD's have been redeveloped so that they are the same height as pavements. Delivery vehicles are now only allowed to enter the city either during the morning or late in the evening, not during shopping areas thus not affecting it (the trade). Perhaps another problem that faces British Cities, particularly the CBD, is the price of property. As land values increase, fewer people seem able to afford the high prices, meaning in general less trade. Only the larger shops, such as Gap or M&S, are able to afford these rents, so there is a smaller abundance of the smaller shops as they are unable to survive. Less trade is a result of this as the shops that people want are no longer there. In some ways this means that the city on the whole suffers, and isn't just effected by the high prices. There is the constant fight going on for different shops to buy areas of land, actually owning them, is the important thing. This eventually leads to the demand of more properties being built, as the need for them is ever increasing. This may cause the CBD to expand, in some ways something it does not want. Only the richer shops are able to afford the rents, so the increase of these shops is more apparent. Most importantly they take other shop's trade away, but do increase the number of people coming to the city- that is one advantage. So perhaps a solution to this problem would be to lower the cost of rents, which would be to the advantage of the city, on the whole.

The main solution to the problems of traffic in the CBD has been the creation of precincts or streets that consider first the needs of the walker. These have taken a variety of forms: streets in New Towns that were built solely for Pedestrian use. These covered shopping precincts and streets that have been closed to varying categories of vehicles or excluded them altogether. The first example of Pedestrianisation is to have been a converted street in a German town, Essen in 1929. The same thing soon happened in Britain which had an advantage which was taken of the closure of London Street because of a collapsed sewer, and the passing of the Traffic Regulation Act, to make closure permanent. The 1971 Town and Country Planning Act gave added impetus to the movement, and by 1980 there were more than 1,000 pedestrian streets, arcades or enclosed centres.

The exclusion of traffic from urban centres and related environmental improvements not only helps to retain residents and encourage others to return, they also attract more users and visitors, maintaining the traditional function of urban centres.

Transport, in relation to the CBD, is an important factor in the economic prospects of the inner areas, because mobility and congestion affect the job prospects of their residents and the efficiency of local businesses. Transport management has been reformed over the last decade with new style transport authorities, plans and financial arrangements. The transport Act in 1969 introduced Passenger Transport Authorities in the major cities, following the model of London Transport. The Greater London Council's plans for a motorway box in inner London and a massive restructuring of the primary road network were abandoned in 1973 and following the increases in oil prices metropolitan county councils reviewed their road building programs.