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The future of the city centre: urbanisation, transformation and resilience - a tale of two Newcastle cities

Abstract

Recent debates over the content and theoretical orientation of urban studies act as a strong reminder that the nature and existence of the city as a form of spatial urban agglomeration is changing. They have acted positively as a heuristic to inspire critical analysis of urbanisation and helped to illuminate the considerable empirical variation over time and space in urban agglomeration forms. However, in shifting the focus onto the planetary reach of urbanisation, such debates risk deflecting attention away from the city core at a time when it too is being subjected to transformation. The recent proliferation of public and policy interest in the future of the city centre as the archetypal expression of urban agglomeration has not been matched by similar growth in academic and theoretical accounts of its transformation. Drawing on the examples of two city centres, and placing them in the context of the recent debates of urban agglomeration theory, this paper seeks to initiate deeper analysis and dialogue about the future of the urban core, including how it is being articulated and by whom. It argues for a greater analytic understanding of the ways in which the city centre as a physical and emotional entity has been so resilient, and advocates for stronger engagement with initiatives seeking to reactivate the city centre as a crucial epicentre of urban agglomeration.

Keywords: urbanisation, city centre, resilience, urban planning; agglomeration theory

Introduction

Recent debates over the content and theoretical orientation of urban studies act as a powerful reminder that the nature and existence of the city as a form of spatial urban agglomeration is changing. In challenging the extent to which it even remains prudent to adopt 'the city' as an appropriate empirical or theoretical lens (Merrifield, 2013; Brenner & Schmid, 2014; Storper & Scott, 2016; Brenner, 2016; Roy, 2016) these debates have sought to provide bold understandings of the changing nature of the urban and cities. Much attention, in this journal and others covering urban studies, has been given to the merits of perspectives such as postcolonial urban analysis, planetary urbanism, and assemblage analysis as ways to understand urban trends and the urbanisation process. Each perspective has acted positively as a heuristic to inspire critical analysis of urbanisation and has helped to illuminate the considerable empirical variation over time and space in urban agglomeration forms. Exploration of this diversity of urban forms has both generated a plethora of terms to capture the forms of urban development (Scott & Storper, 2015) and encouraged a shift in analytic and theoretic gaze beyond the 'city' (Brenner & Schmid, 2014). Despite this outward gaze, there remains a consensus that 'the city' continues to be a significant, albeit only one, representation of urbanisation (Merrifield, 2013).

Amidst these debates and shifts in theoretical sensibilities about cities, the city centre's constitutive and existentialist position as 'inside' the urban remains unchallenged. It has retained an ontologically distinctiveness because as Storper & Scott (2016, 1129) note the city centre *"poses uniquely problematical scientific and political questions deriving from its mode(s) of operation"* (italics in original) as well as its distinctive empirical character. Set within the wider urban agglomeration, the

city centre is epitomised by the specialised land uses, dense networks of interaction, economic and institutional functions, and its impact of social dynamics, cultures and mentalities.

Planetary urbanisation and postcolonial urbanism theories, however, remind us that contemporary critical urban analysis needs to revise systematically inherited concepts and representations of the urban. Like the term 'city', analysis of the city centre (or its other variants including downtown, central district, or urban core) risks being constrained by definition bounded spatiality, distinct from other parts of the urban agglomeration, and with an empirical focus on stability and equilibrium. Our starting point in this paper is an acknowledgement that the seemingly familiar form of the urban city centre as a distinctive, extensive expression of agglomeration is itself being fundamentally transformed across the planet (Schmid, 2018). Attention needs to switch away from stasis to questions of change over time, as the gravitational pull of the city centre is weakened by externalities resulting from its agglomeration, proximity and density, and reduced by changing patterns of sharing, matching and learning provided not least by new technologies and universal online access.

The city centre under threat?

Across the world there is renewed public and political attention to, and concern about, the future of the city centre. Along with the 'high street' of smaller urban agglomerations, accounts discuss the 'death' of retail functions as familiar names of businesses close and new leasing agreements are sought to stave off other closures (Hubbard, 2017; Millington & Ntounis, 2017; Zhang et al, 2016). Changing needs and the design of ageing commercial office properties are generating new levels of vacancies (Harris, 2015; Bruce et al, 2015). City authorities, realising that structural change is happening in city centres, are responding by seeking to construct new collaboration between private and public sectors, and with citizens (Branka et al, 2016; Le Feuvre et al, 2016).

In developed nations, there are early signs of more centripetal tendencies (Pickett et al, 2013; Luque-Ayala & Marvin, 2015) with beginnings of a selective re-population of the city centre (Serwicka & Swinney, 2015). In developing countries, continued and rapid growth of the city has placed the city centre under renewed pressures, leading to the rise of centrifugal pressures to create more new centres serving the needs of the dispersed housing developments which accompany urban population in-migration. Such transformative change, comparable with the dissolving of the city as the single expression of urbanisation, has meant that the city centre is also not immune to different intersecting trends of economic, social, cultural and political processes of urbanisation. Indeed, if as some advocates contend planetary urbanisation offers open horizons of liberation where "suburbs, peripheries, peri-urban areas are not dangling dependently off the "urban" centre anymore" (Keil, 2018, 1594), the future of the city could be radically different.

This transformation - visible and for some threatening - however also creates opportunities for the reactivation and repositioning of the city centre as a 'liberator of agglomeration'. If as Scott & Storper (2014, 6) contend "agglomeration is the basic glue that holds the city together as a complex congeries of human activities… [with] a highly distinctive form of politics", then the city centre forms the epicentre of such agglomeration. In this sense, it is more than the physical centrality that is important, for the city centre also has a key role in helping to "circumscribe individual agglomerations in geographic space, and certainly, in the limit, to distinguish one agglomeration from another" (Scott & Storper, 2014, 7). Transformational change which reinforces the unique internal organisational dynamics and 'generic roots' of the city centre can thus have far wider

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(spatial and non-spatial) positive implications. Some recent interdisciplinary research exploring opportunities for the use of smart technologies and systems to improve standards of environmental efficiency, citizen health and well-being and increase prosperity and social cohesion (Mehan, 2016; Ogbourn et al, 2014; Berman, 2016) has made a positive start in this direction.

In the following discussion, our focus on the urban core is designed to open up discussion about the 'place' of the urban core in the context of processes of urbanisation, drawing upon Lefebvrian notions of urban spaces as places that can dissipate themselves, dissolving and recreating themselves, and where the classic notions of centrality can be recreated anywhere. To do this, we consider the visions for the future of the city centre of two 'Newcastles' - one in the UK and one in Australia – as they respond to wider processes of urbanisation and change. We explore how the urban core is being conceptualised and represented by two city councils and their partners, located within their respective neoliberal planning and development frameworks. In so doing, we are seeking to open up such conceptualisations to critique and in particular to suggest future research avenues to understand the processual realisation of the city centre futures.

Methods

The analysis here focuses on two key planning documents produced by the municipal authorities to articulate a future vision of their respective city centres, both in developed nations. The pivotal role of these was reinforced by discussions at workshops held in both cities as part of an AHRC international research network grant, where key private, public and civic stakeholders came together to enter into dialogue about the future of the city centre. In adopting this approach, we recognise that these city plans are situated and partial, the outcomes of a process of neoliberal governance designed to mobilise particular forms of growth coalitions, and designed to respond to statutory and regulatory obligations placed on the municipal authorities by national governments. As such they represent a partisan view, and as was evident from the critical engagement in the workshops, constructed primarily by one actor – who under neoliberal urbanisation systems is often a minority partner. Municipal authorities can only suggest a future plan and vision where they can utilise their relatively limited but critical regulatory powers to help transform visions into a reality. In large part these blueprints are discursive documents designed to mobilise and align other actors to engage collaboratively towards a shared reality

The use of term city centre here is not as a distinct, bounded territorial unit of analysis but more as a relational space (Amin & Thrift, 2002). In both case studies, the city centre is nested within a wider urban region, incorporating not only the urban agglomeration but also a larger economic and spatial hinterland. The city centre is viewed as the beating heart of the urban system, under threat economically and emotionally, and needing to be reinforced through a coalition of shared interests to secure its future. In adopting the notions of the city centre constructed by the city councils, we acknowledge that these form only one, contested and far from self-evident conception. However given the relational power of this source to shape debates and direct the future of the 'city centre', their conceptions have significance. We use them here not as accepted facts or indeed as more than guiding visions, in order to explore critically some of the research questions which we feel need to be asked about the city centre and its future.

Problematising the city centre

   1.   Newcastle upon Tyne, UK

In November 2017, the City Council of the north east English city of Newcastle upon Tyne launched what was claimed to be an ambitious proposal to kick start the transformation of the city centre into a globally renowned shopping and leisure destination. Collaborating with other partners, especially the local business improvement district (BID) company NE1 Limited and its neighbouring city council of Gateshead, the plan approved earlier in 2015 follows a well-trodden path where the economic and social regeneration of the central part of the city is built around compact growth. It seeks to reinforce notions of traditional economic roles of the city centre as one where economic ideas and innovation emanate (increasingly in conjunction with educational partners) and provides the majority of leisure and retailing for the regional population serviced by a radial transport network. It also views the city centre as offering residential living for a small, but growing cohort of population, extending the socio-demographic profile through affordable housing and student rented accommodation. In the absence of both fiscal and regulatory capacity to respond more radically to the acknowledged pressures on the city centre, Newcastle upon Tyne City Council and its partners continue to implement a compact city model where scope for transformational change is limited and indeed the underlying theory of change is incremental rather than radical (Figure 1).

At the core of 2030 vision is a city centre maintaining a balance between economic and cultural activity, between pedestrians and vehicles, and between public realm and private spaces. It is one able to attract people (and their wealth) from the local area for leisure and retailing and from further field through tourism. The limited funding committed by the two municipal authorities is primarily set aside to enhance streetscapes and pedestrianisation, to capitalise on the city's already strong network of public transport, improving sustainability (Table 1).

Most emphasis, however, is placed on reversing long-term economic and social trends afflicting the urban core. Despite evidence of a sharp fall in demand for commercial and retail properties, the Newcastle plan argues that "there is still significant growth potential in the Urban Core" (Newcastle & Gateshead City Councils, 2015, 122) with its strategy being to "reinforce its continued success by bringing new businesses, particularly in science, retail, digital, creative and tourism sectors to the area". To this end, the strategic focus is on re-development of key, under-utilised interstices (geographically defined) within the existing built environment. It assumes that private sector investment alongside cityscape improvements provided by the civic authorities can strengthen the economic and social fabric of the city. Socially, the generation of an urban buzz underpins this economic growth. Based on intensifying social interactions in a compact urban space, the plan envisages continued re-profiling of the demography of city centre users through the processes of studentification and commodification of the student experience (Chatterton, 2010; Mulhearn & Franco, 2018), and the use of planning regulation to encourage use of vacant spaces for rented and owner occupied housing.

Newcastle and Gateshead Councils' vision document claims to be a product of "active conversation with our communities" (p10), setting out an agenda for future action, recognising that processes of urbanisation are impacting negatively on the functional logic of the city centre. The underlying logic remains however of a city centre more compact and lively, generating positive externalities and fostering an environment that reinforces density, proximity, and connectivity, whilst also being a driver of economic growth for the city as a whole and the urban region.

2.   'ReNew'ing Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia

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At first glance, the planning vision for the City of Newcastle, New South Wales, set out in its Greater Metro Newcastle Plan 2036, is similar to that of its namesake in the UK. It too has a vision of a compact city centre which is entrepreneurial and dynamic, seen to be globally competitive, offering lifestyles able to attract new populations, and with enhanced sustainability credentials through its 'new economy' as a smart city supported by carbon neutral initiatives. It too envisages key roles for the University as a civic partner and growth of student population, a focus on culture as a part of the economic base and a renewed focus on tourism, and with densification through infill site residential development.

Here too, the city council's approach follows the orthodoxy of national metropolitan planning which for the last two decades has focussed on producing monocentric compact cities (Randolph, 2006; Bunker et al. 2017; Limb et al, 2018). This involves regulating land use types and intensities strategically distributed around hierarchical transit lines and nodes to create clustered centres. A modern light transportation system (replacing heavy rail lines) and dedicated cycling and walking routes are reinforcing the use of public spaces and buildings to integrate the urban core. The vision presents the structure as a compact city centre composed of precincts but the reality is the physical development of a polycentric linear city (Figure 2). Without any explicit reference to urbanisation processes, the vision document's underpinning message is about transformation and transition, replacing the city and city region's economic dependency on coal exportation to a more diverse "service, creative and knowledge city".

Whilst there are parallels with the other Newcastle, there is however one key difference between the two visions; the New South Wales document is the forerunner of conversations rather than the outcome of consultations. Changes at the national level updating the Environment Planning and Assessment Act (1979) has required States, and through them City and Local Councils, to engage in more transformative thinking, and to develop a 20 year vision for land use management and preservation as part of community participation plans. These are designed to make it clearer and easier for citizens to understand the planning process and its aims, and to participate in planning decision-making (New South Wales Government, 2018). The 2030 vision document for Newcastle represents a deliberative attempt to simplify and clarify the planning process, enabling improved regulatory efficiency to deliver economic development whilst also delivering greater transparency (Ruming, 2018). It forms part of a process to re-calibrate the political economy associated urban consolidation and compactness in the past two decades which saw multi-players, especially in the private sector, dominate the discourse and development agenda squeezing out opportunities for communities to be active in the planning process (Ruming & Goodman, 2016; Bunker et al, 2017).

In responding to this enforced regulatory change, Newcastle City Council has thus sought through its vision statement to present the logic (and arguably the underlying theory of change) associated with urban planning. For the city centre, which has already seen significant revitalisation spearheaded by the Hunter Development Corporation, the representation is a series of inter-locking precincts, each focused on a spatial area but designated by function and contribution to the overall economic growth of the area (Figure 2).

In bringing together a heterogeneous agglomeration of different components – urban materialities, territory, symbolisms, economic functions, and authority/power – Newcastle aims to accrete and align particular forms of urbanisation and urbanism into each distinct areas precinct (Table 2). Resembling an assemblage, and open to future assemblage theory analysis to explore how and why such elements might align, it is a framing device for thinking through the reformation of the city centre and represents an active attempt to create a 'new downtown' (Helbrecht, 2012; Dirksmeier, 2012).

Workshops held in the city with key stakeholders offered some further insights on the importance of partnerships with identified key actors such as the University (civic precinct), and tourism developers (east end precinct) but like the vision statement did not reveal mechanisms about how the future vision of the urban core are to be realised.

Processual realisation of the future of the city centre

The two Newcastle examples remind us that effective interventions to transform the city centre to the benefit of the 'city' as a whole are dependent on the context in which such interventions take place. This is more than just the local economic, social and cultural setting, including also national governance structures, and global economic and sustainability agendas. They, like other cities, are thus repositioning themselves within an urban world society seeking to recreate and reinforce the centrality of the urban core as new downtowns (Helbrecht & Dirksmeier, 2012).

Both Newcastles are seeking to reinforce their cores. For those growth coalitions involved in setting out their visions, the city centre is, for example, the "focal point of the Tyneside conurbation" (Newcastle & Gateshead Councils, 2017, 122) seeking to be the "place of choice for doing business, learning, entertainment and living" (ibid p136), and in Australia "an important catalyst for a vibrant and internationally-facing Greater Newcastle" (New South Wales Government, 2018, 17). Both strategic plans, with their heavy reliance on local planning and regulation, acknowledge the role of the city councils as place making leaders to manage change and avoid dysfunctionalities of urban agglomeration being able to undermine the viability of the city centre.

In analysing these two visions articulating the individuality of each Newcastle, we are not advocating notions of 'new particularism', although we certainly do not deny the considerable empirical variation existing between city centres. Quite the opposite, as we see both cities creating discrete and distinctive responses to similar processes of urbanisation. Both are seeking to foster regeneration of what is publicly and politically viewed as a key urban space. Both are facing similar organisational forces and processes which are perceived to threaten the existence of the city centre. And both set out plans for the urban core within the context of a wider urban hinterland. Equally, neither are we arguing for a theoretical articulation of urbanisation and the city centre which is totalising where specificities of cities simply reflect the local context. There is the possibility, as with other critical urban theory (Leitner & Sheppard, 2016) that no single theory can account for the variegated nature of city centres across the world.

The plans, in contrast to Brenner's (2013, 90) critique of the urban as "devoid of any clear definitional parameters, morphological coherence, or cartographic fixity", emphasise that the city centre continues to have empirical and conceptual resonance. The strategic documents offer more than just a statement of intent to reinforce the continued meaningful existence of the city centre within the urban system, as they both underline that this existence is at risk of being hollowed out along with the 'urban'. Of course in using planning processes and the associated use of bounded spaces, the plans offer a narrowly defined city centre, at risk of simplifying the connections with the urban 'outside'. Whilst acknowledging this, the plans are nevertheless creating meaningful political and spatial entities through with future institutional actors and practices will be shaped (Allen and Cochrane, 2014).

However, the political and processual realities of implementing plans like those espoused for both Newcastles have the potential of making such guiding visions little more than 'story-telling' using assumptions about the future whilst cast within narratives of the past (Devisme, 2015). For all its

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claims to reposition itself from being a 'great port city' to a post-industrial city (Stevenson, 1999), Newcastle NSW for example remains heavily dependent of the exportation of coal through the port, jarring with its aspirations around urban sustainability. And with limited budgets relative to those being expended by the regional Hunter Valley Development Corporation, the Council's influence is limited. In the UK's Newcastle its limited fiscal and regulatory capacity to react to the pressures on the city centre means that here too the City Council has to achieve its visions through collaboration and partnership, relying heavily on private sector investment and support beyond the 'urban' spaces managed publicly. In this respect, a focus on the city centre may be misplaced. Its future is being shaped by urbanisation processes beyond any spatial bounding of the downtown, with those managing this area relatively powerless to make a difference as they increasingly draw support from beyond the city centre.

Researching the 'urban inside' future

The current debates, arguing for more theoretically informed analyses of urbanisation, offer critical insights into how the tentacles of urbanisation processes extend beyond urban agglomerations. However, in challenging the 'city dominance' and rightly asking critically about the non-urban or 'hinterland' (Brenner, 2016), such debates risk deflecting attention away from the city core at a time when it too is being subjected to transformation. Such limited scrutiny may arguably reflect the assumption that in contrast to suburban (Addie, 2016), post-suburbia (Helbich, 2012), or other wider urban areas (Scott & Storper, 2015) the centre remains analytically distinctive.

Our intention here has been to start to rebalance the focus on how contemporary urbanisation is remoulding the 'inside' as well as the urban 'outside'. Our argument is that the analysis of visions of the future of the city centre opens up key questions requiring further interrogation into, first how urbanisation processes are transforming the city centre and, second the ways in which future visions are being constructed and delivered. This needs to go beyond the contemporary attention by academia, media and public on the future of retail in the city centre (Millington, et al, 2015; Risselada et al 2019). As one key function of the city centre, the future of the retail sector is important, but the downtown core of the city and its urban character is based on more than consumption.

In responding to this call, we acknowledge that our paper offers only an initial, limited analysis. It has focussed solely on the planning and vision statements published by the municipal leadership of the two cities both in developed nations, which although viewed as significant by local representatives in research workshops as part of the AHRC international project, do not capture the breadth of analysis needed to consider the complexity of city centres future globally. Even in this restricted context, however, it is still possible to suggest potentially fruitful and desirable future avenues for research into the urban inside.

One strand is a need for greater understanding of the ways in which the city centre as a physical and emotional entity has been so resilient, especially under the planetary growth of urbanism, despite (or arguable because of) continuous 'disturbance' and flux. This lends itself to engagement with concepts of urban resilience and the recent interest in the politics of urban resilience (Meerow & Newell, 2019). But to do this, there is a need to avoid being constrained by viewing city centres as self-organising, predictable ecosystems (Beilin & Wilkinson, 2015), by avoiding inherent conservativeness and passively accepting change (Evans, 2011), and overly focus on adaptation to disruptions without sufficient attention to the underlying causes of such change (Wamsler, 2014).

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The two visions above point to an amalgam of desired resilience and resistance to change, whilst also seeking to embrace and foster change, but further interrogation into how such planning decisions both enable and constrain the future of the urban core is required. With the reduction of non-statutory responsibilities for municipal government under neoliberal reforms, strategic planning documents have become more critical in representing the views of influential stakeholders, whilst also opening up local governance to wider scrutiny and engagement. The documents are intentionally ambiguous and contradictory, a position seeking both to engage local constituencies (including commercial and citizen) whilst also building extra-local legitimacy and support for development through local projects (Lauermann, 2014). The contrasting purposes in this respect of the two Newcastle documents underscore the need for further interrogation of their genesis and attention to the processes of 'negotiated resilience' (Ziervolgel et al, 2017).

Equally, and related, greater attention needs to be given to planning and strategic documents such as those considered in this paper, including whether like master plans previously generated to assisted urban regeneration (Madanipour et al, 2018) their fixed spatial and temporal foci unintentionally create greater risks of being rigid. As an ideological practice, the city centre blueprints and plans developed by both city governments can rightly be subjected to criticism of supporting local urban regimes (Addie, 2013; Olesen, 2014; Wachsmuth, 2014). They reinforce the notion of a particular conception of the 'city centre' giving it political and economic significance, and positioning it within an urban regional context of urban systems. They thus reify a particular sense of functional purpose and processual realisation, providing justification for municipal attention and investment. The approaches adopted in both cities are reinforcing the continuation of historic and critically unchallenged functional logics and spatial practice that foreground the same actors, and reduce opportunities for others to be involved in dialogues about the city centre future.

New forms of urban governance are needed which move beyond the collaboration seen here between neighbouring city councils in Newcastle upon Tyne or between the Hunter Valley Development Corporation and Newcastle City Council in Australia. Alternatives, such as the creation of 'cabinets' and other city-regional governance forms (O'Brien & Pike, 2018) associated with city deals in the UK are required to mediate and generate new and more progressive interactions between the centripetal and centrifugal tensions associated with urban agglomerations and planetary hinterlands. Under the existing urban governance arrangements, as both Newcastles illustrate, municipal authorities are struggling to operate as mediators of urban conflicts and frictions in the city centre. There is thus a need for greater consideration of achieving democratisation of city centre regeneration.

Key questions arise about who is included and excluded from the planning of a future city centre is crucial (Meerow & Newell, 2016) especially as multi-stakeholder engagement and partnerships form the basis of city centre transformation. There is, for example, a need for deeper analysis of how a 'shared' sense of threat to the city centre has been generated and how such perceived vulnerability is (or is not) creating bonds between partners. And questions need to be raised about what role municipal authorities have in leveraging assistance from others as they tap into the innate characteristics of citizen and society to build social resilience (Rose, 2014). In focusing on more democratisation of regeneration of the future of the city centre, there is scope to consider a tripartite categorisation of those likely to be involved, from those *in* the core (e.g. residents), *of* the centre (stakeholders having a presence) and *for* the centre (with wider urban region). In envisaging a future for city centres, there are critical questions needed to be researched about who are involved in their evolution, and in turn who are excluded from and by the emerging plans.

Conclusion

As an expression of the urban land nexus agglomeration, the city centre and its future has wider significance in the theorising of urbanisation and urban change. The contemporary and public focus on the retail in the Anglophone world risks overlooking the multiple functions of city centres as places where people live, work and play, and is shaping a perception of the urban core having a bleak future. Political and policy responses increasingly reflect this characterisation, focussing on regeneration and renewal, rather than situating responses in more nuanced accounts of processes of urbanisation. As illustrated by the examples of the two Newcastle cities on opposite sides of the world, the accompanying narratives of a future of the urban core both extend outside of the core for future growth, and reify the functions and logics of the core itself as 'urban inside'.

The two case studies here are not only attempts to ensure continued revitalisation and regeneration of the city centre, important though that is as part of their constant evolution under processes of urbanisation. In addition, they are projects seeking to reactivate the city centre as a crucial epicentre of urban agglomeration. In this respect, city centres and their future merit greater critical attention – as they embody the very tensions between dispersion and concentration that lie at heart of the contemporary debate about the nature and form of urban theory. Whilst contemporary processes of urbanisation are altering the historic gravitational pull of the city centre, they continue nevertheless to be potent powerhouses of the spatial concentration of the means of production and infrastructure. As part of a reflexive analysis of the city centre within critical urban theory, there is a need for a deeper understanding of their resilience to profound and rapid mutations of urbanisation, and an exploration of how city centres might have new liberating roles as part of urban agglomerations.

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Table 1 – Newcastle upon Tyne Urban Core future development
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Future contributors	Vision	Priorities
Office and business development	Provision of at least 380,000 m² new office space	5 large scale office development in mixed-use sites
Leisure, culture and tourism	Enhance and diversify offering, both daytime and night time	Extend conference & business facilities, new hotels, family-friendly attractions + enhance riverside access
Homes	Diversify housing offer and develop c3750 new homes	1000 new homes, allocate home space in 5 mixed use sites (as above for offices), Support conversions of upper floors for homes
Sustainable transport	Promotion of sustainable transport modes and safe, better linked areas	Priority to sustainable modes on designated primary pedestrian routes; creation of direct routes to 5 mixed-use sites (as above); enhanced public transport by bus priority lanes, and re-invigoration of Metro
Other transport	Minimise impact on environment and quality of place	Focus traffic on defined urban core routes; minimise car parking for developments; promote short stay over long stay parking
Urban design and Heritage	Deliver higher quality locally distinctive places	Presumption against development which cause significant harm to views; maximise opportunities to sustain and enhance heritage assets; provide strong urban frontages, especially along pedestrian routes
Urban Green infrastructure	Protect and enhance network	Fill gaps and linkages in network
Public Realm and Public Art	Enhanced network of public and open spaces, and use public art to enhance their character	Improve add new public spaces which are flexible for use; incorporate durable materials; make provision for temporary use and events by the private sector

Source: based on Planning for the Future: Core strategy and urban core plan 2010-30, Newcastle City and Gateshead Councils (2015)

Table 2: Precinct model of city centre development, Newcastle NSW

Precinct	Contribution to city centre	Proposed interventions
Newcastle East	Tourism sector	Enable new and revitalised accommodation and tourism functions; stage major events
East End	Heritage and retail	Transform public spaces to connect shops and waterfront; retain and repurpose heritage buildings; revitalise shopping mall
Civic	Education and research hub + cultural axis to waterfront	Leverage from University of Newcastle NeW Space campus; encourage addition civic and cultural activities
West End	Commercial sector	Relocate key Civic functions to area; increase commercial floor space; promote area of professional, finance and office employment; new ferry wharf and extension of ferry network
Wickham	New economy space and extension of city centre	Leverage transit oriented development around interchange; provide floor space for emerging new economy business and industry

Source: Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036 (State of New South Wales Government, 2018)
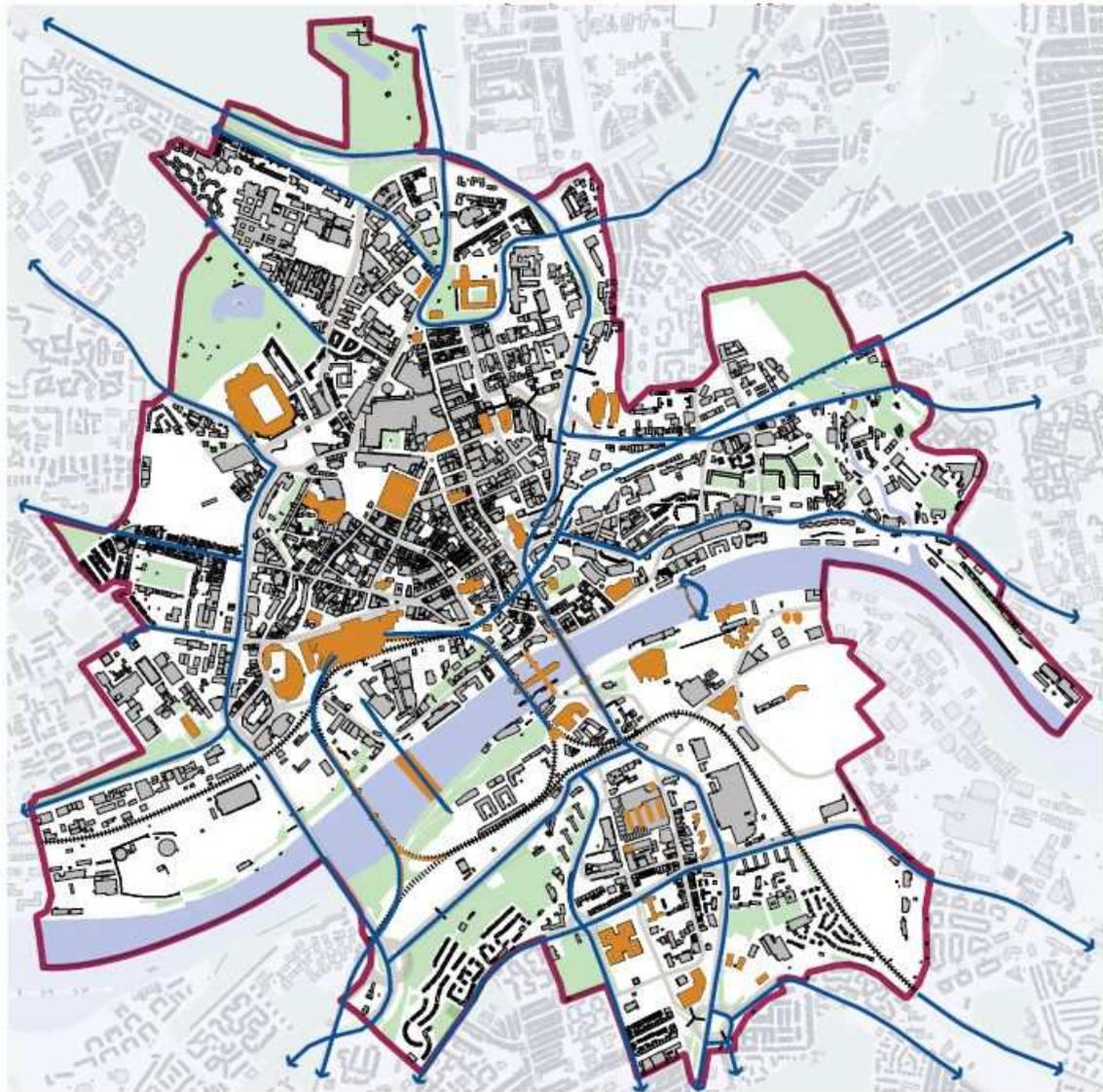
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Figure 1: Compact city regeneration infill, Newcastle Upon Tyne, UK (Source: Newcastle City & Gateshead Councils, 2015)

Figure 2 – Polycentric linear 'Precinct' approach to Newcastle city centre renewal (Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036)