

Leone Lorrimer, February 2018

# An Activity Based City: The Future for Newcastle?

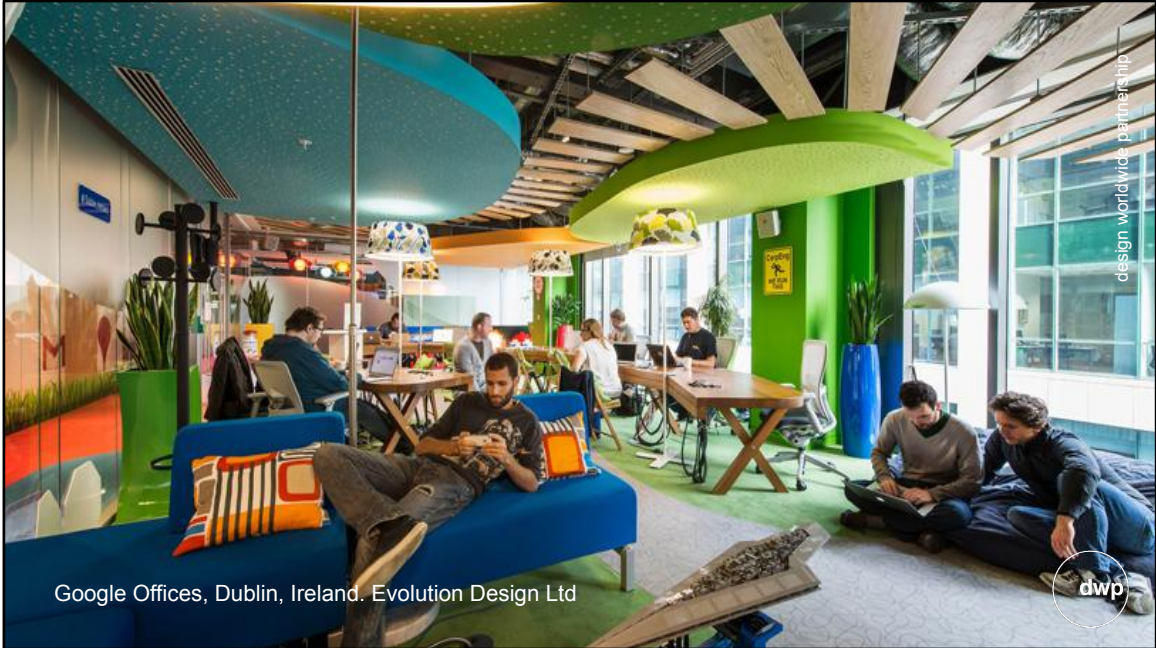
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Today we are talking about cities, and more specifically Newcastle, and how we might be shaped them in the future.

Do we continue to develop the places in which we live, work and play in regimented silos

Or can we look at models of successful adaptation in today's flexible, digital environment and apply these lessons at the urban scale?



Activity Based Work methodologies, have transformed how we think and act in our workplace, and what we consider to be our workplace.

Together with new technologies, we choose how, when and where we work.

Successful businesses still have a clear brand objective, competent delivery, and a recognition of value.

But transactional 9 to 5 workplaces have been replaced by agile, collaborative places that are not owned, but shared; and by cloud-based work practices with flexible communication that is not regimented by fixed timeframes.

## Your office is where you are

Philip J. Stone and Robert Luchetti

Imagine what it would be like to have an office space that is not only comfortable but also one that you can move around in. It would be like a living room where you can sit on the floor, stand up, or move around as you please. It would be like a living room where you can sit on the floor, stand up, or move around as you please. It would be like a living room where you can sit on the floor, stand up, or move around as you please.

This situation, like any other, is not a given. It is a result of the choices we make. It is a result of the choices we make. It is a result of the choices we make. It is a result of the choices we make. It is a result of the choices we make.

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## In view of more participative cultures and increased use of electronic equipment, current office designs may make it harder to get work done

At Hewlett-Packard, a company long committed to open office spaces, the corporate motto is "no cubicles." At Digital Equipment, another company with open offices, many department managers allow staff to check out portable terminals and work from home.

At Xerox, an executive dismissed with a pension plan that has prevented access to computers with a few associates because he is far from his own office and has no way to receive a conference room, he comments that current office leaving the typical occupant standing in the hallway.

These examples illustrate how current office designs in the 1980s might cause our office work environment to change. At Hewlett-Packard and DEC, for instance, employees are doing work that requires intense concentration and yet they are in open offices, using computer terminals. At Xerox, the executive who is "managing by walking around" has moved his own office to a conference room to get away from the distractions of the open office.

How can managers enjoy the advantages of the open office as well as the quiet and privacy of the closed office? How can they wonder about the building without losing the convenience of being at their own desks? In this article, we challenge the customary ways of thinking about office and the design challenges that arise. We also explore and evaluate the design challenges of the new technologies. Managers can improve physical layout, design, and communication to support organizational objectives that:

## From workstations to activity settings

The premise of the activity settings approach is that one place is not a purpose workstation for people. One longer office, instead, people need multiple workspaces. Each activity setting occupies a limited range of activities rather than all of the things a person or work does. The specialized settings span the variety of office activities rather than being a single point. For example, for some tasks people need to be included and participate, but for others they need quiet to think things through. They often need access to specialized resources, but at certain times a pencil and paper are the best tools of all. An under-charge, employees move to various specialized activity settings. This movement through the office is not only in hourly and makes jobs more interesting but also encourages participation in all core company groups.

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relational data management, dynamic displays, or production using low production machines. Whether more specialized pieces of equipment will lead to a more specialized specification of office space is a matter of whether equipment operators will be assigned to the position where an office workstation is a more efficient place to work.

The accuracy of these specifications, however, depends on the evolving situation, not just on expectations from past traditions. When the Mead Corporation, for example, introduced its computerized data on legal matters, called LEGAL, a computerized data base, as a traditional in-law research, clients would be the primary users. But both business LEGAL was so convenient and because lawyers could easily check out various versions of investigation that a clerk might overlook, they started to use the data base themselves. With various pieces of equipment to do work, it is often faster, less expensive, and more productive for one person to handle a more task than to bring a team of people standing in line and try to do each other's work.

Most important, when each office workstation is free on its own to do all purpose work, the organization can begin to resolve the dilemma of providing both privacy and participation. Even in a good, open environment such as Frank Lloyd Wright's Le Corbusier, the headquarters for Exhibit 1, it is still nearly impossible for them to do work that requires concentrated attention in their workstations.

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When position no longer means place. Attending the idea that fills a position is not simply occupying one physical place. One can attend to this equation even when it is no longer just a chair. Over and over again, managers appear content to see an optimal office space with their present assigned tasks, support equipment, and tasks. In fact, at the limits of this kind of thinking, the modern office:

## Office expectations

EmpLOYEE INFLECTION. Reasoning people in different work teams and study groups. Provide many employees access to specialized equipment. Minimize individual activity and mobility. Define payoffs from innovative and Attain talented employees. Increase productivity while reducing office costs.

Office environments aren't course one particular activity, they can support course functions which, including others. Already in some companies, "task" groups composed of people from facilities management, human resources, office automation, engineering, health, and design are contributing ideas to create office environments that will lower turnover, reduce absenteeism, increase productivity, and improve patient health care. The approach we propose is a move from situation B to situation C.

Competitive in the long run. One concern is not with the paper-pushing back office which is likely to decline as more transactions become electronic or the small office or self-contained mini-organization which does more logistical problems with immediate face-to-face communication but with the large, dense network office. The three drawings in Exhibit 1, A, B, and C, represent the back office, the networked office, and the dense work office. The approach we propose is a move from situation B to situation C.

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even though their managers may be unable to draw on the front-end staff person from which company for each task. The people in a mini-organization usually work within sight of each other with everyone aware of the activities of the group and able to cover for one another when the client calls. Even if personal attention is suboptimal, labor is economically not top. The mini-organization reduces the logistical difficulties of coordinating members widely separated in a large organization. The question is how managers in large offices can pool their resources so that the best talent is available for each task and still maintain a visible office. The more the arrangement of office space helps management coordinate its activities, the more managers are likely to have advantages that pool resources better than making the company more competitive in the long run.

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## Cubicleland reconsidered

When you work less in an office building today is a question of whether you'll find closed offices or open, partitioned landscaping. Even computers in the same business, such as IBM and DEC, have different office environments. IBM's Park Ridge office is a network of partition-based systems and new office buildings are regularly staffed with cubicles. Hasn't this trend continued in the long run?

Where did this mass of partitioned cubicles come from? Work space modifications typically claim that the high cost depreciation write-offs allowed for partition components and the fact that cubicles and the higher costs of partitioning small rooms account for some of its popularity. But although these factors may be influential, the way people think about office today has historical roots.

Many large advertising, law, engineering, research, architecture, and consulting firms, for instance, have a choice of either to support more mini-organizations to serve as individual client or product or to pool the entire office talent and skills. Mini-organizations offer the advantage of a small office, which is able to process as many as 100,000

## Alternative Workplace Strategies

The idea of activity based working was first highlighted in the Harvard Business Review in 1985 in a seminal article called "Your office is where you are". Stone and Luchetti proposed "alternative workplace strategies" or "alternative officing" concepts.

Encouraging flexible working environments, even working from a cafés or from home, office workers could be mobile, coming together for teamwork in programmed spaces or working in spaces designed for focused individual work.



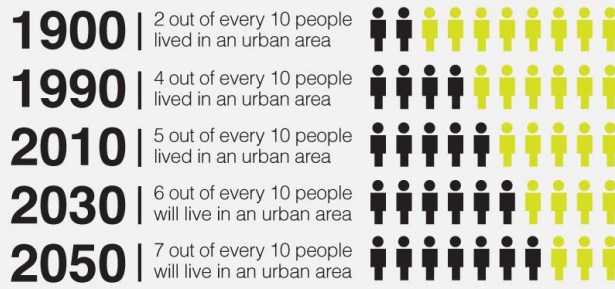
Challenging the status quo of 'cubicle farms, Activity Based Working took another 30 years to catch on.

The authors were visionary, but how much more visionary do we need to be today in a tidal wave of change, driven by voice activated technologies and artificial intelligence. The one constant in change is that we are all human.



Sub-urban sub-divisions remind me of those cubicle farms. I certainly hope it doesn't take 30 years to re-imagine our planning frameworks and achieve human centred communities.

## Urbanization



Defined by UN HABITAT as a city with a population of more than 10 million

Over 85% of Australians live in urban areas; nearly 70% live in Capital Cities.



These are the big facts:

1. We are urbanising.
2. We are developing buildings that no longer suit the purposes for which they were designed, due to the rapidly changing way in which we work, live and play.
3. And our environment cannot sustain simply building more and more and consuming more and more.

So, what are the lessons that we have learned with the advent of Activity Based Working that we can successfully apply to the re-imagining of our cities?



Foreshore House, Sydney, Australia

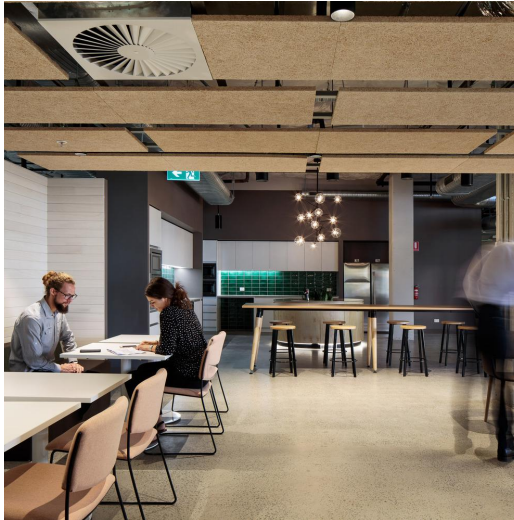
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## Learnings from Activity Based Working

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- People do different things at different times, so need different settings
- The better the tech infrastructure the better the communication
- The more effective the work practices, the less time and resources are wasted

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## Learnings from Activity Based Working

From	To
Owned Space	Shared Space
Set Times	Flex Times
Siloed	Collaborative

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We are moving from:

- Owned space to shared space
- Set times to flex time and
- Siloed to collaborative





What has this got to do with Newcastle?

Cities are drivers of wealth, accounting for 80% of GDP, producing intellectual and service outputs.

Given their scale, cities operate as nation states or large corporations.

Their survival will depend on their ability to develop sustainably and to have clear brand recognition in terms of lifestyle and employment opportunities.



The result of our approach to town planning is that jobs are not where people live, and people can no longer afford to live where the jobs are.

In the case of the Broadmeadow Sports Precinct and the Showground, large swathes of public amenity are largely underutilised for the majority of the time, and key pieces of transport infrastructure are not capitalised upon by population concentration.



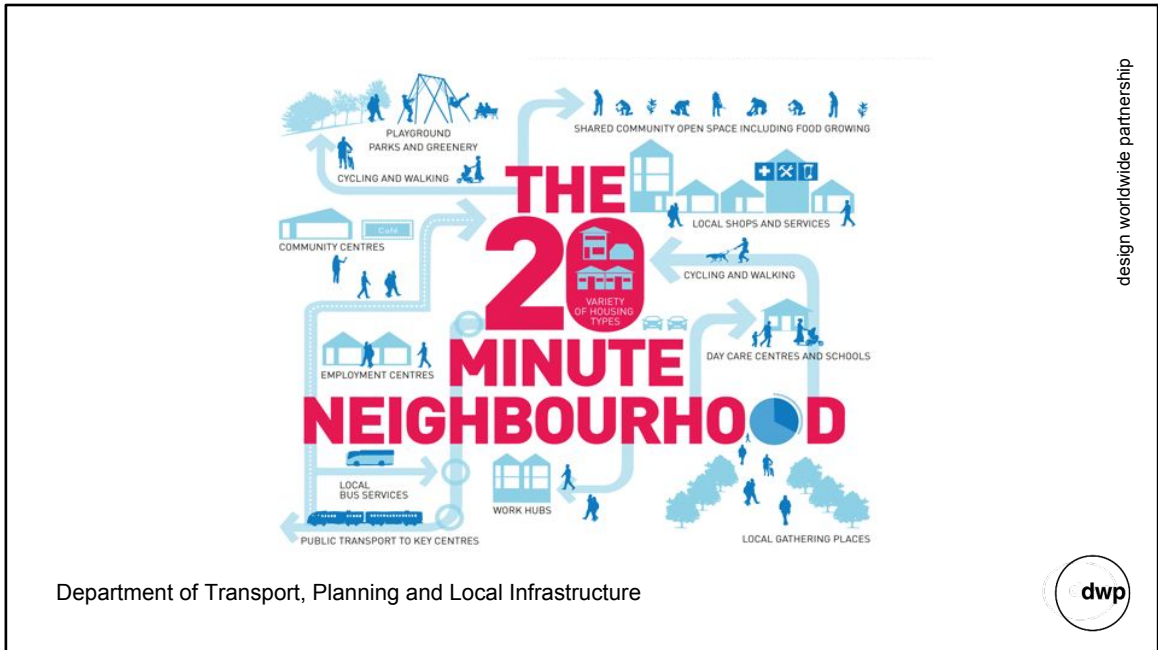
Showground Site

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However, if we were to repeat a typical inner suburb lot layout to the Showground site, we would increase population concentration, potentially an additional 320 new homes, to the detriment of amenity, and retention of significant cultural heritage. The perceived density of the area would be regarded as low by virtue of the height scale of houses but would lack any intensity of activity that could drive the economic fortunes of the broader city.



The ideal framework for a successful city considers how people connect with each other effectively, to create a vibrant community that:

- Uses space and assets 24 x 7
- Is an intellectual, cultural and economic powerhouse
- Is physically and mentally healthy
- Comprises close knit communities



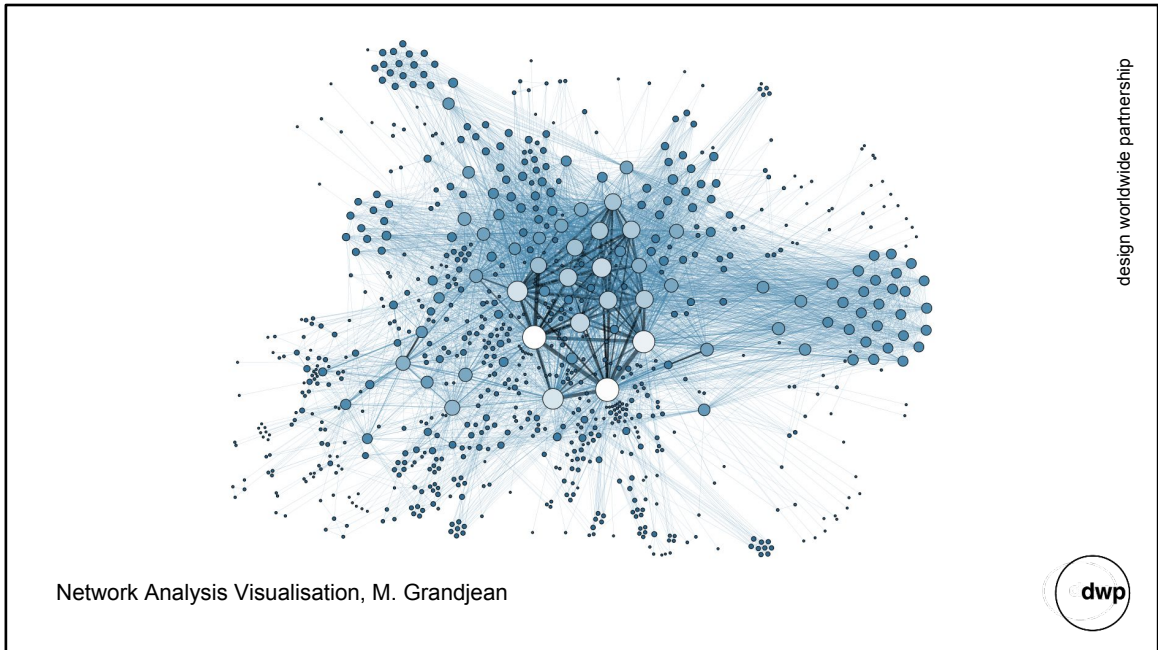
Newcastle, it seems, needs more than unparalleled lifestyle and affordability to attract investment and encourage migration.

A successful 'Greater Newcastle' should be a combination of 20 Minute Neighbourhoods. And job opportunities will be critical in the marketing of the region as the location of choice for businesses and their staff.

A brand that encompasses the broad cross-section of sectors that are currently operate regionally and recognition of the Newcastle Smart City Program, leads me to suggest that the Brand Identity of Newcastle is in "Innovation".



As Newcastle transitions from an industrial city to one which is broadening its employment opportunities in the tech, digital and advanced manufacturing industries, who interacts with who, and how can that interaction can create new opportunities becomes a driver in the way we develop.



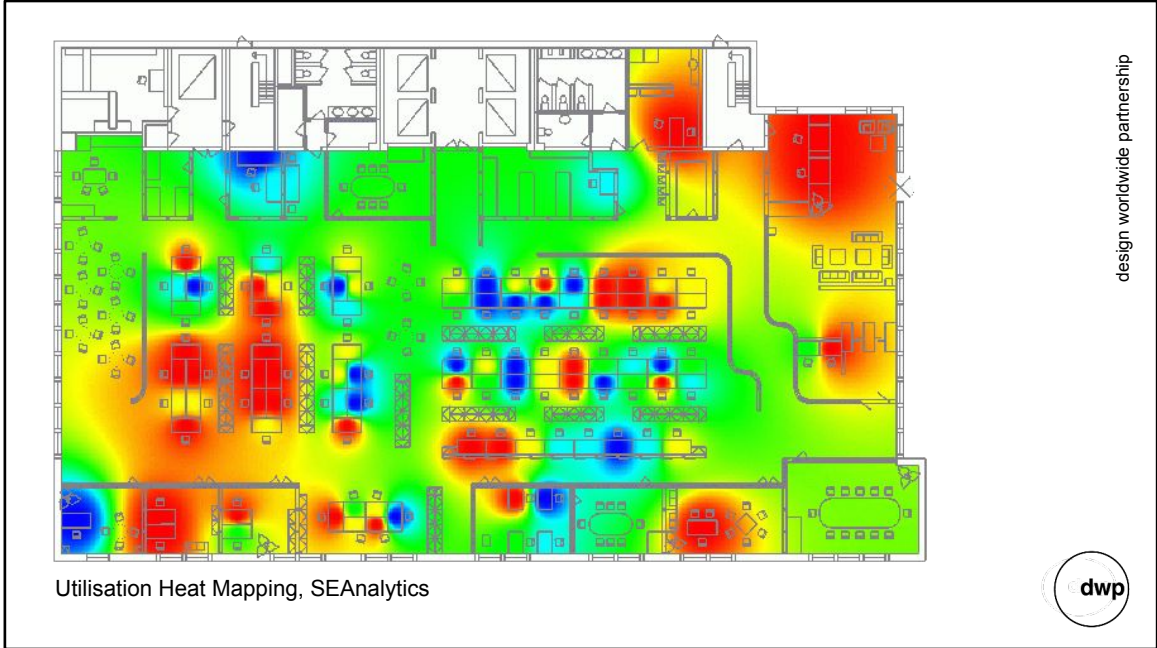
This is a map of connections within an organisation. The dots are work groups and the lines joining them are episodes of collaboration between individuals. In Activity Based Working we use mapping like this to better understand the interactions within an organisation to better plan offices, and even to manipulate desired social interaction between departments that might benefit from a closer relationship.

So what if we were to imagine each dot as an industry interaction (between logistics, sport, education, medical, agriculture, manufacturing and so on) what clues can be deduced to better arrange the city to live life more effectively, and drive economic success through collaboration?

Is there a link, for example, between the creative, logistics and construction industries that could innovate the prefabrication sector by connecting the dots between port, industrial land and delivering modular building elements by rail directly to site? Could this be the revolution that takes Transport Oriented Development to its next logical step?

There are countless possibilities that arise out of collaboration in the workplace, and these are multiplied when we expand the idea out to how we live our lives, not just how we get work done.





In the same way, most places we go to operate for limited hours and limited days – perhaps as low as 40% effective use. Indeed time utilisation maps such as this allows designers to assess spatial efficiency by time in the workplace. By blurring the boundaries of ownership ‘from mine to ours’ and overlaying concepts drawn from the ‘shared economy’ it is possible to access physical spaces more effectively and work them harder over time.

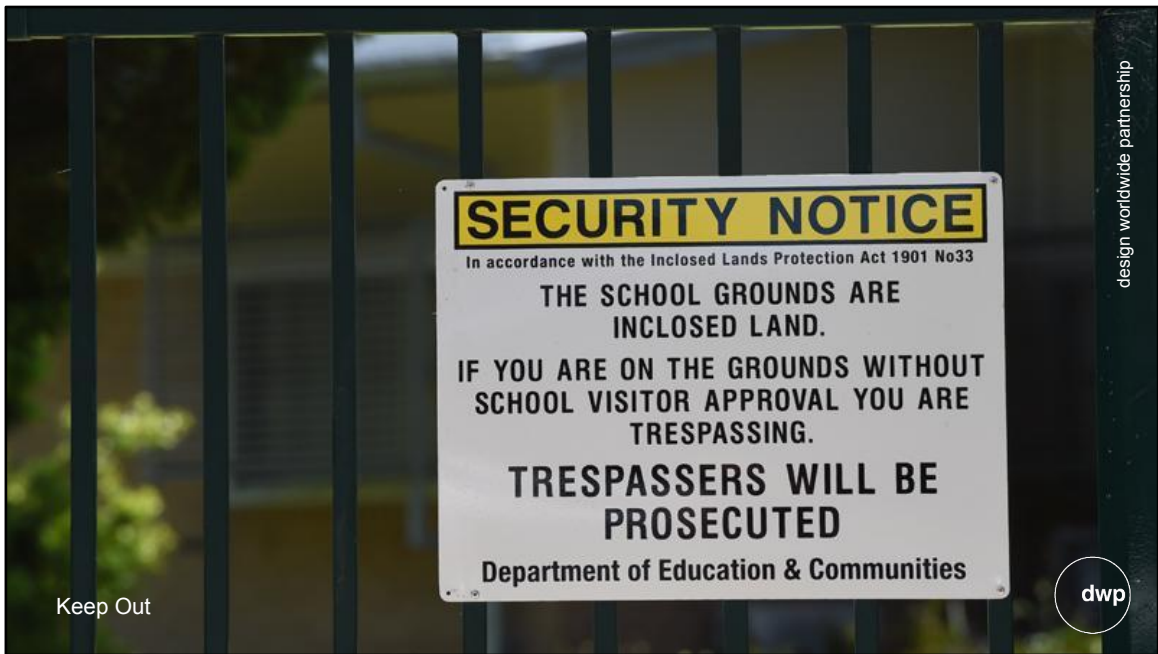
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# Showground Hypothetical



dwp undertook a hypothetical exercise that imagines repurposing the showground as a dynamic destination with multiple functions in one vibrant block. Proximity to transport infrastructure, social infrastructure specifically in the form of a primary school, and a gateway address to the inner city offers the potential to trial an innovative mix of offerings that can bolster Newcastle's brand as Innovation Capital of Australia, and lead to other centres of focussed development.

Building owners are waking up to the need to explore new models of asset ownership. They are already looking at greater diversity of income streams, from dedicated leases, to club-like shared facilities and even income by use based on a time increment of as little as an hour, why not apply that on a larger scale?



Schools open their gates at 8:30am and close them back up 7 hours later, leaving valuable sporting and education assets underutilised. Yet the Government struggles to meet demand and diversity of facilities because of budget constraints.



Imagine if, in the case of Hamilton North Public school seen here to the north of the showground site, the shared use of a repurposed showground as playspace and sporting field could allow for better utilisation of the school's land for an increased number of learning spaces that could be time shared after school hours with TAFE or some other community function.



Introduction of facilities on the showground site could include childcare and a library which further allows for the common services to be shared with school children, and the greater public. Could we push this idea further?



How can the growing 'Seniors' population contribute to better utilisation?  
Intergenerational living used to be common place in our society, but planning frameworks drove residential villages to the outskirts of our cities, creating dislocation from families, friends and things familiar. Wouldn't it be a better solution to collocate schools, libraries, parks and seniors housing within a larger community campus?



You can create a socially dynamic place that reduces duplication of spaces and allows for the ‘uberisation’ of education and childcare. What if retirees could, by virtue of proximity, offer tuition in fields they excelled in during their working lives? The simple ability to offer after school care for the hour or two until parents finish work doesn’t simply assist in land use efficiency it enables a segment of our society to re-engage and become an integral part of the community again. In our hypothetical a vertical seniors development with integrated care and independent living units allows for an aging in place model to be enhanced with shared lobbies, a library and childcare facilities at the ground plane, immediately adjacent a repurposed showground for sport and recreation, and the Hamilton North Public School.

And there are many other new combinations of functions that can challenge the way we view our cities.



As we densify and continue to expand vertically, it's not just the lobbies of our commercial buildings that are incorporating retail and F+B offerings, we are continuing to find that the ground floors of apartment buildings are incorporating a café, some retail or some other commercial outcome. Furthermore, large commercial landlords are creating clubs for their tenants who can share expensive facilities, rather than own the themselves.





With the rise of entrepreneurial startups and co-working hubs we imagine that the home office of the future becomes upper level apartments with shared workspaces in a collaborative ground floor tenancy.



Innovation is often the product of collaboration, so promoting a greater level of interaction in shared workspaces along with conventional office space allows for depth of commercial tenancy outcomes that are co-located with dwellings.



Central to a broader community benefit, and a key attractor for the region would be a multifunctional entertainment space. Integrated with retail, carparking and an adjacent hotel, bookending the sports and entertainment precinct, with the stadium to the west and an entertainment centre to the east allows for better utilisation through mixed use activation and the potential for interstitial development between the two activity nodes at either end of the precinct. A generous forecourt offers an address to the entertainment centre, hotel and indeed the showground site as a whole.



Permeability throughout the site, activated by smaller interventions, including the adaptive reuse of some existing buildings such as the grandstands, allows for small enterprises to flourish and events such as the farmers markets to continue in more permanent structures, and indeed become a more accessible way of marketing our region's producers.



Importantly, the Showground's location, allows for an integrated carparking asset to be located adjacent a rail station, and as shown here in the background, a potential extension of the light rail, enabling park and ride solutions to a growing traffic congestion problem, and access to the wider sporting precinct.



What happens to our carparks when the rise of Uber and car sharing options like GoGet alters our reliance on car ownership and private car parking? Coupled with improved public transport systems and a future of driverless cars as close as a decade away, we will be presented with the opportunity to repurpose carparking real estate. Above ground carparking could easily convert to workplace or even residential if planned for correctly in the 'Day 1' form of the structure.

As demonstrated, development opportunities need not be constrained to single function precincts. A variety of outcomes are possible though the identification of needs, and exploration of synergistic relationships.

The strategic goals or sub-brands within a city will differ according to location, environment, and speciality, there are however key factors for success in the Activity Based City that remain the same.

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## Key Factors of the Activity Based City

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- **Proximity** to everything you need and want in a time poor world
- **Variety** of places and activities for full life, and whole-of-life settings
- **Flexibility** for sustainable change
- **Bump factor** serendipitous and planned connectivity to the community
- **Environmental performance** where light, ventilation and outlook are ensured
- **Experimentation** through testing of new ideas within a sound supporting system
- **Diversity** of personalities, cultures and beliefs
- **Experiences** including events, fairs, entertainment and educational
- And importantly it must be **Curated** through governance structures.



- **Proximity** acceptable time management in time poor world
- **Variety** of places and activities for full life, and whole-of-life settings
- **Flexibility** for sustainable change
- **Bump factor** serendipitous and planned connectivity to the community
- **Environmental performance** where energy, water, light, ventilation and outlook are ensured
- **Experimentation** to ensure testing of new ideas within a sound supporting system
- **Diversity** of personalities, cultures and beliefs
- And importantly it must be **Curated** through governance structures.

The world is changing, and yet we persevere with a planning and development model within our cities that is failing to appreciate this change and the speed at which it is coming. By establishing a clear brand and strategy for development through the adoption of ABW Methodologies, Newcastle can attract and consolidate growth in a sustainable way.



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Thank you

