



The Multi-versity¹: New Roles and new Rules for Greater Sydney's Universities in Urban Revitalisationⁱ

Greater Sydney from Newcastle to Wollongong is being planned for the next 30-50 years. This is not the first and probably not the last plan for this great City and its surrounding region. Governor Macquarie had a plan for the new colonial community. His approach to building a fledgling community lasted for nearly a century until the Cumberland Plan in 1945. Plans from Macquarie to this day are no more than guides or sets of directions that are meant to project a future for a place based on the best information of the time. Land and its uses were the foundation of Governor Macquarie's plan to guide the fledgling colonial town. But the Governor's very reliable land use base for his plans can no longer be taken as the basic or only base for a good city or regional plans today. Land use is only one aspect for setting direction for new urban metropolitan global regions.

Until the 1970's most planning and plans rested on the segregation of land uses — factories and shops separated from houses and schools etc. In both agricultural and manufacturing eras it was believed that separation of uses was efficient for business and healthy for residential communities. Suddenly the very premise of this form of planning is challenged because the basic production unit is no longer the land or the factory but creative human knowledge. Thus, the central focus of plans and planning is on people and not just land. Land remains important in this new focus but a new planning vocabulary is emerging that places human intelligence and creativity as the central ingredient in plan making. It is in this context that the role of the university is transformed as a new and critical engine of the new economy and not merely the developer of talent for existing firms or the custodian of the past.

¹ The term Multi-versity was coined by Clark Kerr President of the University of California's Ten Campus System from 1958-1967.

Universities will increasingly play important direct roles in the revitalisation of the regions economy. I argue that these new roles transform the university into a multi-verity. That is an organisation that includes not only the development and transmission of new knowledge but taking a direct hand in the revitalisation of urban communities across the greater metropolitan region. This is not to say that the Vice Chancellors of our universities or that many university academics in the Sydney region are not conscious of the need to become more directly involved in their communities. However the current reward structures for university faculties and for the institutions continue to place a premium on producing scholarships along with transferring knowledge to industry without similar resources or clear means to become involved in the new role of urban place making.

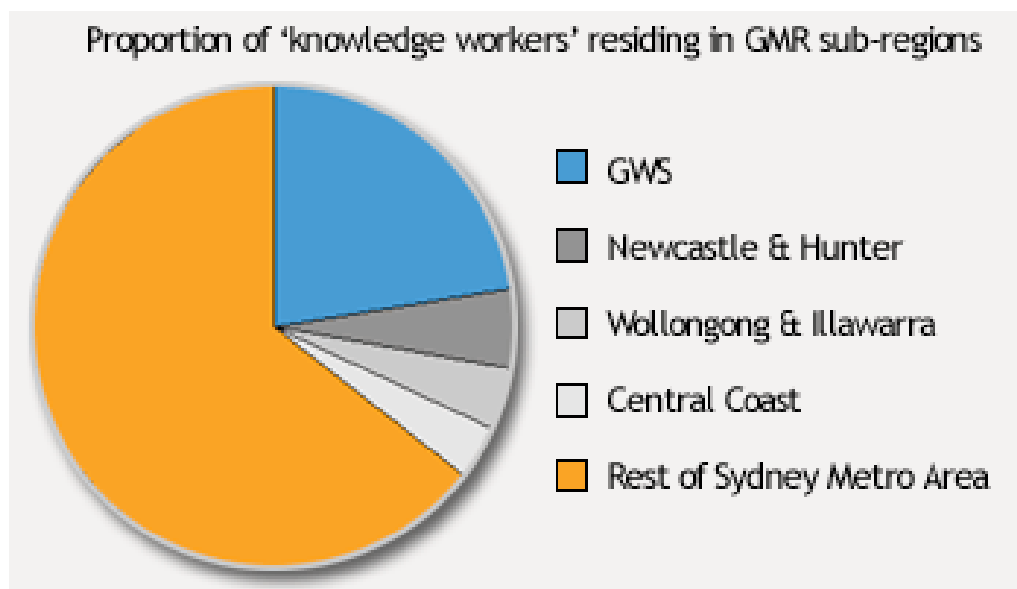
The University located in the City vs. the City University

There is a long history of Municipal Universities in the United States. Just after the Civil War a Congressional Act (The Morrill Act, 1863) established the Land Grant Colleges and Universities that were dedicated to the mission of modernizing farms and communities in every state of the union. This network of universities now includes some of the most prestigious institutions of higher learning in the world such as UC Berkeley, Michigan, Wisconsin and Penn State. From the beginning these universities established programs to improve rural communities and city life. But few of them were located in big cities. As a result, the municipal governments of New York, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh and other big cities established their own competitive universities with a focus on making the city a better place and in a sense advancing the science of urban living. Over the years these city based universities took on genuine city missions and began to see themselves as important instruments in city life and civic renewal. As US central cities faltered in the late 60s and 70s these institutions, frequently became state operated but with a deeper mandate to transform the central city. In some cases these were private institutions like the University of Southern California and the University of Chicago, located near deteriorating downtowns these institutions took on the goal of transforming city center areas. Now, the role of both public and private universities in inner city renewal is well recognized by every level of US government. As these universities have taken on very hard core urban missions they have also become the catalyst and incubators for the new knowledge economy. In a very important sense these universities are not merely located in the heart of the city, they are now major instruments for transforming the very urban based

knowledge economy—thus they are not just in the city, they are a new economic resource for cities. New York cities biggest economic resource and largest employer is not finance but medicine and education just as it is in Los Angeles, Chicago and San Francisco, Pittsburgh, Barcelona and London. So, universities and their spin offs are primary resource for most global cities both directly and indirectly.

University as Economic Resource

Sydney’s core economy is knowledge intensive. Over a quarter of the nation’s GDP pass through greater Sydney. The depth and breadth of Sydney’s creative economy is mind boggling. Sydney’s main business is producing, storing, re-organising information and creating knowledge laden products and services. As the knowledge economy grows universities, university leadership becomes as critical to our economic survival as any cluster of business, perhaps more so.



Source: DIPNR 2004 (GWS=Greater Western Sydney)

While it is easy to see the university role in producing new graduates and importing foreign students as a component of the economy, it is not so easy to see the university as an urban renewal agent. However, increasingly universities like MIT and Boston University along with the University of Pennsylvania and scores of other city based universities are taking active roles as community developers across the United States and now in Europe as well. The reasons universities are becoming involved in civic renewal is that they want

to both protect and expand their roles in the new economy by transforming the space for the emerging knowledge engine.

The Revitalisation Roles of the University

The physical urban landscape of the university with links to the city heart and surrounding communities is increasingly important to all city universities for several reasons. First is the milieu factor. A good deal of urban science is indicating that the physical organisation of space around universities and not merely the presence of tech parks are important to the development of new enterprises near the universities. No one can say exactly why this is so but there is mounting evidence that university investments in the physical and social space on their peripheries increases new business formation. An exceptionally good and graphic illustration of this principle is the remarkable transformation at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. President Ann Rudin and her team has altered the physical space around the campus with new buildings ranging from bookstores to supermarkets with community support and altered the area on the campus border from a scary derelict precinct to one of the city's most attractive neighborhoods. This change acts as a magnet for young creative talent that is rebuilding the blighted neighborhood and creating new jobs for the formerly unemployed and under-employed local residents. Other US urban universities like Pittsburgh have taken similar missions with excellent results for the campus community and for the local disadvantaged neighbours.

Second, university engagement is not only in the physical environment. The University of Southern California (USC) has taken on the role of rebuilding its neighborhood by becoming a partner in seven local schools. The University is the primary resource for these schools in almost every aspect of education including Saturday Schools for the children and English language for the parents. USC offers a free guaranteed scholarship for every child who completes year 12 with university level passing marks as long as the parents participate in adult education programs too. USC runs cadetships for local children in its various administrative units to motivate these youngsters to stay in school and stay out of trouble.

It is easy to understand any major urban university protecting its property investments and building new loyal entrepreneurs but most of these city universities are far more directly involved in civic leadership than that. Many city universities offer bonuses and special

incentives to insure staff live in the central city areas to seed talent pools in local neighbourhoods. These programs are altering formerly depressed neighbourhoods in Chicago, Oakland, Washington DC and other cities. Seeding these neighborhoods with young professionals has been a boom to many communities along with the problems that come from gentrification. But no one wants to turn back the clock in these areas so the universities are introducing affordable rental, leasing and community equity schemes with the help of Fannie Mae to provide opportunities for local residents to remain in their communities as home owners, renters as the neighborhoods improve.

Community improvements have to reach beyond the campus to enrich the total civic environment. Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada has established a downtown education centre in central Vancouver that extends the day in a former run down neighborhood which has been a boom for new residential investment as well as restaurants and other community amenities. Many universities are seeing the advantages of moving key institutional activities into formerly distressed neighborhoods such as arts complexes as key re-starters for these neighbourhoods eg the Film Archive Center of the University of California at Riverside serves as a catalyst for downtown renewal in a mid sized city near LA.

Finally, universities are pioneers in some neighborhoods spurring other private investment to overlooked areas with unique assets on the spine of the urban transportation network. As many US planners have discovered it is not enough to promote new mixed use of commercial shops on the ground floors and residents above in distressed communities. There is a need for magnet institutions to be placed in these communities such as regional arts, science or similar facilities. The Lawrence Berkeley Environmental Science Labs on the edge of a depressed area in Oakland, California brings university and government officials from around the world to its offices with ancillary attraction of new restaurants and new housing proposed to serve the area along with new business queuing up to locate near this science hub. Very simply put no distressed community will attract new economic activity until it is made attractive by some form of magnet economic entity that the rest of the region, the nation or the world needs. Thus, university centres located off the campus in critical neighborhoods that have the transportation and other resources in them create the right mixture for real urban renewal with new good jobs for local residents. Obviously,

the university and the state government have to be partners in these relocations or new locations as well as engaging training or retraining the local workforce for the new jobs.

In my examination of the research on University urban renewal efforts, I found that that these university community renewal approaches have several things in common. They all recognize the new role of the university as an economic and social agent. Furthermore they view the entire metropolitan area as their campus and not just their current university holdings. In each case, the university partners with public and private enterprises and takes a holistic approach to engagement with the community. While universities take risks, they do so usually with government support or acknowledgement. Moreover, university academic staffs are rewarded by advancement for participation in these urban pioneering efforts as an adjunct to usual scholarly publications. Finally, a senior level person with academic credentials and community know-how leads these efforts.

Directions for Sydney's Universities, the State and National Governments

Urban revitalisation is critical to the future of Sydney. Most of the population increases we will experience will come from local youngsters growing up and starting new families, combined with migration from other states and modest international immigration along with the ageing of the existing population.

The key to servicing population is a new planning process to harness the human resources in the existing communities we already have with modest new community building. These human resources in good knowledge resourced communities will generate our new economic activity on the existing land base. We can increase their productivity by improving the livability and the economic viability of our neighborhoods. Balancing job growth in the existing neighborhoods of Central Sydney, the inner ring suburbs, the Western suburbs, the Illawara and the Hunter along with improving our suburban land use pattern is critical to the success of the region.

We are blessed in Sydney with a remarkable set of high quality universities with exceptional faculties. Our Sydney universities will continue to produce good scholarship and good students from the region and abroad. We must expand our university missions as economic engines for the revitalisation for the total community. In the next decade our universities can and must find ways to place new projects and programs in the fabric of the

existing communities not just on their main campuses. We need our universities across the region from Wollongong to Newcastle to lead urban renewal efforts by assigning a senior level Pro Vice Chancellor to assist in the development of new active investment roles in affordable housing, community education, arts and community creative enterprise formation near and far from the central campus settings. For our universities to play these new risky roles we will need active State and Commonwealth support similar to the US University-City Partnership schemes that provide financial and government involvement in such ventures.

Sydney's future is as a Learning Region that leaves no one behind as we reach our global ambition—that's the plan and strategy that will take us to the 22nd century. Our universities hold the keys to this strategy.

ⁱ This article is based in the Professorial Address of Professor Edward J. Blakely on August 17, 2004 at the Great Hall at the University of Sydney. He is the incoming chair of urban and regional planning at the University of Sydney and Chair of the Reference Panel guiding Sydney's Urban Strategy for Minister Craig Knowles of DIPNR. Professor Blakely is a Fellow of the US National Academy of Public Administration and has an international reputation in urban planning and he has served as an advisor on urban planning in major cities around the world including most recently New York City. He was a Presidential appointee of Bill Clinton as well as served as Chief Policy Advisor to two Mayors in Oakland, California as well as receiving a myriad of international awards for urban planning.