

Integrating interests: consumers-retailers-investors

Paper presented at European Real Estate Society Conference, Istanbul,
24th – 27th July 2015

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Introduction

- Retail sector underpins economic health (across spatial scales)
- Large-scale retail-led projects can help secure economic success/stability
- Retail sector: prolonged period of change, evolution and uncertainty
- Complex and changing decision-making environment
- Role of city centre is changing and being challenged
- Diverse stakeholders have complex interests and aspirations
- Aim: to develop a comprehensive yet accessible framework to explore the diversity of user groups and stakeholders, their relationships, aspirations and the environment within which they operate, to understand how outcomes are determined.

Changing Role

- Multifunctionalism
 - **Consumers**
 - shoppers, leisure users, workers, residents, drinkers, diners, community/voluntary groups, arts/culture users, tourists, socialisers, service users ...
 - Changing behavioural patterns
 - **Retailers**
 - Expansion/rationalisation, polarisation of markets, space requirements
 - Challenge of responding to changing consumer behavioural patterns
 - **Investors/developers**
 - Rationalisation of portfolios, changing opportunities for High Street “cash cow”
 - New generation(s) of in-town opportunities
- **Challenge:** to understand interests, aspirations, relationships (& tensions)

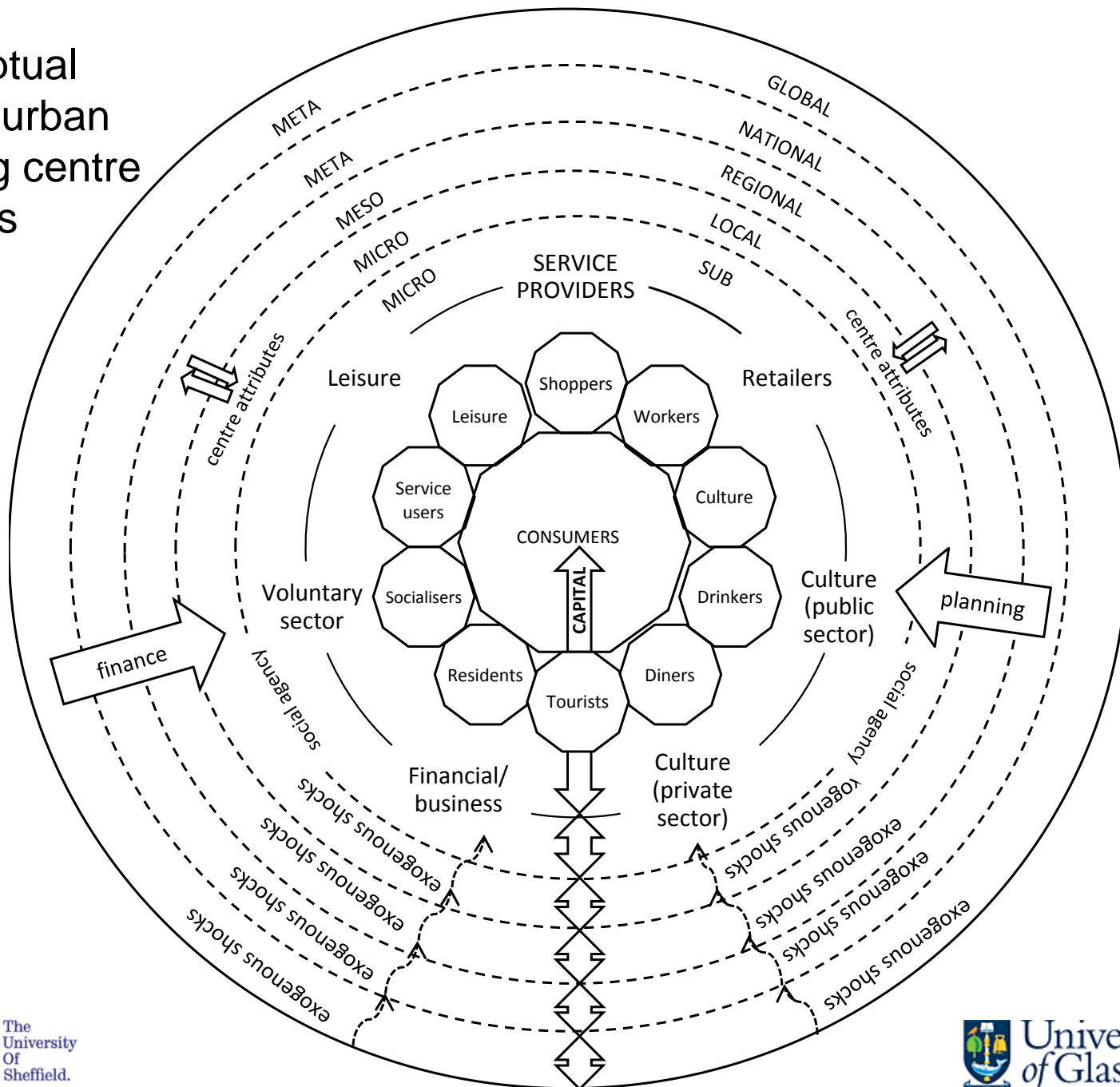
Retail Systems

- Multiple layers of (micro)sub-/ meso-/ meta-systems
 - Complex intra-/ inter-actions
 - Social and institutional structures
 - Social, economic and political groups ...
- Move away from holism versus individualism
- Aim: establish a conceptual framework
 - enable meaningful investigation of the dynamics of city centres
 - improve understanding of the relationships between individuals and organisations and their motivations
 - identify barriers and opportunities
 - offer recommendations for policies and practices; promote better understanding and interaction
 - facilitate greater city resilience

Components of a retail system

- Need to challenge assumption of uniform shoppers
 - Reilly's (1929, 1931) gravity model; Christaller's (1933) Central Place Theory
 - System theories: inter-urban; aggregated behaviours within urban economies
- Part of complex, larger, multi-dimensional urban systems
 - Beyond the retailing system (Wrigley and Dolega): national/regional economic systems
- Should reflect adaptive resilience of centres
 - Continuous process of (anticipatory/adaptive) change; equilibrium unlikely
 - Wrigley and Dolega (2011); Martin (2012)
- Agents: multi-scalar (in)actions, behaviours, relationships
 - Drive network mechanisms: conflict, complementarity
- Framework needed to investigate complexity and relationships

Conceptual model: urban retailing centre systems

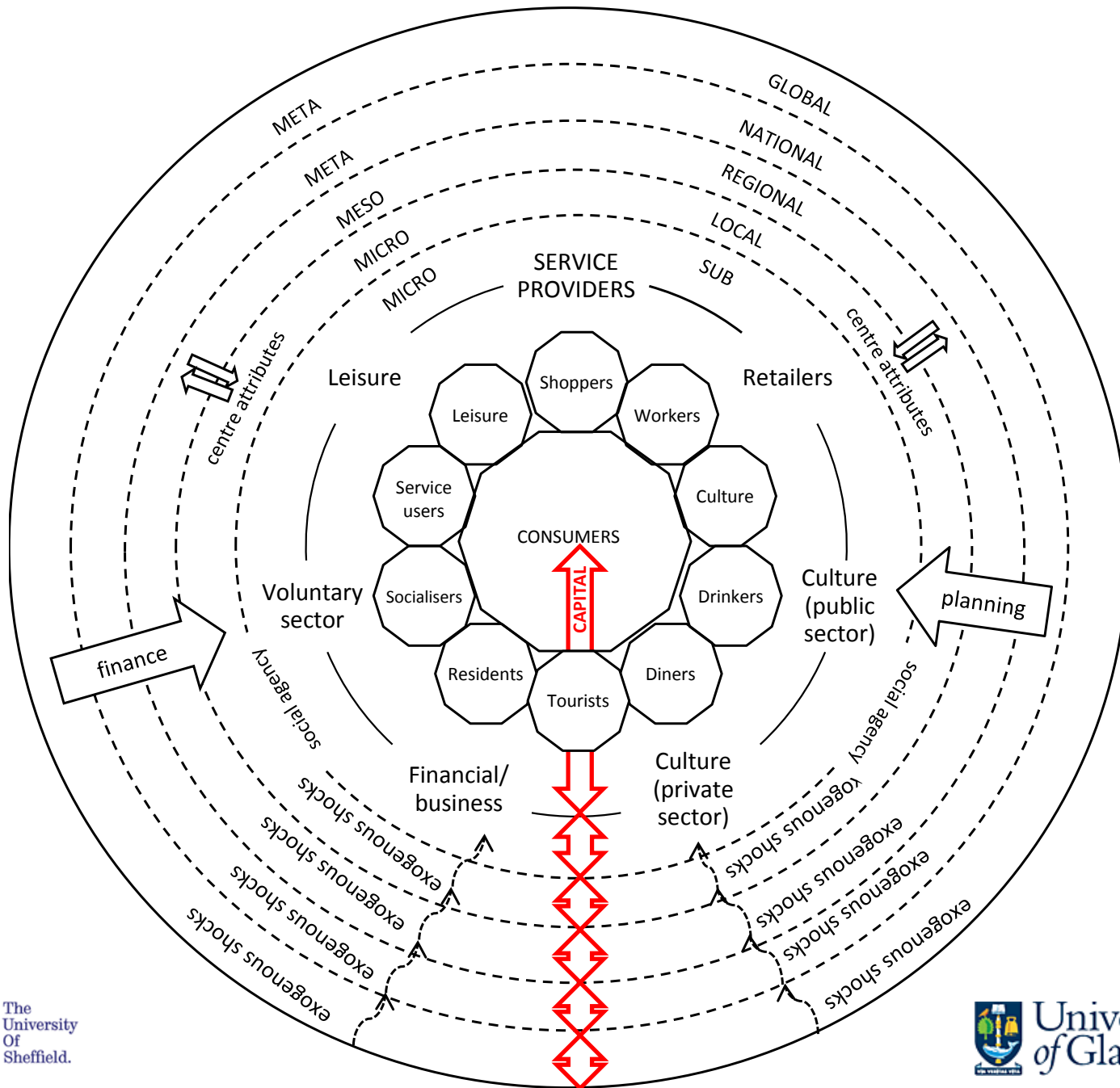


Challenges

- Framework enables robust and in-depth exploration of, for example:
 - Interests and aspirations of stakeholders:
 - Are their aspirations in common / in conflict?
 - Are they known / misunderstood?
 - How do they interact, what are their relationships?
 - The ways in which these interactions may:
 - Impact on behaviour, outcomes, responsiveness and resilience
 - Adaptation and renewal
 - Inclusivity and embeddedness
 - Networks, connectivity
 - Diversity (in all senses)
- Enhancing understanding of such complexity can inform policy
 - Benefit for all, including economic (and city centre) resilience

Developer-investors

- Role of capital. Seen as inert, but:
 - Encapsulates money, information, labour, goods ...
 - Flows into/ out of each system and sub-system ...
 - Underpins decision-making



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 - Underpins decision-making
- Local, regional, (inter)national, may function across many urban systems
- Well known financial drivers, multiple barriers. Go beyond, to explore:
 - What system factors are within decision-making? And how?
 - To what extent and how do they embed themselves into local system?
 - Does responsiveness depend on the strength of connection with local system?
 - How adaptable are they? Are practices/norms barriers to resilience?
 - Do networks and relationships within the retailing system help investors “work” assets and influence their performance?

Conclusion: need robust framework for meaningful investigations