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DOI:

[10.1177/0042098018820181](https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098018820181)

Document Version

Accepted author manuscript

[Link to publication record in Manchester Research Explorer](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Hodson, M., Froud, J., & Mcmeekin, A. (2019). State-rescaling and Re-designing the Material City-Region: Tensions of disruption and continuity in articulating the future of Greater Manchester. *Urban Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098018820181>

Published in:

Urban Studies

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Accepted for publication in *Urban Studies*

State-rescaling and Re-designing the Material City-Region: Tensions of disruption and continuity in articulating the future of Greater Manchester

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Abstract¹

In a context of globalisation, the emergence of city-regions and the politics and dynamics of their constitution has been debated for almost two decades. Recent writings have extended this focus to seeing city-regions as a geopolitical project of late capitalism where the state takes a critical role in the re-design of city-regions to make them amenable to international competition and to secure strategic inward investments in the built environment and infrastructure. We explore this issue in the context of state redesign of sub-national space in England and focus on Greater Manchester, as the de facto exemplar of 'devolution' to English city-regions. We argue that though re-scaling in Greater Manchester is a long-term historical process this has been punctuated by the UK state's process of 'devolution' since 2014. This has involved a re-design and formalisation of Greater Manchester's governing arrangements. It has also involved invoking a long dormant role for city-regional planning in articulating the future design of the material city-region over the next two decades as an attempt to formalise and continue a pre-existing, spatially selective, growth trajectory by new means. Yet, the disruption of new hard governing arrangements also provides challenges to that trajectory. This produces tensions between, on the one hand, the pursuit of a continuity politics of growth through agglomeration, material transformation of the city-region and narrow forms of urban governance and, on the other hand, a more disruptive politics of the future of the city-region, its material transformation and how it is governed. These tensions are producing new political possibilities and spaces in the transformation of Greater Manchester. The implications of this are discussed.

¹ ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Our colleague, Mick Moran, contributed to the ideas in this paper. Sadly, Mick died during the peer review process. We are grateful for Mick's wise contributions and acute insights but acknowledge that any errors or shortcomings in our argument are not down to him. Mick is much missed.

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Alliance Manchester Business School Strategic Research Investment Fund in the research on which this article is based.

1 Introduction

The emergence of city-regions and the politics and dynamics of their constitution has been debated for almost two decades (Scott, 2001ab; Jonas, 2013). Central to these debates have been the politics of space, the variety of city-regionalisms and the contingent politics and dynamics of their constitution. Or, to put it another way, in whose interests and to what end are city-regions shaped?

The pre-eminence of the city-region as paradigmatic to promoting sub-national economic competition has not been without contestation. A variety of new state spaces (Brenner, 2004) have been promoted from regions, to corridors and gateways. Variegated new spaces have also been produced as non-state spaces, promoted by coalitions of private interests (Harrison, 2014). These new - state and non-state - spaces have often been understood as 'soft', that is they are 'in-between spaces' of governance that exist outside, alongside or 'in-between' statutory scales of government (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2009). This provides the potential not only for a multiplicity of spaces to be produced but also a need for understanding the variable constitution of such spaces and the social interests that govern them.

If city-regionalism is often about promoting sub-national competition governed in soft spaces, this rubs up against the historical role of established 'hard' forms of governing in providing collective provision of social and physical infrastructure. The suggestion is that '[p]artly because of the relentless pace of change, these newly emerging metropolitan spaces are often reliant on inadequate urban-economic infrastructure and fragmented urban-regional planning and governance arrangements' (Harrison and Hoyler, 2014, p.2249). Recent writings have extended the view of city-regions as spaces to facilitate the building of agglomerations (Scott, 2001ab) to a focus on seeing city-regions as a geopolitical project of late capitalism (Jonas, 2013) where the state takes a critical role in the re-design of city-regions to make them amenable to international competition and to secure strategic inward investments in material developments and infrastructure.

How does such re-design happen and what material future is envisaged for the city-region through metropolitan planning? More specifically, how are governing arrangements and structures of the city-region re-designed with the aim of securing investments that reshape its material future; and to what extent do these new governing arrangements disrupt or represent continuity with existing arrangements? We address these questions in a context of a renewed round of state re-scaling in England that seeks to formalise city-regional structures and governing (Colomb and Tomaney, 2016; Tomaney, 2016; Pike et al, 2016). State interests striking deals with (often embryonic) city-regional authorities to 'devolve' powers to English city-regions 'represent[s] a new governmentalised remapping of state space' (Harrison, 2014).

In this paper we focus on Greater Manchester (hereafter, GM) as the de facto exemplar of 'devolution' to English city-regions, and as the place that is seen by national and city-regional political leaders and in wider public discourse as the 'leader' in developing formal city-regional structures (Haughton et al, 2016; Deas, 2014). In the smorgasbord of city-regional policies, initiatives and institutional frameworks in England (Harrison, 2012), GM is seen as the context for articulating and making visible state priorities in

‘devolving’ powers to city-regions. These priorities are primarily about positioning English sub-national spaces as competitive and amenable (Hodson et al, 2018), in a post-2007-8 world, to secure inward economic investment.

We argue that though re-scaling in GM is a long-term historical process (Deas, 2014) this has been punctuated by the UK state’s process of ‘devolution’ since 2014. This has involved a re-design and partial hardening of GM’s governing arrangements. It has also involved invoking a long dormant role for city-regional planning. In GM, spatial planning is being re-scaled to the city-regional scale (GMCA, 2016a) including a long-term (20 year) attempt to use spatial planning, through the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF). This incorporates newly formalised (i.e. ‘harder’) city-regional governing arrangements and, in its current form, promotes the future of the city-region as being based on property-led development. This implies that the state-promoted re-design of governing and spatial planning for the GM city-region is an attempt to formalise and continue a spatially selective, pre-existing growth trajectory by new means. Yet, the disruption of new governing arrangements provides challenges to that trajectory. We explore this, highlighting both the potential for a continuation of the existing trajectory, but also for the development of a new, alternative political configuration. This produces tensions between, on the one hand, the pursuit of a continuity politics of growth through agglomeration, material transformation of the city-region and narrow forms of urban governance and, on the other hand, a more disruptive politics of the future of the city-region, its material transformation and how it is governed. These tensions are producing new political possibilities and spaces in the transformation of GM.

In making this argument, our contribution to debates on city-regions is fourfold. First, we contribute to debates on the geopolitical role of city-regions. Second, we add to thinking around the politics of material transformation of city-regions and the dynamics of this. More specifically, we articulate tensions between the politics of a development-led growth coalition and the re-emergent voice of GM publics. Third, we engage with debates on the hybrid governance of city-regions. Fourth, we contribute to the literature on GM.

The paper is organised in four further sections. In the next section, we engage with the literature on city-regions to address how re-design of city-regions can be understood as facilitating spatial agglomerations and securing material transformation. The section highlights governance implications and sets out the focus of research. In section 3, we introduce GM as a lens through which to interrogate these issues. We situate GM in wider debates about state re-scaling in England, the historical development of GM as a city-region and recent efforts to shape its future by hardening city-regional governing arrangements and mobilising city-regional spatial planning. Section 4 discusses the implications of efforts to shape the future of the city-region. Three themes are developed, around disruption and continuity in governing in GM, re-designing the material city-region through spatial planning, and the potential that a re-emergent citizenry opens up for the future development of the city-region. Section 5 returns to the issue of the future shape of the city-region and presents conclusions.

2 Redesigning the 'exemplar' English city-region? Transforming governance and space

In this section we selectively engage with literature on city-regions over the last two decades. We make a distinction between how city-regions are understood, on the one hand, as spatial structures of capital accumulation and, on the other, as a state re-scaling response to the uneven development consequences of global, finance capitalism (Jonas, 2013). Though both lenses remain important there has been an increasing emphasis on the geopolitical role of city-regions as a state response to securing investment in the city-region. In the UK this has aligned with a long-standing process of experimentation - a 'trial-and-error search to find a new spatio-temporal fix for capitalism' (Harrison, 2012, p.1247) - with sub-national spatial organisation and governance. This has produced a new round of state-orchestrated re-scaling to city-regions (and other spatial units). To better understand this issue, we highlight how in England 'devolution' to city-regions has been promoted as a means of securing inward investment to address economic growth disparities between Greater London and other regions, and the ways in which new city-regions and governing arrangements are central to state strategy. Such state strategy, though, takes place not on a blank canvas but rather layers over pre-existing arrangements. We explore the relationship between a new state strategy for city-regions and existing arrangements and the implications of this for the future shape of the city-region, .

Constructing city-regions to facilitate spatial agglomerations

Debates around city-regions and metropolitan areas are not new though they were renewed in response to the crisis of the Fordist-Keynesian regime of accumulation (Jessop, 1994) from the 1970s. Relatively stabilised state-spatial arrangements were disrupted and experimentation with sub-national spatial organisation abounded. At various points in time and in different contexts, a multitude of spatial forms - including regions, cities, zones, corridors etc - new state spaces (Brenner, 2004) and also non-state spaces (Harrison, 2014) were experimented with in the search for a spatial fix for the crisis of accumulation (Harvey, 1981). From the late 1990s, the category 'city-region' was mobilised. This focus reflected post-Fordist economic organisation, which promoted more flexible economic specialisation (Amin, 1994); regional specialisations and agglomerations - notably, for example, in Silicon Valley, Baden-Wurttemberg, and Emilia-Romagna - were particularly celebrated. By the beginning of the 2000s, city-regions were 'widely recognised as key to economic and social revitalisation. In fact, orthodoxy has developed around the belief that city-region scaled spatial agglomerations are *the* pivotal social and political-economic formations in the era of globalised capital accumulation' (Harrison, 2014, p.2316, original emphasis).

Put simply, city-regions are expanded urban areas where proximate local government areas spatially coalesce to produce 'functional economic areas' (FEAs). The issue that follows is how city-regions should be organised. In particular, how should agglomerations - thick clusters of city-regionally specific economic activities - be facilitated and organised, with what role for economic development policy, and requiring what kinds of governance and institutions. A key point is that 'many regions are now faced with the choice of either passive subjection to external cross-border pressures, or active institution-building, policy-making, and outreach in an effort to turn globalization as far as possible to their advantage' (Scott, 2001a, p.817). Not only did this mean variety between city-regions but also labyrinthine relations within and

external to city-regions. The future shape of city-regions and the activity that was produced within their territories were increasingly seen to be underpinned by 'a search for structures of governance capable of securing and enhancing their competitive advantages in a rapidly globalizing economic order' (Scott, 2001a, p.821).

Constructing city-regions to secure material transformation

This view of city-regions as spaces of economic competitiveness has become a 'key paradigm' in academic debates and at the forefront of EU and national economic policies (Herschel, 2009). At the centre of such debates have been global city-regions (Scott, 2001ab), such as London and New York that are positioned as the command centres of the global economy (Sassen, 2001). Often overlooked in debates until the last decade is how second tier city-regions may relate to international circuits of capital accumulation (Harrison and Hoyler, 2014). The emphasis on 'endogenous' city-regional development of new spatial structures to promote agglomeration and competition still remains strong. That said, the geopolitical consequences of city-regions have become more prevalent in the literature, including the ways in which state strategy seeks to shape territorial organisation to connect to processes of global urbanisation (Brenner, 2013) and the role of state re-scaling to address these uneven geographical consequences for city-regions (Jonas, 2013).

Put another way, whilst agglomeration and the economic development motive for city-regions remains strong, 'a further consideration is how these emergent city-region structures facilitate state-orchestrated processes of territorial distribution around investments in social and physical infrastructures' (Jonas, 2013, p.285). This view implies a need for different city-regional institutions and policies to address collective provision rather than to facilitate agglomeration and economic clusters (Pemberton and Morphet, 2014). Central here is the argument that as a consequence of fiscal austerity and state under-provision 'this geopolitical tendency is deeply intensified by growing demands on behalf of city-regions for strategic investments in social and physical infrastructure' (Jonas, 2013, p.286). This suggests a need to better understand the process through which the state is becoming involved in the geopolitical construction of the city-region, the re-scaling and governance processes this produces, and what kinds of transformation of the material city-region result.

The role of the state in centrally-orchestrating city-regionalism (McGuirk, 2008) is not new and the relationship between city-regions and state actors is recognised to be complex and contested. Central orchestration politically conditions the shape of city-regionalism. Importantly, and in addition to this, 'city-regionalism needs to be understood not solely as the medium and outcome of territorial reorganizations internal to the state – important as these are – but also a decisive moment in the internationalization of the state itself' (Jonas and Moisio, 2016, p.351). In this respect the state is implicated, along with corporate actors, in global infrastructure development that may circumvent or weaken areas of state regulation (Easterling, 2014). It is also implicated in the strategic shape of sub-national territories that it seeks to connect with such infrastructure development and investment flows.

Harder city-regional structures: layering over or disrupting existing arrangements?

Re-scaling and the development of city-regional structures takes place alongside pre-existing tiers and structures of sub-national governing. The rescaling of state power to city-regions has been 'a complex, multi-layered and fluid process: a situation not aided by the UK Government's continuing ambivalence towards devolution in general, and the merits of English regionalism in particular...City-regions have come to represent the in vogue spatial scale amongst policy elites' but where 'attempts to build a city-regional tier of governance have been tentative and lacking coherence'. The implications of this are that 'while the space for city-regions has expanded, the build-up of city-regional governance adds to an already congested institutional landscape, such that the evolution of city-regionalism.... adds to, rather than reforms, extant institutional arrangements' (Harrison, 2012, p.1243 & 1244-5 & 1245).

What follows is that new governing arrangements can be layered over old arrangements or can disrupt them over time. Indeed, one suggestion is that current sub-national arrangements in England are 'transitional' (Pemberton and Morphet, 2014), suggesting a need to better understand this interface between new and old. Since the election of a UK Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government in 2010, there has been an increased focus on city-regions as part of a wider agenda of decentralisation (often characterised as 'devolution'). This is not new, but it gained momentum in the context of a referendum on Scottish independence in 2014 and a resulting reawakening of English regional politics (Colomb and Tomaney, 2016). Broadly speaking, interests coalesced around the economic role of cities, a need for metropolitan planning and cooperation to inform local action and 'legitimacy' in relation to directly-elected city-regional mayors (Colomb and Tomaney, 2016). While state strategy then seeks to reconfigure the institutional and governing arrangements of city-regional space, this is in a context of austerity, where 'devolved' responsibilities meet a mismatch with diminished local capacities (Peck, 2012). At the same time, constant experimentation with city-regional space means that 'these newly emerging metropolitan spaces are often reliant on inadequate urban-economic infrastructure and fragmented urban-regional planning and governance arrangements' (Harrison and Hoyler, 2014, p.2249).

Researching the future shape of English city-regions

The foregoing argument suggests that to understand their future shape we acknowledge the geopolitical positioning of city-regions and the role of the state in re-scaling sub-national space to secure investment in its material transformation. This *re-design of sub-national space* is likely to be predicated on various assumptions, including the idea that the urban core is key to organising city-regional space and, in particular, the idea of its 'connectivity through "corridors of communication" that create, and cut through, marginalized surrounding "peripheralities"' (Herrschel, 2009, p.246). On this basis, those places that are connected to the urban core - and the 'corridors' that connect them - are critical sites for economic policy interventions. This has the effect of formalising distinctions between prioritised, connected spaces of the city-region and marginalised spaces. As a consequence, 'these are now becoming increasingly subdivided into bundles of separate linear territories, leaving 'in between' much less well connected, effectively marginalized spaces and actors, whose access to power and policymaking capacity is much more limited' (Herrschel, 2009, p.240). Connectivity and corridors of communication do not operate neatly within a bounded city-region; strengthening connections between the urban core/prioritised parts of the city-region and global circuits and flows can make city-region boundaries more mutable. The 'expansion' of

the urban core in this way therefore also promotes the idea of the mega-region, consisting of multiple linked together city-regions (Harrison and Hoyler, 2014; Pemberton and Morphet, 2014).

City-regional spaces have often been understood as ‘soft’ spaces (Haughton et al, 2010). Yet, the ‘re-emergence’ of metropolitan planning (Colomb and Tomaney, 2016) means that there is the potential for this multi-faceted view of city-regional space - with its potential implications for inequality - to be formalised and hardened. Re-scaling to English city-regions involves some *re-design of governance* even while other pre-existing institutional structures and arrangements remain. This raises the issue of whether new governing provisions disrupt existing arrangements, or whether they complement and produce continuity with them; and what the implications are for the material shape of the city-region.

To address this, in the next two sections we focus on three decades of experimentation in GM which have been frequently cited by national government and city-regional interests as the exemplar for other English city-regions (Haughton et al, 2016; Jenkins, 2015) and characterised as the ‘Manchester model’ (Haughton et al, 2016) of cross-border local cooperation that, for some, has even produced the ‘Manchester miracle’ (Harding et al, 2010).

In focusing on GM, we use documentary analysis. Primarily this involves strategic city-regional documents in relation to spatial planning (e.g. the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework), the future of transport (e.g. Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040) and their substantial evidence bases, as well as a wide variety of other documents (e.g. Greater Manchester City Deal; UK Budgets; Manchester Independent Economic Review etc). Additionally, as contextualising data we draw upon research that we have undertaken on the future of housing and transport in GM (see, for example, Froud et al, 2018), including case study work in Manchester city centre and in other areas outside the city centre, including the M61 Corridor, Hattersley and the Northern Gateway. We also engaged with wider academic debates on city-regions and, more specifically, with debates around the future of GM.

3 Unfolding English sub-national spaces and the historical development of Greater Manchester as a city-region

This section sets out processes of UK state re-scaling and the focus on GM as an exemplar English city-region. Recent state re-scaling should be understood as a long-term process over three decades that includes orchestrating a city-regional agenda, with specific experimentation in constituting a city-region in GM (Deas, 2014).

Rescaling to the city-region as long-term process

Local government re-organisation was enshrined in the Local Government Act 1972 that included the re-scaling of many large English urban areas to metropolitan counties and districts. Included in this was the establishment of the GM metropolitan county of local authorities surrounding and including Manchester. Metropolitan counties were subsequently abolished by the UK Thatcher government in 1986. What followed was variable across different English metropolitan contexts but included considerable experimentation through the 1990s with soft, partnership forms of governance.

The process of re-establishing formal metropolitan governing structures commenced with the election of a national Labour government in 1997. In Greater London in 1999, this saw the setting up of the role of Mayor and an elected assembly (Travers, 2004), albeit with limited powers, but nevertheless as a national exemplar (Hodson and Marvin, 2007). But, the development of city-regional institutions and governing for other English metropolitan areas did not follow. Instead, state strategy in the early 2000s initially prioritised the development of a *regional* agenda for England – through regional development agencies - rather than city-regions.

During this period, economic development was intensified via the publication of the Manchester Independent Economic Review (MIER) in 2009 (McKillop et al, 2009), which further supported city centre development. The effect was to practically position GM at the forefront of trialling UK policy in a number of areas (Hodson and Marvin, 2012). This economic development pioneering was followed by a hardening of governing structures in GM. The 2009 UK Budget announced that GM was to be given statutory city-region status (HM Treasury, 2009). The establishment of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) followed in 2011 and, subsequently, national government sought a deal to redefine relations between the centre and GM (Tomaney, 2016; Pike et al, 2016). The premise of this was part of a long-standing recognition of a need to ‘re-balance’ the UK economy between Greater London and the South-east and ‘lagging’ UK urban areas and regions. Decentralisation of powers to the GM city-region (characterised as Devo Manc from the end of 2014) and promotion of GM within a pan-city-regional, connected north of England (labelled the Northern Powerhouse) (Nurse, 2015) were seen as ways of connecting these areas to global circuits of trade and investment.

The City Deal in 2012 brought a limited set of decision making powers and funding agreed with central government (GMCA, 2012). This was rapidly followed in 2014 by an agreement between UK central government and the leaders of the 10 GM local authorities on a package of devolved measures, that included greater planning powers, further responsibility for local transport including franchising of buses and inter-modal ticketing, housing development, skills and further education. This would be controlled by a mayor for GM (HM Treasury/GMCA, 2014), elected in May 2017. The deal was reckoned to be worth more than £1 billion, still a fraction of the £22 billion public spending attributed to GM. The logic of ‘devolution’ is that further powers follow this. By February 2015 agreement had been reached to devolve National Health Service (NHS) spending for the city-region to GM.

In summary, there has been a long process of experimentation with state re-scaling that has three implications. First, abolition of hard metropolitan governing and institutional structures in 1986 led to experimentation by state actors, with various forms of sub-national spaces, and by decisionmakers in GM with ‘soft’ city-regional structures; this was followed by another switch back to harder structures, with the aim of changing the culture of governing. Second, these harder structures are not an unproblematic substitute for pre-existing soft structures. Rather, they appear to disrupt them in ways that need to be better understood. Third, these processes of layering and disruption can be explored through the lens of spatial planning, addressed at city-region level through a new draft plan in 2016, as outlined below.

Articulating the future of the city-region through spatial planning

The re-scaling processes encapsulated in Devo Manc had various implications, but two issues are of particular importance for our argument. First, it meant constructing harder governing structures, reflecting new, re-scaled responsibilities in areas like transport that subsequently created the potential to disrupt the dominant, soft form of governing in GM. Second, as part of Devo Manc, the development of a city-regional spatial plan was agreed. In this section, we critically summarise the key elements of this plan, the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF). We do this before, in the next section, assessing the implications of this re-scaling and formalisation of spatial planning and urban governing in GM.

The draft GMSF, the first metropolitan-scale spatial plan in GM since 1981, was published in October 2016 and covers the period to 2035 (GMCA, 2016a). The preparation of the GMSF was agreed by the 10 local authorities of GM in August 2014. The aim was that it would be submitted to national government by the end of 2017, though for reasons explored later, that date has been pushed back. The focus of the Framework is 'land allocation' to housing, industry and other uses to help deliver 'jobs, economic growth and new homes' (GMCA 2016a). The plan is based on assessment of needs that factors in heroic GVA growth assumptions of 2.5% year on year. This is to be underpinned by population growth of 294,800, an additional 199,700 jobs and a requirement for 227,200 net new homes.

This approach to accelerating growth is through parcelling up spaces as different kinds of (housing, retail, warehousing) development opportunities to attract inward investment, implying a recognition of a spatially fragmented city-region. The GMSF says that: 'All parts of GM will make a contribution towards growth and prosperity, but there is a small number of locations that will be strategically significant in terms of their economic importance and role in meeting future development needs' (GMCA, 2016a, p.15). More emphatically, 'there will continue to be a very strong focus on the core of the conurbation' (p.12).

There are various spatial assumptions in the Framework and we highlight three critical ones. First, central to the GMSF are efforts to simultaneously densify and extend Manchester city centre. For example, almost one-quarter of the 227,200 net additional residential dwellings, set out in the draft, will be in Manchester city centre with a further 15% in neighbouring Salford; as a result, '[t]he boundaries of the City Centre may need to be further expanded to accommodate the scale of growth that is envisaged...' (p.17). Second, the GMSF is an economic development strategy that categorises zones for the focused intensification of warehousing and logistics around transport intersections. The rationale is that many of these developments sit at the intersections of connectivity that are central to this promotion of growth. Third, selective residential development is planned outside of the city centre. The draft GMSF promotes development of housing in transport corridors and, in some cases, on green belt land in various parts of GM: the Framework claims that there is a 'land supply gap' for both housing and industry and that 'we have to consider green belt release to meet this need' (p.8).

Transport infrastructure is presented as critical to building the connectivity claimed necessary for growth both within and outside the region. For example, the strategic

promotion of development adjacent to Manchester airport (Airport City) highlights the aim of doubling passenger growth over 20 years and building the logistics, warehousing and office infrastructure to promote GM's position in global flows and as part of wider global infrastructures (Easterling, 2014). This argument extends to the promotion of enhanced facilities at Port Salford for access to global shipping infrastructure as part of an overall 'vision for the future [that] is of an even more successful GM, which can compete on the global stage to attract investment, businesses, workers and tourists' (GMCA, 2016a, p.11).

Transport infrastructure is also fundamental to the strategy of positioning GM at the centre of a pan-Northern English growth configuration (TfN, 2018; Nurse, 2015). As the Framework says: 'Major improvements in the quality, speed and reliability of transport connections between GM and other cities and towns across the UK will be delivered. This will place GM at the heart of a much larger integrated economic area, providing access to a huge labour market and network of suppliers and customers' (GMCA, 2016a, p.58). Spatial redesign is therefore underpinned by infrastructural transformation, including aspirations for a high-speed (HS3) trans-Pennine rail route and various other plans for big projects on road, rail and canal, connecting GM to other urban areas of the north of England.

The transport strategy thus both supports the aspirational city-region in making connections outwards but also consolidates the importance of car use for journeys within GM given that much of the new commercial and residential developments are in places poorly served by public transport.

How the expected economic and other benefits outlined in the GMSF will be delivered is not of immediate concern. The plan is intended to set out specific sites and parameters for development, with the detail to be filled in later: 'These policies are high level and strategic and the detail of how they are applied at district level will be set out in local plans and strategies' (GMCA, 2016a, p.7). For example, in relation to sites for logistics and housing, the Framework sets out where development will take place and its scale, noting that there will be a need to 'develop new investment models to shape places where people want to live, invest and work' (p.4). Furthermore, 'Compulsory purchase orders will be utilised to assemble the land, particularly where there is a risk that existing land ownership patterns will slow down the delivery of key sites' (p.43). It is also implied that public investment will be deployed where private investment does not see a sufficient return, implying that it 'will be heavily targeted towards the existing urban areas' (p.42). New sites are expected to be 'funded wholly by the developments on those sites', though there is less clarity about costs related to off-site infrastructure including roads; warehouse developments are likely to add significant pressures on already busy road infrastructure yet the responsibility for upgrading general transport infrastructure is not clear.

Overall, the draft GMSF represents a selective re-design of the city-region over a period of two decades. Spatially-selective growth is likely to produce a (more) fragmented city-region of premium, logistical and peripheral spaces. In particular, attempts to crown GM as the centre of the North of England are underpinned by efforts to develop a new urban core that is both more dense and stretches out its boundaries. On this basis, the draft Spatial Framework suggests a formalisation of previous patterns of development in the

GM city-region with the concentration of growth in the central city area and selective development of outer areas around the airport and motorways. However, while there are strong elements of continuity, the rescaling of governance in GM has also produced significant disruption. The next section explores these forces through the disruption of soft governance in GM by harder governing, through the GMSF and the mayor.

4 Tensions of continuity and disruption in articulating the future of Greater Manchester

In many ways the GMSF is an attempt to formalise the property-led regeneration agenda that had been developed through the urban growth coalition and soft governance of the 1990s and 2000s. In other words, it is an attempt to solidify the narrow governing coalition of political interests (Manchester City Council, Greater Manchester Combined Authority) and developer interests (e.g. Renaker, Peel Holdings) and its extension to include new, often international, financial actors (Silver, 2018). This is about the promotion of an agenda for the future of the city-region that is based on the 'opportunities' for developers from the physical transformation of the city-region and, in particular, of the spatial prioritisation of Manchester city centre and of other selected areas (e.g. Manchester Airport and the Trafford Centre (retail and leisure)). GM publics have been peripheral to this agenda (Deas, 2014).

The draft GMSF was put out for public consultation between October and December 2016, resulting in around 27,000 responses. The scale of this engagement required a considered formal response and a lengthy pause ensued while the authorities worked on a revised plan. In the meantime, the election of the first Mayor for GM in May 2017 provided a significant disruption, both during the campaign phase and in the first year of office. The hardening of structures produced a visible, elected figurehead for GM and for its citizens. This section explores the tensions of continuity and disruption that have emerged through the processes of governance rescaling and material redesign. Three themes are developed: first, the elements of continuity in a draft plan that extends the existing development model; second, an overlay of disruptions, with citizen protest focused on the green belt while the new Mayor amplifies concerns around housing and transport; third, the extent to which hardening governing and spatial planning creates the conditions for - but does not cause - a re-emergent citizenry to challenge the future of the city-region. Paradoxically, attempts to formalise a spatially selective city-regional agenda, that assumes above trend growth and that is produced via a narrow politics, has created visible structures through which challenges to that agenda can be focused. The overarching point from assessment of the dynamics of city-regional governing, spatial planning and a re-emergent citizenry - is that there is the potential for a new city-regional political configuration, though this is subject to political struggle.

Continuity: developer-led regeneration in Greater Manchester

The GMSF represents a long-term (20 year) plan to re-design the material fabric of GM. This needs to be understood not as an endogenous city-regional re-design but as design conditioned by a state-driven process that re-purposes (city) regional planning. That is to say, regional planning - prevalent in the post-second world war period and

supplanted by the emergence of neoliberalism in the 1970s - is being mobilised to 'prepare' GM to be further integrated into global financial and resource flows, to make it amenable to a form of development whereby the built environment and infrastructure are the focus of financialised infrastructure investments that connect territory to wider global circuits. The GMSF was sanctioned under the devolution deal agreed between national government and GMCA that provided the mayor (subject to unanimity within the Cabinet) with '[p]owers over strategic planning, including the power to create a statutory spatial framework for Greater Manchester' (HM Treasury/GMCA, 2014, p.1). However, it can also be seen as a means of experimenting with and formalising new ways of achieving the objectives that have been dominant in GM since 1986, chiefly the prioritisation of particular spaces to secure investment in the built environment and narrowly conceived infrastructure. Thus, while the city-region spatial plan is new, there are distinct elements of continuity.

Most significantly, the GMSF presents plans to significantly densify and extend Manchester city centre over the next two decades, with up to 50,000 more homes and potentially 110,000 more jobs. Tangibly, this aims to formalise the property-led regeneration of Manchester city centre through a continuing focus on apartments marketed at mainly young professionals. Though this is a trend that is common across English cities, it is particularly pronounced in Manchester (Thomas et al, 2015). Over two decades to 2011, over 30,000 net new apartments were built in Manchester, and a further 10,000 in Salford, contributing to a parallel 'new town' in the city centre area (Folkman et al., 2016, p.17). This new town also incorporates office space: in Manchester city centre alone some 5.38m square feet has been added between 1991 and 2016, leading to a net increase in office space of 25%, or sufficient for around 50,000 office workers (Folkman et al., 2016, p.16). These processes continued through the 2010s and the GMSF signifies a further intensification of developer-led regeneration combining densification and extension. In terms of commercial space, the GMSF reaffirms the aim to enhance the city centre as 'the primary office location outside London' (GMCA, 2016a, p.11). Densification involves the incorporation of new pockets of land within the central area, typically brownfield (former industrial and office), into development sites along with verticalisation in the central area (Graham, 2016) as vacant sites become harder to find. At the same time, extensification is managed through the parcelling of sites into packaged 'districts' across Manchester city centre, and over its boundaries into neighbouring areas, including Salford and east and north Manchester.

If these planned outcomes suggest continuity, so too do the underlying processes. The 'pipeline' of planned, approved and under construction apartments to date has involved a relatively small number of developers and land owners. Major developers operating in the city centre have a close relation with Manchester City Council: sometimes through joint ventures; but also through the City Council setting the area development framework or even providing loans from the Greater Manchester Housing Fund. In other words, they are a particular manifestation of the more widely observed relationship between urban expertise, real estate activities and the production of urban form (Robin, in press) that aims to align with capital markets and availability of finance to reconstruct the city.

As a *city-region* plan, the GMSF not only formalises the importance of the central city area as a place for residential apartments and office development, it also outlines a series of gateways and corridors across GM for warehousing and logistics, as well as sites for large scale residential development, mainly houses. These outer developments are intended to promote economic development more broadly in the city-region through identifying sites close to various transport intersections. As with city centre apartments, these plans build on earlier and ongoing development based on logistics. For example, a large scale warehouse park has been developed as part of the so-called M61 Corridor and is now home to logistics operations for concerns such as Amazon and Aldi. Significant housing developments are also being promoted around transport intersections: for example, the GMSF includes plans along the M61 Corridor for the development of 1,700 houses on former industrial land proximate to Junction 6 of the M61 and also to local rail stations. In this respect, the GMSF represents an acceleration of existing patterns of development which privileges the city centre and its 'corridors of communication' (Herrschel, 2009), while largely ignoring large parts of the urbanised city-region.

The redesign outlined in the GMSF, therefore, implies continuity with city-region development prior to 2018; and, if developers have played a key role in the transformation of the central city area to date, they have also argued strongly for more development opportunities during the GMSF consultation. The first consultation from November 2015 to January 2016 was focused on the draft vision, objectives and options (GMCA, 2015) and used to identify the sites and plans that would feature in the first draft of the plan. Views were sought on three options that factored in varying rates of growth and hence implied different amounts of land to be identified for residential and commercial development. For example, option 1 assumes annual growth of 2.5%, leading to a need for 152,800 new houses up to 2035; while options 2 and 3 assume growth of 2.8% and 3.3% and 217,350 and 336,000 new houses respectively. Responses from developers criticised what they considered to be overly-cautious growth estimates: GM Property Venture Capital Fund and Peel Holdings supported bolder option 3 over the other two. The response from Housing the Powerhouse, which describes itself as 'an unprecedented coalition' of house builders, developers and investors noted that 'this plan lacks ambition'. This submission argued for higher growth targets, stating that 'the housebuilding and development industry can deliver more new homes in Greater Manchester' (GMCA, 2016b). Peel Holdings, a significant developer in the GM and Liverpool areas explicitly argued for a 'review of Green belt boundaries' in their submission, with a view to making more land available on the periphery (GMCA, 2016b). This became a highly symbolic element of the draft GMSF released in October 2016: the proposed net reduction of green belt by 4,900 ha (8.2%) in the draft plan (GMCA, 2016a, p.76) was a trigger for subsequent disruptions, as outlined below.

Disruption: new governance actors and an awakened citizenry

While the initial consultation on the GMSF objectives and options in 2015 generated only 170 responses, with some 600 sites suggested (mostly for new housing), consultation on the first draft plan less than a year later became a much more high-profile process involving more than 80 public events, 50,000 downloads of the document and around 27,000 responses, some 16,000 letters and 8,000 emails (GMCA,

2016c). Over 90% of these responses were about specific sites proposed for development, though a sizeable number also addressed more general issues including, the optimistic growth assumptions in the GMSF, the lack of planned infrastructure in areas of proposed development and the challenge to a vision of housing as a market asset not as a social need. Proposals to build on green belt land mobilised multiple, site-specific protests and, even before the consultation period closed, a series of local campaigns and events were in train, focused on ‘saving the green belt’ (Manchester Evening News, 2016). The potential for disruption to the process of redesign was amplified by concurrent changes in city-region governance: during early 2017 the election of the inaugural GM Mayor was underway and the winning candidate, Andy Burnham, had pledged his support for the green belt during his campaign (Manchester Evening News, 2017a). After his election, the new Mayor used his powers over strategic planning and housing to promise a ‘rewrite’ of the GMSF (Manchester Evening News, 2017b). Not only was there an intention to significantly limit incursion into the green belt but the Mayor also made public his support to shift development into the (often deprived) district town centres that were largely ignored in the draft plan. The disruption is significant and is partly explained by the fact that the original draft plan pre-dated the Mayor. This is in contrast with London, where mayors have in the last three decades produced successive versions of the London Plan, each one reflecting their distinctive mayoral priorities (Holman, 2010; Mayor of London, 2017). The new GM Mayor, in contrast, had to capture and reshape a process that was already well underway.

Enacting the mayoral promise to rewrite the plan established an extended pause in the GMSF process with several delays to the release of the revised plan, including to respond to revised population estimates in June 2018 which imply the need for a downwards revision in the need for new houses.² Moreover, this pause has become significant because it has allowed the intrusion of other disruptive local and national debates into the process of city-region planning. During his election campaign, the GM Mayor highlighted a commitment to tackle homelessness (even without a budget or clear powers to do so) and this specific local pledge has come alongside wider concerns about the availability and cost of housing. At the city-region level, public debates about the lack of ‘affordable’ housing in new developments, the use of public funds to support city centre apartments and the use of viability assessments to avoid developers’ financial obligations have all become noisier in the pause between the draft and the revised GMSF. Reports by campaigning groups Shelter (2017) and Greater Manchester Housing Action (Silver, 2018) highlighted the absence of affordable housing in developments in Manchester City centre, while the *Manchester Evening News* (2018a) has increasingly highlighted both the lack of ‘affordable’ homes in Manchester city centre developments and the lack of disclosure of the viability assessments that allow developers to avoid 20% affordable home requirements (or equivalent in financial contribution). Mayor Andy Burnham’s suggestion that he was ‘signaling a change in Greater Manchester’s housing policy’ with the aim of ‘tackling the housing crisis and ensur[ing] truly affordable housing is available for everyone in Greater Manchester’ is in tune with current national and local debates; but such statements also create a difficult local politics around raised expectations and limited policy and financial resources.

² At time of writing, the revised plan is due to be published in October 2018.

A new, hybrid governance?

Re-scaling, post-2011, has been part of state strategy to attract and secure inward investment and to formalise and naturalise a culture of (soft) public-private governing. Under this urban regime, governing political and societal elites act as decision makers, selectively shaping and making deals via narrow configurations, but where the voice of ordinary citizens is weak. This is not necessarily about gaining controlling 'power over' citizens but may be about building productive 'power to'. Nevertheless, the opaque and narrow processes of regime formation and action mean that social and political legitimacy is hard to secure (Hendriks, 2014). Yet, hardening GM's existing governing arrangements has involved attempts to build legitimacy through the election of a mayor. It should be noted that GM voted against the introduction of an elected mayor in 2012³ and the city-region mayor was imposed by national government as part of the devolution settlement. So, while now providing a visible figurehead and new possibilities for governing GM, the introduction of a mayoral institution was hardly an expression of democratic power. Nonetheless the new mayor has prioritised issues around development, housing and transport in ways that have sometimes created tensions with sub-regional political structures in the form of the leaders of the 10 GM boroughs (Manchester Evening News, 2018b).

The productive 'power to' of the regime is also subject to contestation that is channelled through newly invigorated processes of 'public consultation'; in 2018 it was announced that the revised GMSF will be accompanied by a more accessible engagement platform 'Citizen Space' (GMCA, 2018). Together with the arrival of the mayor, this builds tensions between the de facto public-private urban growth governance and formalised, democratic governing, with the potential for a new 'hybrid' mode of governing (Gross, 2016). Of course, many modes of governing are 'hybrids' in the sense that they fuse elements of markets, networks and hierarchies yet hybrids 'may be less about modalities and more about the need for a reconsideration of governance mind-sets focused on the conditions underlying hybridization within urban governance arrangements more broadly' (Gross, 2016, p.2). In GM, what we appear to be seeing is a hybrid that discursively fuses a pre-existing focus on agglomeration, together with an emphasis on attracting inward investment to spatially zoned areas, with increasing and broader-based public contestation. While the outcome remains uncertain both in terms of the extent to which citizen consultation becomes more firmly embedded and, of course, the extent to which material redesign is different to that envisaged in the draft GMSF, the hybridisation process and the partial unravelling of existing urban governance norms is significant.

One important question is whether citizen consultation and alternative forms of expertise are disrupting the way in which the urban regime operates in GM, moving beyond responding to an episodic process, like the GMSF development, towards a more systematic hybridisation (Gross, 2016) of governing. A test of this is the extent to which citizen groups can begin to set the agenda including proposing alternatives to the urban regime. In GM there is a wide variety of more experimental forms of urban governing (Hodson et al, 2016); a fragmented counter culture of diverse small groups centred on

³ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-17949390>

places or issues and scattered across the city-region. These groups include a wide range of relocation and other grassroots initiatives, with diverse visions pursuing various logics. They often address foundational services (Foundational Economy Collective, 2018) such as energy, transport, food, buildings and green space. They deal in political advocacy and education and have a range of substantive concerns including experimenting with forms of local democratic control, bringing old industrial assets into modern use, producing local green infrastructures and spaces, experimenting with developing local food systems, and new forms of energy generation.

A perennial issue has been how the influence of these groups and the lessons learned from them can spread beyond their immediate locality (Evans et al, 2017). In many ways, what can be seen to be missing is a mechanism - an urban platform (Hendriks, 2014) - for integration and deliberation of these multiple concerns. By contrast to the narrow politics of GM's urban regime the plethora of alternatives lack a common basis for governing and institutionalising. There is, therefore, the need for a form of urban governing in GM that combines the realities and limits of its urban regime with potential alternatives. This might also enable some of the grassroots groups that have mobilised around responding to the GMSF to achieve their aims through city-regional governance (Harrison and Hoyler, 2014). A first interesting development here is the involvement of citizen groups in planning the details of a new cycling network across GM (TfGM, 2018).

5. Conclusion

In this article we have addressed the future shape of the city-region in England. We have done this through the lens of an 'exemplar', GM. The process of constituting the GM city-region has been a long-term project of both UK state interests and of local political and business interests: however, since 2014 there has been what, on the face of it, seems to be a disruption to this long-term process. Through the hardening of governing arrangements and the invocation of city-regional spatial planning this article has posed the challenge for understanding the tensions arising from actions that disrupt existing public-private urban governance arrangements and those that support continuity. Specifically, in this context of new democratic institutions, what does the 'pausing' of the GMSF signify? Will we see a continuation of a narrowly constituted city-regional agenda or a new kind of city-regional politics that is co-produced via citizen participation? What does this tell us about the limits and potential of governing the city-region in a context of state-rescaling?

Through our case study of GM we explored these broader tensions arising from attempts to shape the material design set out in the GMSF. We discussed the spatial selectivities that the GMSF seeks to formalise; particularly the material transformation of Manchester into a city centre of apartments for young professionals, with enhanced infrastructural connections to other areas of GM, the urban north of England and to global circuits and flows; but also the development of housing estates and warehousing and logistics sites in zoned transport corridors.

Envisaging this future has been built on 30 years of the 'Manchester model' and the cross-local authority, public-private governance that characterises this. The role of public governing in this view is to transform the city-region by making sites and zones of the city-region amenable to private investment and development. The new governing

arrangements that the 2014 Devo Manc deal signified has meant some hardening of governing structures, in particular the establishment of an elected city-regional mayor. This has provided a focus for those that have been 'excluded' from the politics of the Manchester model to engage with the GMSF. The 27,000 replies to the draft GMSF are not solely responses to the established governing structures of the GMCA but have necessitated a response from a new, visible and more accountable form of city-regional governing. What follows from this tension remains uncertain, particularly while the new city-region mayor negotiates with other local politicians.

In making this argument, our contribution is to extend recent arguments on the geopolitical role of city-regions in state rescaling through the case of GM. Despite strong signs of continuity, purposive state rescaling and formalising city-regional governing arrangements has the potential to disrupt both existing governing arrangements and the material design of the city-region. The implication is that this state-promoted re-design of governing and spatial planning for the GM city-region is an attempt to formalise and continue a pre-existing growth trajectory that is spatially selective by new means. Yet, the disruption of new governing arrangements provides challenges to that trajectory. This produces tensions between the pursuit of a continuity politics of growth and a more disruptive politics of the future of the city-region. These tensions and our articulation of their dynamics suggest that we are seeing both an acceleration of the physical transformation of GM and new political possibilities and spaces emerge in – and in resisting – the transformation of GM.

While our argument focuses on one case in an English context. In terms of future research, it is important to follow through the process of tensions between disruption and continuity in GM. It would also be valuable to research this issue in English city-regions with less developed structures and to assess the ways in which this tension between disruption and continuity unfolds. Finally, research that looks at city-regions outside of the UK could usefully focus on this tension in a context of political devolution.

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