

Devolution to UK cities: Answering the wrong question?



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Divergent Cities Conference
St Catharine's College, Cambridge

Session Divergent cities; recovery and policy

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17th July 2015





Presentation (and, soon, paper!) draws on:

GOS/BIS Future of Cities paper

- Cities and Public Policy

ESRC Urban Transformations commission

- Paper on devolution, cities and the GMcr model

What Works Centre for Local Growth paper

- The role of evidence in the GMcr story

All are review papers. Limited 'new' evidence

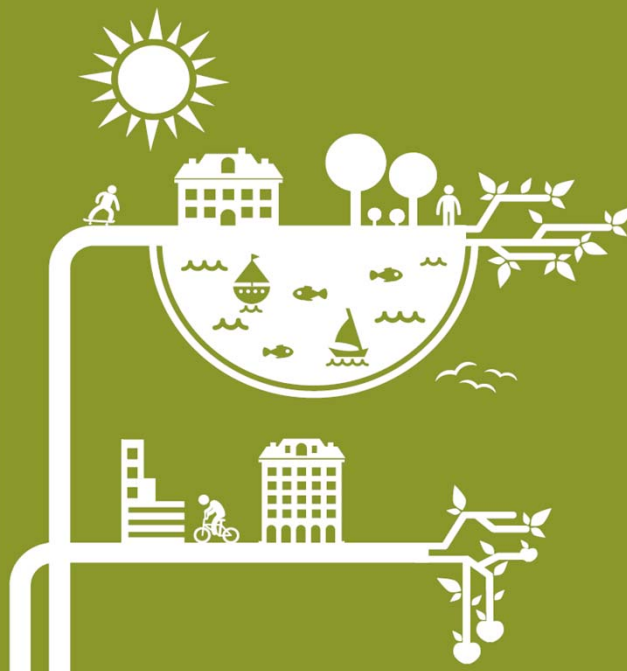
3 core questions:

What is the relationship between **good governance** and **city growth**?

Does (national) **olicy** make a difference?

- Explicit urban policy
- Implicit (place-blind) urban policy

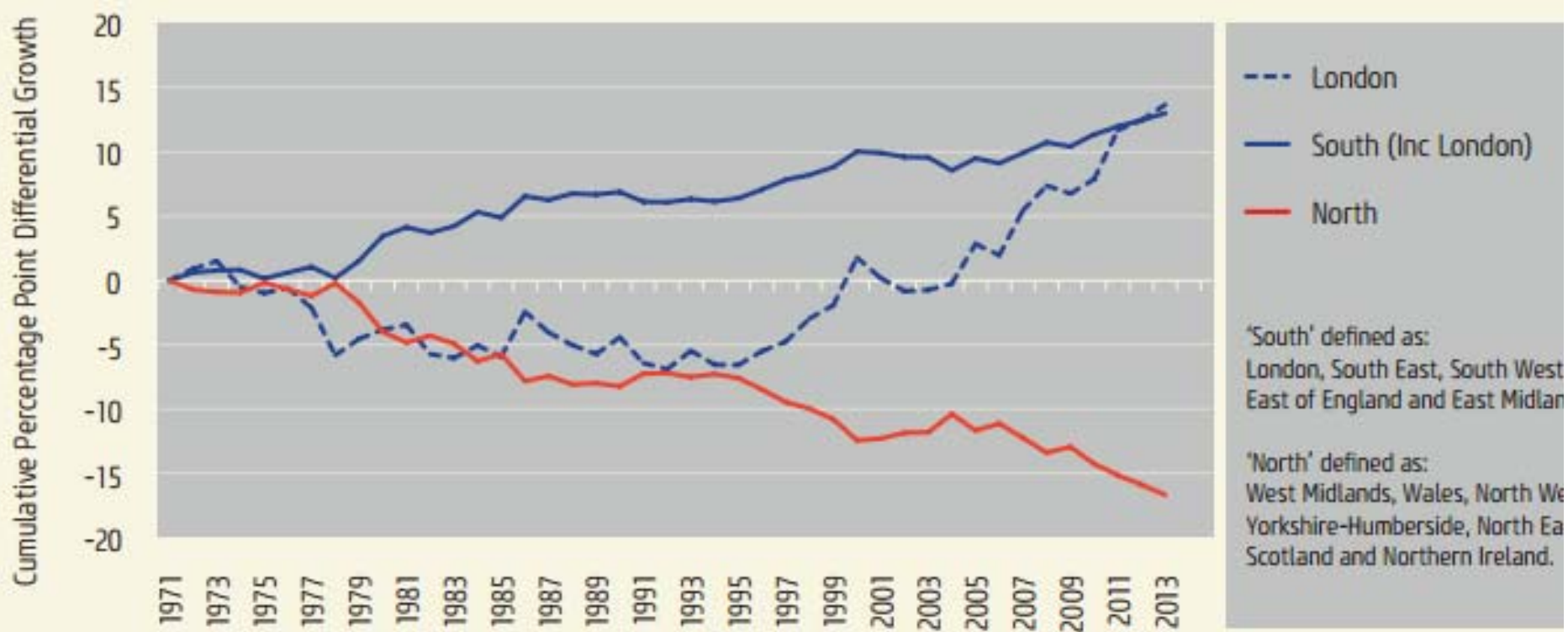
Does, or can, devolution to sub-national tiers of governance improve economic performance?





City-regions are the principal scale at which people experience lived reality. The geographical churn, turbulence, and unevenness of development, combined with the sheer scale of urbanization, will make city region development more important than ever—to economics, politics, our global mood, and our welfare. And managing it will pose one of the most critical challenges to humanity. **The winning side of the process will excite us and motivate talent**, but the losing side will create displacement and anger, both within and between countries. Storper, 2013:4

**Figure 3: Cumulative Percentage Point Differential Growth Gaps of GVA (2011 prices):
The North, South and London, 1971-2013**



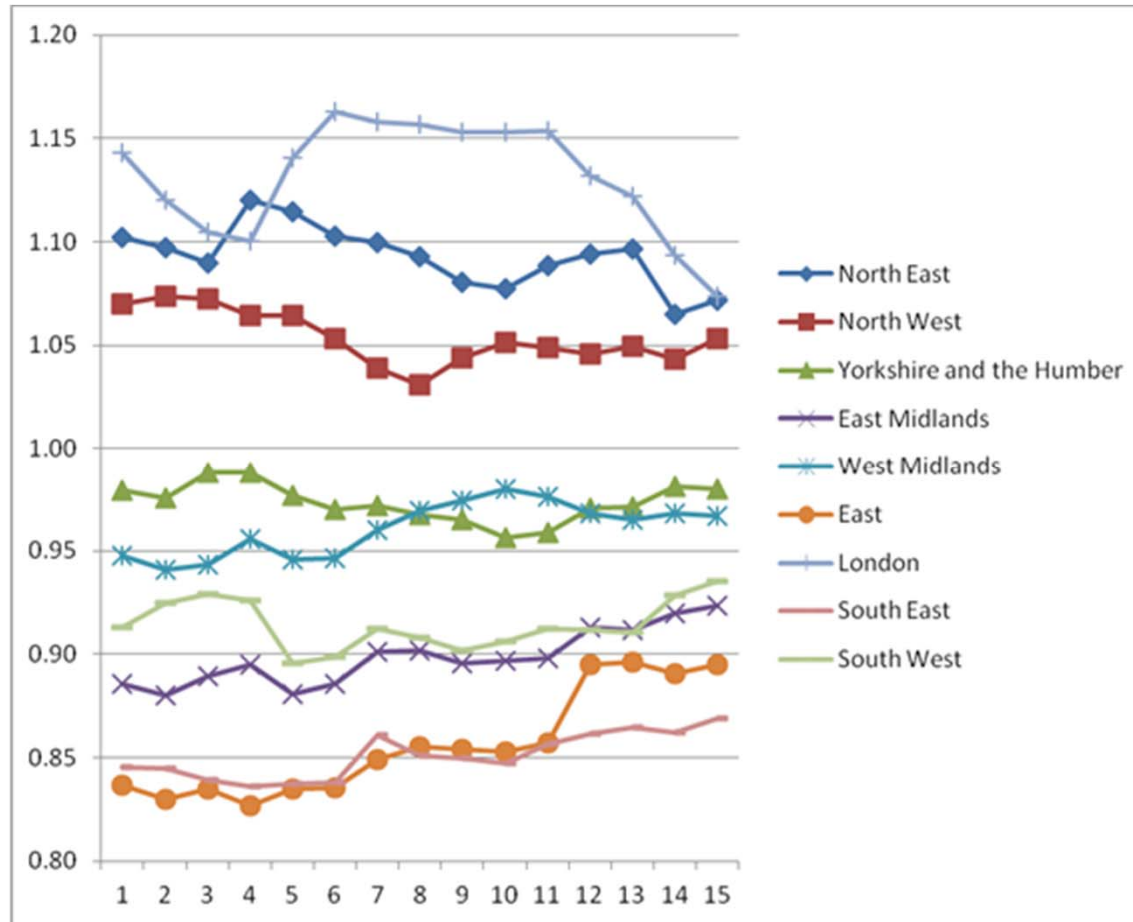
Source of data: Cambridge Econometrics

Public Sector Net Investment 1966-67 to 2018-19

Source: Institute of Fiscal Studies

Period	Average spend per year (£bn, at 2013 prices)	Average % of GDP
1966-67 to 1976-77	35	5.3
1977-78 to 1989-90	11.7	1.5
1990-91 to 1999-2000	12.84	1.18
2001-02 to 2010-11	31.73	2.04
2011-12 to 2018-19	26.78	1.57

Ratio of per capita expenditure to UK average by English region, 1999-2013



Understanding the (Greater) Manchester 'miracle'



Understanding the 'Manchester miracle'

Time

Economic geography

Political geography

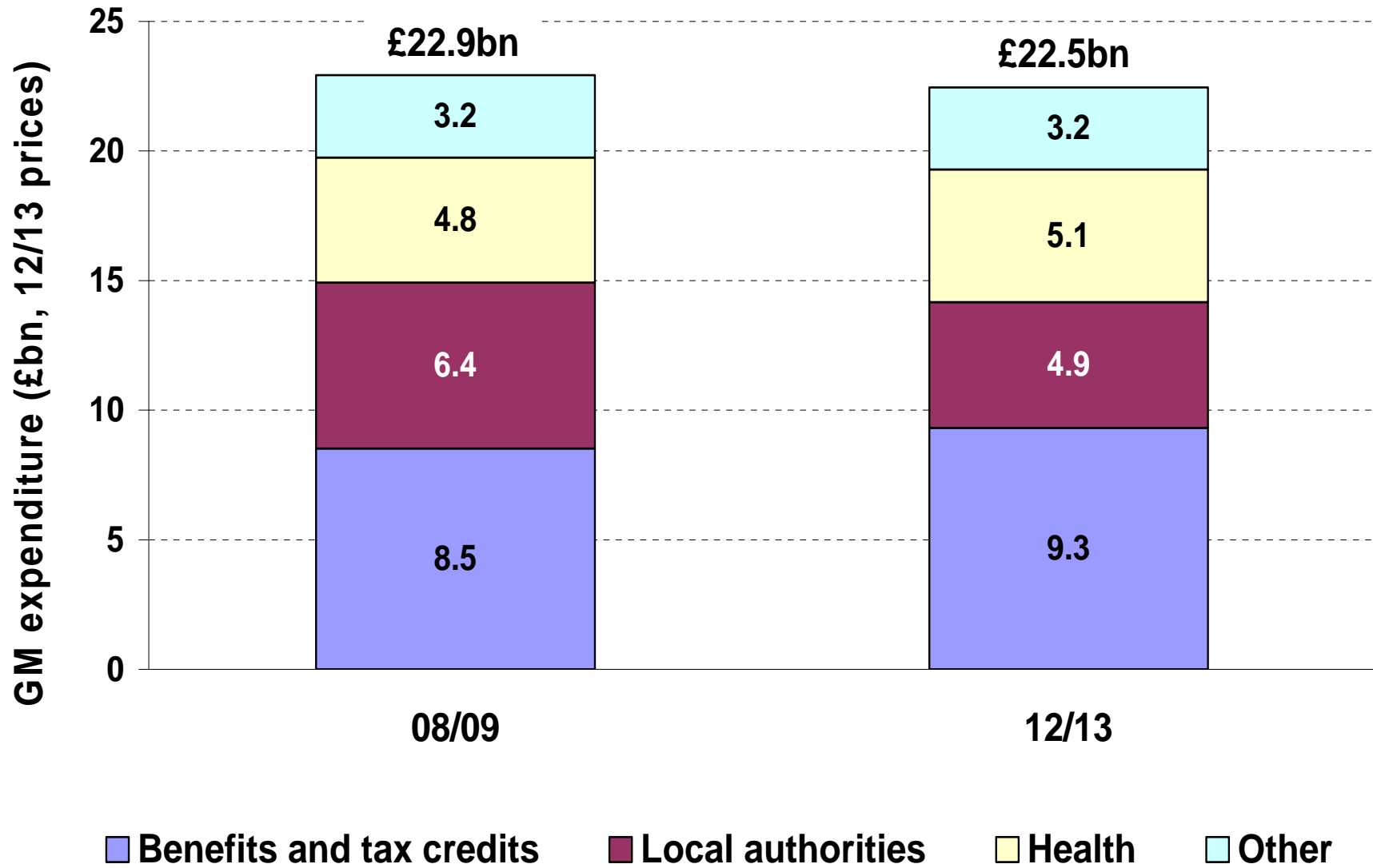
Consistency and aspiration of city/CR leadership

Metropolitan institution-building

Narrative building

Track record (hence trust)





What next?



What principles underly UK devolution?

Granting rights to greater self-government (under sub-national political pressure)?

Improved economic performance (wherever it might occur, or 'rebalanced'?)

Improved service delivery?

Dumping?



What is needed is a thoroughgoing reassessment of the UK's spatial political economy.

This would not eschew the significance and role of such processes as agglomeration, but would place these within an interpretative framework that assigns key importance to the form, operation and spatial organisation of the nation's core institutions, governance structures, political arrangements and policy-making machinery.

Spatially rebalancing the UK economy is not just about (yet) another round of spatially-focused policy programmes and initiatives seeking to promote the advantages of agglomeration in cities outside London, better co-ordinating economic and spatial

planning between the constituent parts of the UK, boosting innovation in the regions, or improving the infrastructures of city-regions outside the south of England, necessary and important though such interventions might be. At this potentially decisive moment, it must also be about more fundamental change, about the need to undertake a long-overdue spatial rebalancing of the nation's institutional and governance architectures. (Martin, Pike, Tyler, Gardiner, 2015: 26)



