

‘ENVISION MCR’ – ‘ADVICE TO THE NEXT GOVERNMENT’

CONTENTS

‘ENVISION MCR’ – ‘ADVICE TO THE NEXT GOVERNMENT’ 1

 What happens next? 2

1) ENVISIONING G.M. – ‘STRATEGIC RESEARCH-POLICY PATHWAYS’ 3

 A) Citizen Pathways: 3

 B) Local Pathways:..... 4

 C) Informatic pathways: 5

 D) ‘Whole Value’ Pathways: 5

 E) ‘3-word summary advice’ 6

Annex: working group outputs

1) INCLUSION & INEQUALITIES 7

2) GREEN = CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE 8

3) RE-VALUING GOVERNANCE 9

4) PLACE-MAKING 10

5) FROM CORRIDOR TO CITY-REGION 11

OVERVIEW

The 2024 midsummer LAB meeting included a creative networking / ideas session - a rapid brainstorm on 'advice to the next government'. This was the form of strategic research- policy pathways, i.e. challenges and priorities which look beyond the detail of housing policies or climate programs, towards a wider and deeper bigger picture.

The Manchester city-region is a showpiece for both challenges and opportunities. The next 12 months offer a unique moment for change, with a new national government, GM mayoral term (and UOM President).

The LAB session took a futures perspective with a 'third horizon' of up to 25 years, and used the Mind-Lab toolkit for mapping 'from crisis to opportunity'. This also follows on from the major UK program on [Foresight-For-Cities](#) and the GM2040 program.

The LAB session was run in hybrid mode: round table discussion on paper, with an online page on [MUI-LAB advice-for-next-government](#) (this is still open for comments).

The results are compiled here as preliminary 'advice to the next government', in the form of '**strategic research-policy pathways**', i.e. agendas and priorities for challenges and transformations.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

- First we invite comments and ideas, from the MUI Local Advisory Board and academic members.
- The result will be posted on the MUI site as a working paper on 'strategic research-policy pathways'.
- **For research applications**, the pathways provide a reference point for academic agenda setting, funding proposals and networking activities. We will follow up opportunities as they emerge.
- **For policy applications**, the pathways and 'advice to next government' provide a reference point for research-policy collaboration. These first results will be presented to the GMCA research section, and to similar units at national level. For priority applications, details can then be developed, with opportunities to be followed up as they emerge.

ENVISIONING G.M. – ‘STRATEGIC RESEARCH-POLICY PATHWAYS’

Envisioning GM is here explored here in dynamic form: not only a ‘shopping list’, more as cross-cutting **strategic research-policy pathways**.

These research-policy pathways aim at structural agendas which link between the 5 key themes set out in the LAB so far (4 live working groups with 1 by written input), i.e. -

- Place-making / Social / Ecological / Governance / City-region

These research-policy pathways are in the form of inter-connected sets of strategies / actions / resources. Each works in complex situations of uncertainty / opportunity. Each pathway is based on stakeholder collaboration, synergy and co-production: i.e. between policy, academia, enterprise, civil society & citizens.

Four strategic research-policy pathways have emerged by exploring the inter-connections, during and following the LAB. Each pathway is here expanded with a set of **policy applications**, **research applications**, and **‘advice to next government’**.

This last ‘advice’ centres on catalytic actions and ‘enablers’, suitable for a new government with few spare resources. For instance we can’t aim to solve all UK housing problems immediately, but we can aim for key catalysts / enablers, which can then enable such transformation down the line. The ‘advice’ also includes a city-region perspective, which focuses on the unique opportunity of Greater Manchester (GM) as a natural unit with huge potential for forward looking policy & governance.

These pathways are outlined below, for further dialogue & development:

A) CITIZEN(SHIP) PATHWAYS:

Envisioning MCR:

We can envision a beautiful city-region founded and organized by the democratic ideals of social justice and citizenship – to each / from each (by needs / means): the whole being greater than the parts...

These **citizenship pathways** work towards the challenges of bridging divisions & integration of socio-economic structures – inclusion, empowerment, education, access.

- **Policy applications:** many topical policy questions, in housing, education, health, security, jobs, marginal groups & social economy:
- **Research applications:** social justice / institutional / social practice approach to structural barriers & inequalities: action / participatory research approaches for creative opportunities;

- **‘Advice to next government’:**
 - **‘Citizen-index’:** evaluation of all public policies & systems for inclusion / justice / empowerment effects (e.g. housing, education, etc):
 - **‘Citi-verse’ labs / forums** to explore alternatives & game-changers in participative dialogue, using digital and place-based platforms.
 - **‘City-region citizens’:** building on the trends to towards social / rented accommodation for knowledge-based communities with entrepreneurial livelihoods.

B) LOCAL(ITY) PATHWAYS:

Envisioning MCR:

We can envision a dynamic city region, one of 1000 villages and localities – each one a hub of synergist and inter-connections, where local needs find local resources, social / economic / ecological / cultural...

These **locality pathways** work towards the practical integration ‘on the ground’, i.e. for the multiple interconnected dimensions of space and place – social / economic / ecological / cultural etc, where ‘place matters’ and ‘local’ is the counterpart to global forces of (typically), financialization, expropriation, exclusion and alienation.

- **Policy applications:** local integration of public services, planning, infrastructure, greening, housing etc.
- **Research applications:** living lab / co-innovation approach to inter-disciplinary agendas, complex problem / opportunity analysis.
- **‘Advice to next government’:**
 - **‘Quality of place’ (‘QOP’)** standards for access, services, environment, infrastructure:
 - **‘Local-wise’ hubs,** for integration of services, resources, opportunities, exchanges, resident participation etc.
 - **‘City-region local’** – integrated planning for the whole range of inter-connected local places, from city-centre to outer peri-urban

C) INFORM(ATIC) PATHWAYS:

Envisioning MCR:

*We can envision a fully **informatic** city region - 1000 platforms and 10000000 threads of value... So we have to find ways to manage the digital before it manages us.... The CHAI principle ('collective human-artificial intelligence') can guide the design of organizations, policy models and enterprise models for the human resources, social / economic / ecological / cultural...*

These **informatic pathways** work towards fully effective & inclusive knowledge systems, both digital & social, both static platforms & dynamic AI-driven: for public policy, private enterprise, civil society, education & knowledge- based research & innovation.

- **Policy applications:** AI & IOT, smart platform disruption, social media extremism & exclusion;
- **Research applications:** understanding the socio-digital interface, in rapid transition with unknown risks & opportunities.
- **'Advice to next government':**
 - **'Smart-wise' platforms** - all public online systems to include for dialogue, exchange, co-learning resources.
 - **CHAI ('collective human-artificial intelligence')** – every platform / AI / IOT application to have a societal evaluation and/or 'kitemark' system, fully accessible & transparent (similar to health warning / footprint).
 - **'City-region informatics':** GM as a natural unit for digital innovation, for new forms of governance, public & private platforms & services, online / onsite networks & communities.

D) 'WHOLE (E)VALU(ATION)' PATHWAYS:

Envisioning MCR:

*We can envision a **'whole-value'** city region – where social, ecological, cultural values can enable the poor & excluded to exchange with the rich & powerful.... As the basis for emerging policy & enterprise, the **'whole-value'** principle can then be the catalyst for sustainable & resilient human livelihoods and nature restoration.*

These **whole-value pathways** work towards integrated value-generation - social / economic / ecological / cultural - in real urban places.

- **Policy applications:** public decision-making, evaluation, social investment, green infrastructure, net-zero & similar transitions.
- **Research applications:** complexity economics, policy studies, institutional analysis, decision / game theory, cognitive systems analysis etc.
- **'Advice to next government':**
 - **'Value generation'** – policy enablers / framework for dynamic social value creation, via inclusion, empowerment, co-creation & co-production of all stakeholders, in all public services & governance systems.
 - **'The Greener Book':** policy / governance system to enable social / economic / environmental / cultural value inter-connections (short / long term horizons), in decision-making, investment, management, planning & public choice of all kinds.
 - **'City-region whole value'** – again the GM city-region provides a natural unit for assessment and integration of values, for public policy & private enterprise, i.e. social / economic / ecological / cultural value systems.

E) '3-WORD SUMMARY ADVICE'

This shortlist offers three simple words in each agenda – each calling for exploration:-

- *“Places, quality of life, health.*
- *Inclusion, empowerment, choice.*
- *Innovative, accountable, funding.*
- *Intergenerational social mobility.*
- *Green = critical infrastructure*
- *Health outcomes = social investment.*
- *Triple-helix knowledge economy*
- *Social car-free communities*

ANNEX: WORKING GROUP OUTPUTS

1) INCLUSION & INEQUALITIES

Ageing population and increasing health and social inequalities; shifts in the labour market (can be positive or negative); public funding is not looking good, even under new government; increasingly poor populations at urban periphery. Tech can help with challenges, new job opportunities, new government, increased contribution from more socially aware private sector, more community-based initiatives.

1. *Stop using public money to benefit the wealthy (e.g. subsidies for EVs), target funding where it's needed most*
2. *Best start in life, focus on early years. Reduce barriers to lifelong learning.*
3. *Develop asset-based new communities, community governance and skills and confidence in communities to take on leadership.*
4. *REAL CSR – the private sector making a strong contribution. This needs to be proportionate and balanced with the government's role in planning change. We shouldn't be using CSR in place of government planning.*

Social & community - General themes:

- inequality, health, education, security, migration, cost of living;

FUTURES

- Ageing population
- Greater health & social inequalities
- Less public funding for services
- Increasing poverty on urban peripheries
- Social breakdown & street riots??
- Shifting labour market & skills – digitalization

- Community cohesion
- Technology advances
- Education opportunities
- Community based initiatives
- Private sector & industry contributions

ACTIONS

- New government!
- Stop using public money on wealthy – e.g. EV
- Put social housing in well-connected places

- Life-long education – reduce barriers e.g. care costs, flexible delivery
- Inter-generational social mobility - best start in life
- Asset based community – green & built infrastructure
- Community capacity building & empowerment
- Real CSR – ‘proportionate’

2) GREEN = CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

There is less confidence in perceptions of this as part of critical infrastructure.

Greening creates a ‘quality feel’. Aversion to maintaining green infrastructure – how do we identify what good investment is in a different way prioritising health, welfare and social outcomes? Benefit often emerges from beyond regional boundaries.

Development pressure, austerity, funding reduction. Opportunities driven by covid, including greater awareness of green space. Equality and lack of equality in terms of access to green space. A future that sees green infrastructure as critical is one in which it is integrated with other types of infrastructure e.g., transport.

1. *Taking advantage of a quick win stimulated through a change in mindset*
2. *Spend more time understanding and managing the disbenefits that come from green infrastructure*
3. *Promote the economic argument for green infrastructure.*
4. *Increasing public and institutional awareness of the importance of green infrastructure.*

Environment & climate: general themes

net-zero, energy, food, air, water, climate change, waste;

FUTURES

- Increasing public awareness & vision for urban greenspaces e.g. food
- Integrated green & grey GI
- Loss of GI in development
- Increasing equality of access to urban green space

ACTIONS

(Taking advantage of quick wins & mindsets)

- Public & institutional awareness campaigns – why is GI vital
- Multi-functional green corridors

- Connecting green & grey
- Promoting economic case for GI gain & loss, with intangible benefits
- Green space factor – planning regulations
- Green space access standards
- Recognizing / managing dis-benefits of urban GI
- Stimulate community ownership of urban GI.

3) RE-VALUING GOVERNANCE

How governance works: *Treasury green book and the framings within it – will this evolve in the future? The importance of recognising the benefits of investment into public projects. Best public outcomes are not always aligned to green book. Local talent pools – good things create supply and demand but sometimes other projects suffer. Civil service organised in silos.*

1. *Devising finance mechanisms which can develop capital for social gain. Be better at accounting for value.*
2. *Guidance on how to account for benefits. Once it is business as usual there isn't always interest in capturing benefits.*
3. *Evaluation is a concept the government hasn't embraced.*

Policy & government – general themes:

democracy, extremism, global north / south...

FUTURES

- Refocusing value to prioritize social well-being
- Devising innovative finance mechanisms for patient capital ...
- .. for infrastructure investment which delivers social gain
- Devolution to enable co-benefit delivery at local level

ACTIONS

- New value toolkit (beyond Green Book)
- Biodiversity net gain as first example

4) PLACE-MAKING

Regulation and policies going backwards, domestic burning (?), a place must grow but in a sustainable way, creating places that people want to be in, the state cares and therefore I will care, low carbon future from the ground upwards.

1. *Reform business case model (and entire planning system)*
2. *Retain economic benefits*
3. *Actions making places nicer (?)*

Place-making – general themes

Economy & business: industry, services, skills, innovation, productivity, social economy;

FUTURES

Negative –

- BAU & regulations going backwards

Positive –

- Fundamentals to local economy
- Look after existing places
- Sustainable growth & community cohesion
- Reduce car use
- Get incentives right - e.g. pay to drive per mile

ACTIONS

- Reform planning & longer term planning
- Reform business case model (to include co-benefits)
- Retain economic benefits
- Setting common goals

5) FROM CORRIDOR TO CITY-REGION

(these are offsite informal inputs from Oxford Rd Partnership)

How are things changing:

- Population shifts to cities (By 2050 89% of the UK's population will live in cities and 24% will be aged over 65)
- Expectation around work as people strive to achieve greater work life balance; and successful city economies will be underpinned by knowledge intensive industries
- A generation of people will not own their own homes (and cars).

What is the potential:

- Growth and densification of the city core is an opportunity to shape the transition to a more sustainable future. While density brings its own challenges with regards to quality of life, it does present the opportunity to build cross-sector capacity at a city level to affect real change as well as protecting the greenbelt.
- The changing nature of work and transition towards a knowledge and tradable service-based economy has the potential to increase productivity.
- A higher proportion of people in rented accommodation has the potential to give a collective voice to drive wider housing and social security reform. Improved transport options and active travel friendly policies will negate the need for car ownership.

How to achieve them:

- The development of Manchester's next Local Plan 2027 onwards should provide the framework to expand the city centre core with sustainability at its heart. The plan should draw on local expertise and learning from other cities; difficult, but ambitious land-use choices will need to be made to balance employment, housing, and green spaces.
- Fully realising the potential of the triple-helix within a place context, as demonstrated by the Oxford Road Corridor, but on a larger scale, this will provide the knowledge intensive jobs of the future. Reindustrialisation is not an option; digital, life sciences, creative industries, tech etc... fuelled by a strong and diverse graduate pipeline and increased levels of translational research and the diffusion of innovation will be key to raising productivity.
- Future devolution deals should seek powers and resource for the city to build a new generation of social housing allied to greater protection for renters, including city rent caps, and the suspension of right to buy until sufficient provision is in place. Increased housing options in the city will bring a new workforce in proximity to jobs, however improved public transport links across the region will be required (GM underground!) and it feels inevitable that the debate in relation to congestion charging will have to be revisited at some point.