

Governing Uneven Development: The Northern Powerhouse as a 'State Spatial Strategy'

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Abstract

Launched in response to widening regional inequality in the United Kingdom, the Northern Powerhouse (NPh) initiative is part of a wider international trend towards competitive multi-city regionalism. This paper aims to provide a theoretical and political analysis of the NPh as part of the UK state's efforts to govern and manage uneven regional development. In particular, the paper understands the NPh through the lens of strategic-relational state theory (SRST), seeking to make three contributions to the further spatialisation and development of SRST. First, it provides a greater sensitivity to the spatial particularities of state space through an analysis of the NPh as a 'state spatial strategy' for the North of England, closely linked to the 'state spatial project' of English devolution. Second, the paper emphasises the strategic agency of prominent political and business actors working in and through the state. Third, it assesses the temporal development and delivery of the NPh as a strategy in motion, particularly in terms of how it has been affected by changing political agendas and contexts. While the NPh achieved a degree of regional hegemony in 2015-16, it was subsequently undermined by a lack of government commitment and investment following the Brexit vote of 2016.

Key words

Uneven development, strategic-relational state theory, regional inequality, Northern Powerhouse, devolution, England

Introduction

Speaking at the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester on 23 June 2014, George Osborne MP, then Chancellor of the Exchequer in the United Kingdom (UK) government, called for the creation of a Northern Powerhouse (NPh). According to Osborne, ‘modern economics’ meant that great Northern cities like Manchester, Leeds and Liverpool were too small to compete individually on the world stage with London and other world cities, resulting in the economy of the North lagging behind the rest of the UK. This prompted his assertion that:

... if we can bring our northern cities closer together – not physically, or in some artificial political construct – but by providing modern transport connections, supporting great science and our universities here, giving more power and control to civic government; then we can create a northern powerhouse with the size, the population, the political and economic clout, to be as strong as any global city (Osborne 2014).

As well as attracting widespread policy, academic and media interest (Haughton *et al.* 2016; Northern Powerhouse Partnership (NPP) 2017a; Parker 2015a), the NPh has triggered other trans-regional initiatives in the UK, most notably the ‘Midlands Engine’ (ME), Oxford-Cambridge Arc and Western Gateway (Lee 2017; National Infrastructure Commission 2017). More broadly, it can be seen as part of the emergence of new multi-city forms of regionalism internationally, representing an upscaling of established discourses of urban entrepreneurialism (Wachsmuth 2017).

Previous research on the NPh has defined it as both an economic development strategy and a political brand used to publicise a range of disparate and often pre-existing policies and spending commitments (Lee 2017). This paper aims to provide a fuller theoretical and political analysis of the NPh as part of the UK state’s efforts to govern and manage uneven regional development (Martin 1988; McCann 2016). In particular, the paper seeks to interpret the NPh through the lens of strategic-relational state theory (SRST) (Brenner 2004; Jessop 1990; 2016a). As a leading strand of neo-Marxist state theory, SRST adopts a broad, integral perspective on the state, extending beyond its narrow political and judicial apparatus to emphasise its embeddedness in civil society (Jessop 2016a, b). Accordingly, the state is defined as a social relation, rather than as an instrument of capital or class, focusing attention on the

strategies of the social and political forces represented in and through the state apparatus (Etherington and Jones 2018: 53).

While it provides a rich theoretical framework for understating the changing geographies of statehood (Varro 2010), SRST remains highly abstract, privileging theoretical accounts of the underlying logic and direction of state restructuring over concrete analyses of how broader processes are played out within specific urban and regional contexts (MacKinnon and Shaw 2010). In response, this paper seeks to make three inter-related contributions to the further spatialisation and development of SRST. First, advancing beyond theoretical abstraction, it provides a greater sensitivity to the spatial particularities of state space through a theoretically-informed analysis of a specific regional initiative. Second, the paper responds to Hay's (2004: 49) call to "reanimate contemporary state theory with political actors" through a concern with the strategic agency of prominent political, civic and business actors in harnessing the powers of the state and mobilising regional interests and organisations (Oosterlynck 2010; Varro 2010). Third, in an effort to extend analysis beyond the formulation of spatial strategies and visions (Haughton and Allmendinger 2015; Oosterlynck 2010), the paper assesses the temporal development and delivery of the NPh as a strategy in motion (Peck 2011). While Neil Brenner's seminal contribution to the spatialisation of SRST presents a rather singular and cohesive conception of 'state spatial strategies' and 'state spatial projects' (Brenner 2004), this paper aims to foster a more differentiated and open understanding of spatial strategies and projects.

The paper argues that the NPh represents a state spatial strategy for the North of England, comprised of an accumulation strategy and hegemonic vision (Brenner 2004; Jessop 1990). It is designed to address the problem of uneven development in the form of England's entrenched North-South divide (see Martin 1988) by closing the growth and productivity gap between the North and the rest of England through a long-term programme of investment (NPP 2017b; SQW, 2016). As a state spatial strategy, the NPh initiative has become closely linked to the state spatial project of English devolution, based upon negotiated devolution deals between central and local government (Sandford 2017). It is both an economic and a political strategy whereby its use of economic theories of agglomeration to promote regional growth and rebalancing is shaped by the political motives and rationales of the key actors engaged in its promotion and implementation. It has material and discursive dimensions, emphasising investment in Northern growth and institutional and political empowerment through devolution, whilst advancing a positive discourse of the North as an economically competitive

region with the potential for ‘transformative’ growth (NPP 2018). Over time, however, the UK state’s commitment to the NPh vis-à-vis other regional initiatives such as the ME and Oxford-Cambridge Arc has fluctuated within a turbulent political environment following the 2016 ‘Brexit’ referendum to leave the European Union.

The remainder of the paper is structured in six main parts. The following section discusses the spatialisation of SRST through an engagement with Jessop’s recent work on the state, Brenner’s account of ‘new state spaces’ and Jones’s conception of spatial selectivity. The paper then turns to an assessment of the origins of the NPh initiative. Subsequent empirically-grounded sections analyse, in turn, the NPh as an accumulation strategy, a hegemonic vision, and as linked to the wider ‘state spatial project’ of English devolution. The final section concludes the paper. The research which underpins the article is based on a mixed methods approach based on multiple policy documents, strategies and reports; numerous national and regional press articles and blogs; over 20 semi-structured interviews with key actors from central and local government, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), business organisations and think tanks; and, attendance at a series of NPh policy events. Documents and articles were collected covering five years (2014-2019), the interviews were conducted between March 2017 and March 2018 and events were attended from 2017 to 2019.

Spatialising Strategic-Relational State Theory

SRST builds on the theoretical work of Gramsci, Poulantzas and Offe to conceive of the state as a social relation that derives its specificity from the interplay between state structures and the efforts of social forces to promote their interests in particular temporal and spatial contexts (Jessop, 1990). Developing this critical insight, Jessop (*ibid*: 260-262) defines the state as the site, generator and product of strategy. First, according to the concept of strategic selectivity, the powers and capacities of the state are more open to some actors and interests than others based upon the strategies and tactics these actors adopt towards it. Second, strategies are elaborated through the state, focusing attention on the efforts of state personnel to impose direction, coherence and purpose upon a differentiated state apparatus (Jones *et al.* 2004). Third, the state can be understood as the product of past political strategies and struggles that have shaped its structure and operation and which, in turn, frame emerging strategies. From this perspective, the state has:

“no power; it is merely an institutional ensemble; it has only a set of institutional capacities and liabilities which mediate that power; the power of the state is the power of the social forces acting in and through the state” (Jessop, 1990, p. 269-70).

This opens up SRST to the strategic agency of these social forces, although Jessop’s more substantive work on state restructuring has been criticised for underplaying the role of concrete political actors such as political parties (Hay 2004; Varro 2010).

Table 1 about here

In his latest iteration of SRST, Jessop (2016a) identifies six key dimensions of the state (Table 1). The first three of these refer to formal institutional aspects. ‘Modes of political representation’ refer to the channels which give social forces access to the state apparatus, including political parties, lobbies and interest groups, social movements and state managers. ‘Modes of articulation’ highlight the institutional architecture of the state, particularly its branches, levels and agencies, whilst ‘modes of intervention’ cover the policy mechanisms of the state and their supporting resources.

The last three dimensions focus attention upon the substantive aspects of the state, giving strategic meaning and purpose to its institutional structures (ibid). The social bases of state power pertain to the configurations of social forces that support the state, linking to the notion of a hegemonic bloc (Etherington and Jones 2018). As an internally differentiated institutional ensemble, the state has no essential unity, but must be actively unified through specific ‘state projects’ which mobilise the various branches of the state behind a more or less coherent line of action (Jessop, 2016a). This is supported by ‘hegemonic visions’ or projects which “elaborate[s] the nature and purposes of the state for the wide social formation” through a broader conception of the public interest or ‘common good’ (ibid: 58). As Jessop argues, this notion of the public interest is essentially illusory, invariably privileging some interests, identities and spaces over others. He goes on to distinguish between ‘one nation’ and ‘two nation’ visions, referring to expansive and inclusive hegemonies and projects which target strategically important sections of the population whilst excluding other sections respectively. As an on-going process, hegemony is never fully realised or achieved, but must be continually adapted in response to potential forms of resistance emanating from “excluded social forces”

(Hall 2011: 727). In practice, competing hegemonic visions may emerge for particular regional spaces, promoted by conflicting social forces and interests (Oosterlynck 2010).

In addition, the earlier concept of ‘accumulation strategy’ remains highly pertinent to the analysis of the state’s role in managing spatially uneven development (Jessop and Oosterlynck 2008). It represents another substantive dimension of state intervention, relating to an allied hegemonic vision and supporting the distribution of material resources to the ‘social base of the state’. An accumulation strategy can be defined as a specific economic ‘growth model’ accompanied by various extra-economic preconditions and a general strategy for its realisation (Jessop 1990: 198). It requires a framework of supporting institutions and policies and can be articulated at the national or sub-national scales. Different regional strategies may develop within a country at a particular point in time, competing for national state support. An accumulation strategy may be underpinned by simple economic domination of a particular fraction of capital or economic hegemony which requires that the strategy addresses the immediate interest of other fractions as well as serving the long-term interest of the hegemonic fraction. A strategy only becomes hegemonic when it is accepted by the subordinate economic classes (ibid: 201).

The spatialisation of SRST has generated valuable theoretical insights on changing state spatialities (MacLeavy and Harrison 2010). Extending Jessop’s (1990) terminology, Brenner’s account of ‘new state spaces’ distinguishes between state spatial projects and state spatial strategies. State spatial projects refer to the internal operations of the state, serving to mobilise and coordinate state personnel and agencies behind a particular initiative or activity (Brenner, 2004: 92). State spatial strategies, on the other hand, refer to how the state interacts with society in a broader, more integral sense to promote economic and social development, encompassing Jessop’s accumulation strategies and hegemonic visions. Each incorporates a scalar and a territorial dimension (Table 2). State spatial projects are often shaped by the tensions between centralising and decentralising tendencies in scalar terms and between standardised and customised forms of administration and service provision in territorial terms. Similarly, state spatial strategies are structured by the contradictions between privileging a particular scale or seeking to distribute responsibilities across multiple scales and between the concentration or equalisation of socioeconomic assets and activities across territories (ibid: 96-101). While theoretically distinct, the relationship between state spatial projects and state spatial strategies is one of interdependence and co-constitution as they tend to emerge in parallel and work in

the same broad political direction (ibid: 101-107). For instance, the establishment of state spatial projects emphasising decentralisation and customisation has coincided with the harnessing of state spatial strategies based on the geographical concentration of socioeconomic activities and scalar multiplicity in Western Europe since the late 1970s.

Table 2 about here

The concept of spatial selectivity contends that states privilege certain places through their accumulation strategies and hegemonic visions (Jones 1997). Spatial selectivity is driven, according to Jones, by ideological factors, reflecting the state's need to maintain hegemony, suppress opposition groups and secure the international competitiveness of the national economy. It operates along both national-regional and national-local axes. With regard to the former, those places that support the basic objectives and operation of the state, and the social forces that govern through it, are privileged and rewarded, whilst other places, social groups and institutions are marginalised or even repressed (ibid). With regard to the national-local dimension, it focuses attention on how national state projects may privilege certain places over others, involving, for instance, the mobilisation of strategically significant actors such as business elites alongside efforts to promote more entrepreneurial and market-based forms of governance in the 1980s and 1990 (Haughton and Allmendinger 2015). Space can be either an explicit object of strategy through, for instance, regional policies or an unintended side effect of ostensibly aspatial policies such as defence expenditure and research and development support (Peck 1994).

The later work of Jessop *et al.* (2008), Jessop (2016b) and Jones and Jessop (2010) makes an important contribution to the spatialisation of SRST. In response to a succession of one-dimensional spatial turns in the geographical literature, Jessop *et al.* (2008), advance a TPSN framework based on four prominent spatial categories: territory, place, scale and networks. They emphasise the need for rich, multidimensional accounts of the inter-relations between these four dimensions of space, particularly in terms of how TPSN ensembles become enmeshed in the production of new geographies of accumulation, regulation and hegemony (ibid: 395). Jones and Jessop (2010) expand this framework, providing a stronger sense of social and political agency. More recently, Jessop (2016b) discusses states' changing role in meta-governance, referring to the guidance and management of governance arrangements. While non-state actors can also engage in meta-governance, states often play a crucial role in

establishing “the ground rules for governance and the regulatory order through which governance partners can pursue their aims” (Jessop 2016b: 16). In place of the established concept of multi-level governance, Jessop proposes a broader ‘multispatial metagovernance’ approach which incorporates a wider range of spatial categories, actors and governing processes.

State spatial strategies often involve the identification of particular regional spaces as key objects of intervention, requiring an understanding of regionalisation processes (Oosterlynck 2010). In contrast to traditional conceptions of space as fixed and static, recent research argues that regions are actively constructed by key actors at specific points in time (Allen *et al.* 1998; Haughton and Allmendinger 2015). Here, Lipietz's notion of 'regional armatures' emphasises the leadership of a particular coalition of interests, or ‘hegemonic bloc’ in Gramscian terms (Lipietz 1994). The activities of this hegemonic bloc are instrumental, Lipietz argues, in the conversion of a 'space-in-itself', defined by the social relations associated with regionally-specific forms of production, to a 'space-for-itself' endowed with the institutional capacity to intervene in processes of economic and social change. This process of regionalisation is supported by multiple TPSN practices, including territorial bounding, the spatial embedding of social relations, scalar differentiation and the building of network connections (Jessop *et al.* 2008). It is articulated through particular spatial imaginaries which demarcate the region in question as an object of governance, requiring it to be distinguished from other places within a complex geography. Competing spatial imaginaries, supported by distinct hegemonic visions, may represent regions in contrasting ways (Jessop 2016a: 138).

Whilst providing a theoretically sophisticated and conceptually rich framework for the analysis of the multiple geographies of state restructuring, the spatialised SRST literature remains characterised by three important limitations. First, although highly productive in identifying the broad directions of state restructuring, it provides less insight into the spatial particularities of such restructuring in particular historical and geographical contexts (Varro 2010). In response, concrete analyses of the politics of specific spatial strategies and projects are required to enrich these abstract and stylised accounts (Oosterlynck 2010). Second, the spatialisation of SRST still tends to underplay questions of social and spatial agency, with the state itself often becoming the key actor (*ibid*). This underlines the need to restore the strategic-relational sense of actors acting through the state, requiring a re-politicisation of the state that views its spatial strategies and projects as shaped and contested by multiple actors (Hay 2004; Varro, 2010).

Third, despite SRST's theoretical recognition of the state as internally differentiated, it still tends to assume that a clear line of action emerges from state actors' efforts to foster unity, conveying a continued sense of the state as a unified political and economic actor able to devise coherent spatial strategies and projects and sustain its pursuit of these over time. In practice, however, particular strategies and projects may stall and fail if key actors and branches of the state are unable to mobilise sufficient resources and authority in the face of changing political priorities and conditions.

The Origins of the Northern Powerhouse

The UK has one of the highest levels of regional inequality of any major European economy, reflecting increasing regional divergence over recent decades (Martin *et al.* 2016; McCann 2016). According to McCann (2016), globalisation has accentuated these entrenched regional economic inequalities to create three increasingly separate economies: the dynamic economies of London and the South; the weakly performing regions of the North and Midlands of England, Wales and Northern Ireland; and Scotland which is more prosperous than the second group (*ibid.*). Regional inequalities grew from 2010-2016 with the three Northern regions experiencing the lowest growth (Figure 1). Widening regional inequalities from the 1980s have coincided with the abandonment of spatial Keynesianism which sought to reduce these inequalities in favour of neoliberal strategies designed to support the growth of the most globally competitive cities and regions (Brenner 2004), leading to a concentration of infrastructure investment in London in recent years (Pike *et al.* 2019).

Figure 1 about here

The NPh initiative was framed by a broader discourse of sectoral and spatial rebalancing advanced by the Conservative-Liberal Democratic Coalition Government of 2010-2015. This argued that the crisis reflected the over-dependence of the national economy on financial services in the South East of England (Gardiner *et al.* 2013). Orchestrating a new round of institutional reorganisation, the Coalition Government instigated a shift from regionalism to localism and city-regionalism through the abolition of Labour's Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and the creation of a complex landscape of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), Combined Authorities (CAs), Enterprise Zones, the Regional Growth Fund and City

Deals to promote spatial rebalancing (see Pike *et al.* 2015; 2018). The resultant gap between these fragmented institutional arrangements and widening regional inequalities left the Government exposed to criticism by 2014 (Gardiner *et al.* 2013).

The thinking behind the NPh as a spatial strategy has been influenced by the ‘new economic geography’ and urban economics which became particularly associated with the London School of Economics (LSE) and the Centre for Cities think tank. This approach views cities as ‘engines of growth’, emphasising the economic benefits generated by the scale and density of economic activity in cities (Waite and Morgan 2019). It argues that the geographical agglomeration of economic activity in cities increases national economic growth, as increasing returns and knowledge spill-overs foster innovation and productivity gains (Martin 2015). Based upon the argument that regional imbalance in the UK is not a result of London being too big, but the secondary cities being too small, the solution is to counter-balance London by better integrating and empowering the group of Northern cities, enabling them to act as single agglomeration (Overman 2017). This agglomeration thesis was developed in the Manchester Independent Economic Review of 2009 (MIER) which identified Manchester as the city-region outside London best able to take advantage of agglomeration economies (MIER 2009).

Another important influence on the NPh is the HS2 project to create a new fast rail link between London, the Midlands, and the North. Alongside other transport and environmental objectives, the government viewed HS2 as a key instrument of spatial rebalancing, despite the lack of clear evidence to support these claims (Tomaney and Marques 2013). Following a report by the former Chairman of HS2 (Higgins 2014), key Northern leaders and interests have presented Northern transport investment as complementary to it, stressing the importance of improved East-West connections links across the Pennines in supporting HS2 (NPP 2019).

The emergence of the NPh initiative also reflected the influence of previous regional initiatives and developing forms of cooperation between Northern cities and regions. The NPh carries direct echoes of Labour’s Northern Way initiative (2004-2010), which fostered a trans-regional imaginary of the North as comprised of a number of functional city-regions (Haughton *et al.* 2016). It involved an element of region-building at the Northern scale through collaboration between the three Northern RDAs to address important cross-cutting issues, particularly transport (Harrison 2012).

At the same time, Greater Manchester became recognised as “an exemplar of efficient, growth-focused territorial governance”, following the formation of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority in 2011, which built on two decades of collaboration through the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (Hincks *et al.* 2017: 652). Cooperation between the leading Northern cities has grown in recent years, driven by their political leaders and supported by the influential Core Cities group, a lobbying organisation of the large secondary cities outside London (senior local politician, authors’ interview, September 2017).

A growing interest in cross-city collaboration was reflected in the emergence of ‘softer’ spatial imaginaries which cut across existing local boundaries (Haughton and Allmendinger 2015). In particular, the NPh was directly informed by a particular imaginary of the Manchester-Liverpool corridor, known as the Atlantic Gateway, promoted by the private sector developer, the Peel Group (Harrison 2014). This fed into the work of the City Growth Commission (CGC), chaired by Lord Jim O’Neill, the former Goldman Sachs economist from Manchester who was also a member of the MIER:

It all started in the Cities Growth Commission, amongst other things from all these regular hearings across the country. And the very first one we did in Liverpool, sorry in Manchester, I said to, we would have a panel of business people, academics, and local councillors, and I said to the business guys ... what do you think of the idea of Man-pool? And one of the reasons why I said it is because one of the other guys on the panel was a senior person of a company called Peel, which is one of the few companies that operate on some scale in both Liverpool and Manchester, and, as you probably know, historically particularly as it relates to football, but also otherwise, Liverpool and Manchester don’t really like each other. But as each place sort of grows they get closer. And that was the beginning of the whole idea, and within three months by the time we had gone to Sheffield, it had morphed into Manchest-Leeds-pool, which is the outlook of the Northern Powerhouse (senior policy-maker, author’s interview, September 2017).

As such, the CGC was a key source of the NPh concept, with O’Neill describing it as “my baby” (Dunn 2018: 4).

While the NPh concept developed out of this series of inter-related initiatives and activities, its adoption as a state spatial strategy was instigated by the political forces working in and through

the state (Etherington and Jones 2018). The NPh emerged within the context of a Coalition Government committed to an austerity programme that led to particularly severe reductions in local authority spending in Northern cities (Gray and Barford 2018). It provided the Conservative Party with a regional strategy ahead of the 2015 General Election, becoming a central feature of the campaign (Parker 2015a). Driven by the agency of Osborne as “the UK government’s chief political strategist” (Kenealy 2016: 576) and then Prime Minister (PM) David Cameron, the NPh was part of an effort to foster “a Tory hegemony” by redefining the political centre ground and marginalising Labour, based on the appropriation of the regional agenda (Parker 2015b). According to one report, “Osborne had grabbed ideas circulating in obscure Labour policy papers and made them his own” (Parker *et al.* 2015), leaving Labour MPs “furious” (Parker 2015a). Osborne’s promotion of the NPh was influenced by his Yorkshire-born special adviser Neil O’Brien, who sought to overturn established ‘modes of political representation’ by making the Conservatives the ‘new workers’ party’ through a strategy of “blue-collar modernisation, focused on the North and Midlands” (O’Brien 2012). As one respondent noted, “there was a lot of one nation Toryism to this” as neither Osborne nor Cameron were “out and out” neoliberals (policy advisor, author’s interview, October 2017).

From a Conservative perspective, the NPh reflects a reverse sense of spatial selectivity, targeting a region in which the party has attracted less support than the South of England since the 1980s (Johnston and Pattie 1987), particularly in its major cities (Goodman 2015). As such, it can be seen as a political response to the material privileging of London and the South East by successive national accumulation strategies (Martin *et al.* 2016). Indeed, in this sense, the NPh can be seen as a ‘compensatory’ regional strategy which is focused, like the spatial Keynesianism of the 1960s and 1970s, on an economically lagging region (Brenner 2004: 133-145). Yet it is framed in terms of the subsequent neoliberal emphasis on territorial competitiveness, marrying this to the overarching discourse of spatial rebalancing. While designed to appeal to regional actors and interests, the NPh strategy addresses national economic goals of increased productivity and growth, thereby enhancing the contribution of the North to the UK Exchequer (NPP 2017b).

As indicated earlier, the NPh was not the only state spatial strategy to emerge in this period as key actors working in and through the state developed new strategies of multispatial meta-governance. In addition to on-going support for the growth of London, particularly through large infrastructure projects such as Crossrail (Pike *et al.* 2019), The Conservative Party’s 2015

manifesto included a commitment to support the ME, formed by regional business and political actors in response to the NPh, alongside more limited commitments to the South West and East of England (The Conservative Party 2015: 11-13). Reflecting its higher political prominence, the NPh received higher levels of investment than the ME in 2014-2016 (Table 3). This investment includes the headline commitment of £13 billion in transport, much of which would have been spent anyway irrespective of the NPh initiative (Bradley-Depani *et al.* 2016; Lee 2017). By contrast, major one-off science projects such as the Sir Henry Royce Materials Research Institute and National Graphene Institute were direct results of the NPh bending national science and innovation expenditure decisions towards the North (Senior local politician, author's interview, September 2017). Subsequently, another state spatial strategy has been developed for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc which the government has designed as a key economic priority (HM Treasury 2018). Unlike the NPh and ME, the Oxford-Cambridge Arc strategy is about managing growth, rather than addressing relative decline.

Table 3 about here

The Northern Powerhouse as a Regional Accumulation Strategy

The NPh sought to mobilise support behind a long-term regional accumulation strategy to close the productivity gap with the rest of England, asserting a general trans-regional interest in the generation of increased employment opportunities and improved life-chances that would ensue (NPP 2017b; SQW 2016). This strategy is supported by a spatial economic imaginary of future regional prosperity and national rebalancing:

The prize is a big one. If we get this right, the Northern economy has the potential to be 100 billion pounds larger over the next three decades than it otherwise would have been ... Central to that future is the understanding that our cities and regions – each with its own proud identity – can work together to build an economy that is bigger than its individual parts. We can build a Northern Powerhouse that works in tandem with the global success of London, and rebalance our national economy (Osborne, quoted in NPP 2017a: 3).

The construction of this prosperous economic future is supported by the identification of the economic benefits enjoyed by international comparator regions with polycentric urban structures, notably the Randstad in the Netherland and the Rhine-Ruhr in Germany (One North

2014; cf. Swinney 2016). Parallels have also been drawn between the NPh and a Chinese mega-region on the basis of its demographic and economic weight (Table 3) (NPP 2017a).

Within government, responsibility for the NPh lies with the Cities and Local Growth Unit, a joint initiative between the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). It was supported by teams from the Treasury (focusing on productivity and growth), MHCLG (devolution) and the Department of Transport in 2015-16 (authors' interviews). This work was supported by a relatively coherent NPh vision within government, based on the application of agglomeration economics to the major cities of the North. Directed by Osborne, the Treasury acted as the key meta-governor driving the state's 'mode of articulation' with the NPh strategy in 2014-2016, being powerful enough to bring other departments into line (Kenealy 2016).

The accumulation strategy for the NPh was set out by the Northern Powerhouse Independent Economic Review (NPIER) (SQW 2016). Local government leaders from Manchester and the other Northern core cities initiated the NPIER, building on the model of MIER and working through Transport for the North (TfN) (see below) as the commissioning body (Blakely and Evans 2018). According to a key protagonist:

I wanted something that would be able to demonstrate or indeed not to demonstrate that collaboration on the North of England's footprint could produce real economic advantage for the North of England. And the question that was given to the people working on the review, both the Transport for the North team and the people, the consultants who were doing it, was to identify those areas of, or those industrial economic sectors that were both genuinely pan Northern and of a scale or potential scale to be of international significance. And my guess at the time, and it was a bit of a guess, with some evidence to support it, was by taking a sectoral approach rather than a spatial approach, we would end up with something that was far more inclusive (Senior local politician, author's interview, September 2017).

The Review identified the four 'prime' capabilities of the North: advanced manufacturing, energy generation, health innovation, and digital, supported by the three 'enabling' capabilities of financial and professional services, logistics and education (SQW 2016). Interestingly, contrary to the underlying emphasis on urban agglomeration, only the financial and professional services and, to some extent, digital sectors are dependent on clustering in city

centre locations (government official, author's interview, July 2017). Accordingly, the NPIER promotes spatial equalisation over concentration (Brenner 2004), reflecting the dispersed distribution of the North's identified economic assets. As the above quotation indicates, this made it easier for the different sub-regions of the North to identify with the NPIER.

While the NPIER set out a regional economic growth model, it did not outline a general strategy for its realisation (see Jessop 1990: 198), reflecting the lack of a dedicated trans-regional institution to implement it beyond TfN. This institutional deficit is partly filled through the influence of the NPIER, as a strategic form of multispatial metagovernance (Jessop 2016b), in framing LEPs' revised Strategic Economic Plans (SEPs) and, more recently, Local Industrial Strategies (LISs). While LEPs' adoption of the NPIER themes is uneven, there is clear overlap between them and local sectoral priorities for seven of the eleven Northern LEPs (author's research). As a trans-regional accumulation strategy delivered through sub-regional institutional arrangements, the NPIER is characterised by scalar multiplicity (Brenner 2004).

The NPh accumulation strategy is critically dependent upon improved transport connections to bring the region's major cities "closer together" (Osborne 2014). Following the recommendation of the former HS2 Chairman, Sir David Higgins, for the formation of a single body to represent the major local authorities of the North (HS2 Limited 2014) – alongside the One North proposal developed by the leaders of the five Northern core cities in the wake of Osborne's Manchester speeches – the Secretary of State announced the establishment of TfN in October 2014 (Bradley-Depani *et al.* 2016: 29). As the key institutional expression of the NPh strategy operating at the trans-regional scale, TfN's remit is to develop a transport strategy for the north and to represent the region to government as a kind of 'single voice'. While TfN gained statutory status on 1st April 2018, its role remains largely advisory, with the government required to take account of its regional priorities in making national investment decisions. As the major disruption to rail services that occurred in summer 2018 demonstrated (see NPP undated), TfN lacks control over the Northern rail franchises as well as the power to fund itself through borrowing. This nationally centralised 'mode of intervention' means that "the accountability still resides with ministers and decision making resides with ministers" (Government official, author's interview, September 2017). In the context of disagreements over proposed transport investments, TfN's limited powers and statutory status prompted local state actors to complain that it has become "more like a 'broker' between the North and

government as opposed to a voice advocating for ambitious transport upgrades” (quoted in Williams 2019).

TfN’s transport strategy reflects the influence of the NPIER, based on the identification of seven strategic development corridors to link the dispersed economic assets of the North, alongside a smart and integrated ticketing scheme and Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR), amounting to a total cost of £70 billion (TfN 2019) (Table 3). Sometimes termed HS3 or ‘Crossrail for the North’, NPR has become central to the broader NPh strategy, based on the concept of a new trans-Pennine rail line between the North’s major cities. TfN’s plan includes a new line between Leeds and Manchester via Bradford, as well as significant upgrades to other parts of the trans-Pennine network. This favoured NPR route is integrated with the two Northern arms of HS2, together with another new section between Liverpool and Manchester Airport and a major upgrade from Leeds to Newcastle. Based on the spatially uneven effects of other high-speed rail schemes (Chen and Hall 2012; Tomaney and Marques 2013), this is likely to foster future concentration and agglomeration around its main urban hubs, particularly Manchester, Leeds and Bradford. The question of whether or not the government will find the £39 billion required to build NPR is viewed as a critical test of its commitment to the NPh in view of its lack of major investment commitment since 2016 (former regional transport official, author’s interview, August 2017).

Another key dimension of the NPh as an accumulation strategy concerns the promotion of the region for inward investment and trade. This is a key sphere in which the spatial imaginary of globally competitive, multi-city region has been mobilised, creating an analogy between the NPh and a Chinese mega-region of around 15 million residents (Government official, authors’ interview, September 2017). Investment opportunities in the NPh region have been packaged in the form of a Northern Powerhouse ‘pitchbook’ of projects which was first put together for a trade mission to China in 2015 (UK Trade & Investment 2015). This approach promotes spatial concentration with smaller cities and outlying districts critical of the dominance of the core cities, particularly Manchester, in the list of projects (local authority official, author’s interview, March 2018). This element of the regional accumulation strategy has been led by the national state, involving adjustments to its ‘mode of articulation’ through the formation of a dedicated NPh team based in Manchester within the Department for International Trade. Similar arrangements are evident for the ME, which has an investment hub based in Birmingham and an investment portfolio that parallels the NPh ‘pitchbook’ (Table 3).

The Northern Powerhouse as a Regional Hegemonic Vision

The NPh was a central strand of the Conservative's 2015 election campaign and became a 'top five policy priority' following their victory (senior policy maker, author's interview, September 2017). As a regional hegemonic project, it was designed to appeal to a broader Northern public, providing a "new lexicon for central government, businesses, and civil society" to promote the economic development of the North (Raikes *et al.* 2018: 9). Osborne appointed Lord O'Neill as Commercial Secretary to the Treasury with overarching responsibility for the NPh. This appointment served to broaden the NPh 'mode of representation' with O'Neill perceived as "left of centre" and better placed to talk to northern Labour councils and audiences than Osborne himself (O'Neill 2017). With Cameron and Osborne at the height of their political powers in the wake of their 2015 electoral victory, the NPh attained a degree of regional political hegemony. At this moment of 'peak Powerhouse' in 2015, the term NPh was recognised by 56 per cent of northerners (Raikes *et al.* 2018: 9), reflecting its use as a label for a series of spending announcements (Lee 2017; Table 3). The political effect was not only to reframe the issue as one of positive economic potential opportunity rather than regional inequality and decline, but also to reposition the Conservatives as the party leading efforts to promote regional growth.

The 'mode of representation' associated with the NPh favours business interests, local government leaders and research-intensive universities. Mainstream business organisations such as the CBI and Chamber of Commerce are broadly supportive of the initiative, along with leading businesses in the region such as the Manchester Airport Group, Siemens and Drax, although this is often mixed with confusion over what it means in practice and frustration over a perceived lack of investment and delivery (Cox and Hunter 2015: 10). The leaders of the major Northern cities rapidly adopted the NPh discourse, recognising its roots in the growing collaboration between them and viewing it as a collective, boosterist project to promote the region to national and international audiences and attract additional investment and devolved powers (author's interviews).

Following his dismissal as Chancellor by the new PM, Theresa May, in July 2016, George Osborne continued to promote the NPh concept, establishing the Northern Powerhouse Partnership (NPP). This was set up as an advocacy organisation to provide "a proper voice for

business and civic leaders” (think tank representative, authors’ interview, February 2018) with a business-led board compared of leading business figures in the region alongside civic leaders, the Chair of TfN and the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Manchester. This alliance between business interests, local authority leaders, former ministers and a Russell Group university can be seen the basis of the hegemonic bloc that supports the NPh vision, representing key elements of ‘the social base of the state’. The NPP helps Northern business interests and civic leaders to represent the North as a ‘space for itself’ (Lipietz 1994). It plays an important role in framing the NPh policy agenda; for instance, extending it to education (NPP 2018). At the same time, underlying tensions between local political leaders and national government can periodically erupt. For instance, the Labour Mayor of Liverpool, Joe Anderson, resigned from the NPP board in December 2018, citing the failure of the government to commit £7bn to a new high-speed rail link between Liverpool and the HS2 route (Banerjee 2018).

The NPh hegemonic vision has been challenged by some civil society actors. In particular, it has been criticised for a lack of gender balance and narrow focus on business and transport. This criticism was triggered by the lack of women speakers at the private sector-run NPh Conference in 2017 (Salles 2018), prompting a boycott. As one respondent explained:

...and we were just sort of saying that it wasn’t just about who was talking about the Northern Powerhouse... it was also what they were talking about. And the agenda was pretty much three or four days of ... there wasn’t even the word people, communities, you know people’s lives ... that didn’t seem to feature at all in the agenda at all about business and investment, trains and infrastructure, and digital or whatever. And so, whose North is it anyway? Whose Northern Powerhouse is it? What is the Northern Powerhouse? (NPh campaigner, author’s interview, February 2018).

This led to the establishment of ‘People’s Powerhouse’ (PP) group which calls for a more inclusive north that represents diverse voices and strengths (The People’s Powerhouse 2017). This movement, seeking to represent ‘excluded social forces’ (Hall 2011), has quickly acquired a presence on the NPh circuit as a part of a broader, participative agenda beyond government and business (author’s notes, Convention of the North, September 2019). This underlines the movement’s resonance in articulating a broader sense of public estrangement from the

mainstream NPh project, reflected in the receptiveness of established NPh actors to the PP agenda.

The Brexit referendum exposed an underlying pattern of intra-regional inequality whereby many former industrial towns and rural areas of the North voted 'leave', while the core cities, with the exception of Sheffield, voted 'remain', albeit rather narrowly in most cases (Inclusive Growth Commission 2016). This division was underpinned by a strong sense of economic stagnation, insecurity and mistrust of political elites among working class voters outside the major cities (Hazeldine 2017). Whilst rooted in the experience of deindustrialisation, income inequality and austerity (MacLeod and Jones 2018), this sense of marginalisation was compounded by the adoption of city-centric growth strategies that have concentrated investment in urban cores rather than attempting to equalise or spread it across the region (Pike 2018). The assumption was that the benefits of investment in city centres would somehow filter out to surrounding districts and towns, but it has become increasingly clear that this is not the case, leading to the identification of surrounding districts and towns as 'left behind' (Goodwin and Heath 2016). The tendency of disaffected working-class voters in these areas to support 'leave' can be seen as part of the broader international phenomenon of the 'revenge of the rustbelt' (McQuarrie 2017). It reflects the failure of the NPh and previous regional policies to generate a sufficient "flow of material concessions" and benefits to "subordinate social forces" (Jessop 1990: 210) in the shape of working-class residents of the post-industrial North (Hazeldine 2017).

While the May government publicly affirmed its commitment to the NPh project in autumn 2016, publishing a NPh strategy with little in the way of new spending commitments (Bounds and Tighe 2016), this was a response to pressure from Northern interests rather than a genuine enthusiasm from May and the new Chancellor, Philip Hammond (government official, author's interview, February 2018). Accordingly, the NPh project lost momentum with May's two key special advisors between 2016 and 2017 blocking any mention of the term "as they hated Osborne basically" (senior policy maker, author's interview, September 2017). This sparked fears that the NPh would be eclipsed by the rival ME strategy which the new government appeared more supportive of (Harrison 2016). Indeed, O'Neill resigned from the government in September 2016, having felt marginalised after the dismissal of Osborne. Subsequently, the NPh Minister, Jake Berry, attempted to rebrand it as 'Northern Powerhouse 2.0' in 2018, based on a 'whole North approach' encompassing smaller cities and towns (Bounds 2018). While

these statements were suggestive of a shift away from the original NPh agglomeration model (Lee 2017), the government struggled to translate them into coherent policy in an unstable political environment dominated by Brexit.

Despite the downgrading of the NPh after 2016, it has not been eclipsed by the ME. Rather, the broader regional agenda lost momentum under the May government. Levels of investment remain higher for the NPh than the ME, even on a per capita basis, although some of this reflects the legacy of earlier commitments (Table 3). In addition, the NPh has a dedicated minister (elevated to Cabinet status in July 2019) and a statutory sub-national transport body, compared to the ME's 'Ministerial Champion' and an as yet non-statutory transport body (Table 3). Furthermore, the Government established the NP11 group in 2018, comprised of the Chairs of the 11 Northern LEPs, proclaiming it as a new 'Council of the North' akin to the body established by Edward IV in 1472 (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) 2018). At the same time, however, the government committed £3.5 billion to a new expressway and £1 billion to the western section of new railway for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc (HM Treasury 2018). In conjunction with higher levels of infrastructure investment in London (Pike *et al.* 2019), this investment suggests that supporting key growth regions in the South to maintain national competitiveness remains a stronger influence on the spatial selectivity of the UK state than competing pressures to promote the development of lagging regions.

In contrast to May, her successor as PM, Boris Johnson, emphasised his support for the NPh in a key speech delivered in Manchester during his first week in office, subsequently pledging to build the Leeds-Manchester section of NPR, framed by a new discourse of "levelling up" growth across the country (The Conservative Party 2019). This was accompanied by an expansion of the Towns Fund, originally announced by May in March 2019 (MHCLG 2019). In the context of Brexit, the Conservative's efforts to appeal to working class voters in the so-called 'red wall' of Labour seats in the North and Midlands gained renewed impetus, based on a populist 'one nation' vision that seeks to reconstitute the social base of the state by targeting disaffected 'leave' supporters in post-industrial towns and districts beyond the major cities (Balls 2019). This strengthened Northern strategy wrought dramatic gains in the General Election of December 2019 with the Conservatives winning 28 Northern seats from Labour as part of an overall majority of 80 seats (Curtice 2019). This electoral breakthrough makes regional policy a key domestic political priority for the Conservatives in order to retain the

support of voters in Northern regions that are most exposed to the negative economic consequences of Brexit (Chen *et al.* 2018).

Devolution as a ‘State Spatial Project’

English devolution can be seen as a state spatial project that seeks to bring together national and local government actors through the transfer of specified powers and resources to local institutions, although the government’s approach has been ad hoc and piecemeal, eschewing any wider constitutional vision of how devolution should be organised across England (Ayres *et al.* 2018). It is not confined to the North of England, of course, also covering parts of the Midlands and South. While devolution and the NPh are distinct political initiatives, they were “hitched together” by Osborne in his June 2014 speech (Blakely and Evans 2018: 200). The relationship between them is closer than the general sense of overlap and interdependence between a state spatial project and state spatial strategy (Brenner 2004) as devolution to Northern city regions has been directly folded into the NPh strategy as a key ‘ingredient’ (Lee 2017). This is based upon the government’s conflation of devolution and local economic growth (Bailey and Wood 2017), despite the inconclusive international evidence on the ‘economic dividend’ of devolution (Pike *et al.* 2012). In common with the NPh, the emphasis on devolution peaked in 2014-6, with the Treasury led by Osborne acting as the key meta-governor. As a state spatial project, English devolution embodies the tensions identified by Brenner (2004) between centralisation and decentralisation in scalar terms, and between uniformity and customisation along the territorial dimension.

Based on the earlier City Deals, English devolution has been enacted through a distinct ‘mode of articulation’ (Jessop 2016a), involving the bilateral negotiation of ‘deals’ between government ministers and officials and local authority and business leaders (O’Brien and Pike 2019). While the government argues that this approach ensures that devolution is highly customised to local needs (*ibid*), there has been a lot of commonality in practice between the powers on offer to different local areas, typically covering transport, skills and employment, land and housing, public services and finance (Sandford 2017). As a form of meta-governance, devolution deals are agreed through dialogue based upon negotiated consent between unequal partners within a highly asymmetrical system of local-central relations (Bailey and Wood 2017). They are more akin to delegation than actual political devolution with local institutions effectively acting as agents of central government (Pike *et al.* 2016), although some local

leaders were able to push back against the government on certain points (Ayres *et al.* 2018). Indeed, Sandford (2017: 64) characterizes this model of devolution as contractual, based on agreements to pursue “agreed policy outcomes in discrete policy areas” which impose “quasi contractual obligations on local authorities, complete with financial assessments, evaluation requirements, and conditions of ‘business readiness’”. This incremental model of devolution has not delivered a substantial decentralisation of authority and resources (see Rodriguez-Pose and Gill 2003; Tomaney 2016).

English devolution is spatially selective in nature, adopting a highly customised or differentiated mode of representing local areas (Brenner 2004). It has focused largely on major city-regions, although deals were agreed for a small number of rural areas, some of which subsequently collapsed (Ayres *et al.* 2018). While spatial selectivity could be viewed as an effect of an ostensibly aspatial approach that emphasises governance structures and implementation capacity over geography (Sandford 2017), this argument ignores an important element of explicit selection influenced by theories of agglomeration and the prior privileging of the city-regional scale (Haughton *et al.* 2016). With regard to governance structures, the establishment of CAs between neighbouring councils was a key pre-condition for devolution (Figure 2). Manchester led the way on devolution through the Greater Manchester agreement of November 2014, followed by another five supplementary deals which transferred additional powers, including health and social care in February 2015 (Greater Manchester Independent Prosperity Review 2018). Subsequently, devolution deals were agreed with another five Northern city-regions: Liverpool City Region, Sheffield City Region, West Yorkshire, Tees Valley and the North East (Figure 2). With the exception of Cornwall, the government has insisted on the establishment of directly elected ‘metro mayors’ as a condition of devolution deals.

Figure 2 about here

The spatial selectivity of the devolution project has been exacerbated by problems in agreeing deals in some areas, particularly the North East and Yorkshire (Giovannini 2018). The original devolution deal for the North East collapsed after four of seven local authorities rejected it, although a reduced ‘North of the Tyne deal’ was then agreed for the other three authorities and a Labour mayor elected in May 2019 (Lempriere and Lowndes 2019). Both the South

Yorkshire and West Yorkshire deals ran into political difficulties with 18 of the region's 20 local authorities and key business organisations subsequently expressing support for a 'One Yorkshire' regional deal (Giovannini 2018). The government rejected the 'One Yorkshire' proposal in February 2019, urging local leaders to focus on the agreement and implementation of city-regional deals, thus reiterating the scalar singularity of the 'state spatial project' of English devolution. Local authority leaders have subsequently agreed to implement the South Yorkshire deal, alongside renewed negotiations on a West Yorkshire deal (Bounds 2020). Like the broader NPh, devolution lost momentum under the May government, representing a stalled spatial project in need of political reinvigoration. Echoing its 2017 predecessor, the Conservative Party manifesto for the 2019 General Election included a commitment to publish a White Paper on English devolution in 2020, signalling a potential shift from a spatially selective model towards a more comprehensive approach (Carter 2019).

The spatially selectivity of English devolution is creating a growing governance and financial gap between devolved and non-devolved areas. In particular, Osborne rewarded devolved areas with additional funding (government official, author's interview, February 2018). From a multispatial metagovernance perspective (Jessop 2016b), such 'fiscal conditioning' acts as a key framing mechanism (Bailey and Wood 2017), whereby central government offers economic incentives to encourage local organisations to meet its objectives, in contrast to Labour's previous reliance on targets (Clarke and Cochrane 2013). This approach has persisted with, for instance, half of the Transforming Cities Fund for local transport schemes devolved to the areas with mayors, leaving the government to allocate the remainder between all other city-regions on a competitive bidding basis (Department for Transport 2018).

Several respondents suggested that the election of 'metro mayors' as new political actors would eclipse the NPh by privileging the interests of city-regions over wider pan-Northern concerns (author's interviews). In practice, however, Northern mayors have periodically deployed the NPh imaginary to criticise government policy and call for increased investment and further devolution (Tighe and Bounds 2018). For instance, they were key players in the establishment of the Convention of the North as a civic forum which brings together political leaders, business, civil society and academia, contributing to the emergence of the North as 'a space for itself' (Lipietz 1994). At the same, however, political tensions have emerged between Mayors representing the interests of their areas, particularly in relation to NPR investments (Williams 2019). While city-regions remain the primary units of devolved governance in the North, the

trans-regional scale of the NPh plays a supplementary role as a ‘soft’ space of cross-regional collaboration between local political actors, amplifying their voices in lobbying the central state for additional resources and powers.

Conclusions

This paper has sought to make three main contributions to the further spatialisation and advancement of SRST. First, it has provided a fuller understanding of the specific political strategies and projects by which states seek to govern and manage uneven regional development. Despite the political and economic dominance of London and South East England, the NPh initiative is testament to a continued sense in which regional inequalities in England remain a political problem for the UK state, generating pressures for national politicians to respond. In particular, it reflects the need to maintain the political legitimacy of the state in the context of widening regional inequalities. The paper argued that the NPh is best understood as a state spatial strategy designed to strengthen the economic performance and competitiveness of the north of England, linked to a state spatial project of devolution. It can be seen as a kind of compensatory strategy designed to support an economically lagging region alongside on-going state support for growth in London and the South East. The NPh was followed by a parallel strategy for the Midlands, although this has never quite matched the national prominence of the NPh. The higher profile of the NPh not only reflects a sense of the North as a greater electoral challenge for the Conservatives than the Midlands (Goodman 2015), but also speaks to the broader geographical significance of the North as England’s enduring regional other (Taylor 1993), stuck on the wrong side of the North-South divide.

Second, the paper sought to re-politicise SRST through a focus on the actions and rationales of the key political and economic actors working through the state (Varro 2010). Framed by the broader post-crisis discourse of spatial rebalancing, the NPh strategy was orchestrated by national politicians, principally George Osborne, as part of a broader Conservative appeal to working class voters in the North of England. Following the Conservative’s election victory in 2015, the NPh enjoyed a hegemonic moment in 2015-16 as the pre-eminent regional state strategy. This proved fleeting, however, with the Brexit vote demonstrating the failure of the NPh and previous regional strategies to generate a sufficient flow of material benefits to working class residents in the post-industrial hinterlands of the core cities. This has undermined

the original NPh vision based upon the city-centric economics of agglomeration (Lee 2017), leaving something of a theoretical vacuum. In response, different regional actors have advanced their own overlapping visions of the NPh through a variety of reports and speeches, periodically converging to demand additional powers and resources from the central state. This re-politicisation of the state requires SRST to move beyond the theoretical recognition of institutional and political differentiation to develop a more open and plural sense of the state, viewing state spatial strategies and state spatial projects as shaped by multiple actors, visions and priorities.

Third, the paper has traced the evolution of the NPh as it has unfolded over time, reconceptualising state spatial strategies and state spatial projects as emergent pathways of action that can result in a range of policy outcomes, including policy failure as well as effective delivery (Davidson 2019). Since 2016, the NPh has been undermined by changes of government, political divisions and rivalries, and a lack of state capacity. It has been implemented through a nationally-centralised and increasingly dysfunctional ‘mode of intervention’ (Jessop 2016a) characterised by a lack of material investment and dedicated organisational capacity, spawning a fragmented array of often under-powered organisations and initiatives. In response, there is a need to rework the UK state’s mode of intervention away from the short-term political drama of annual budget announcements to the serious pursuit of long-term spatial rebalancing goals (UK 2070 Commission 2019). More broadly, understanding state spatial strategies and state spatial projects as dynamic and unfolding fosters a more fluid and provisional conception of state action (McConnell 2016). Yet further research to advance this understanding should avoid over-immersion in the micro-practices of state agencies, maintaining a theoretical sensitivity towards the structuring effects of broader, cross-regional processes and patterns of state restructuring (Peck 2015).

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Table 1 Six dimensions of the state

<i>State dimension</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>SRST linkage</i>
Modes of representation (representational regime)	These give social forces access to the state apparatus and its capacities	Unequal access to state Unequal ability to resist at distance from state Unequal ability to shape, make and implement decisions
Mode of articulation (internal structures of the state)	Institutional architecture of the level and branches of the state	Unequal capacity to shape, make and implement decisions
Modes of intervention (patterns of intervention)	Modes of intervention inside the state and beyond it	Different sites and mechanisms of intervention
Social basis of the state (social bases of state power)	Institutionalised social compromise	Uneven distribution of material and symbolic concessions to the ‘population’ in order to secure support for the state, state projects, specific policy sets, and hegemonic visions
State project	Secures operational unity of the state and its capacity to act	Linked to modes of intervention. Overcomes improbability of unified state system by orienting state agencies and agents
Hegemonic vision (hegemonic project)	Defines nature and purpose of the state for wider social formation	Provides legitimacy for the state, defined in terms of promoting common good, etc.

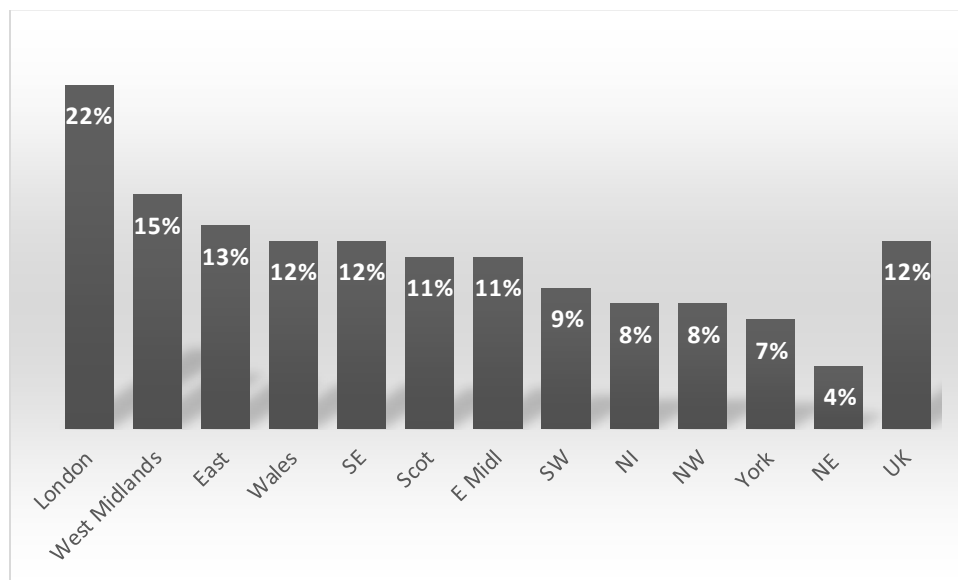
Source: Jessop 2016a: 58; Etherington and Jones 2018: 56-57.

Table 2 Key parameters for the evolution of state spatial organisation

	<i>State spatial projects</i>	<i>State spatial strategies</i>
Scalar dimension	Centralisation versus decentralisation	Singularity versus multiplicity
Territorial dimension	Standardisation versus customisation	Equalisation versus concentration

Source: adapted from Brenner (2004: 97) and Varro (2010: 1274).

Figure 1 Cumulative economic growth by UK region / country GVA (balanced approach), adjusted for inflation



Source: Harari, D (2018) Regional and local economic growth statistics. Briefing Paper 05795, 5 September. House of Commons Library, London.

Table 3 The Northern Powerhouse and Midlands Engine Compared

	Northern Powerhouse (NPh)	Midlands Engine (ME)
Economy (2017)	343 billion (19% UK)	238 billion (13% UK)
Population	15.4 million	10.2 million
Government support	Minister (Cabinet Status from July 2019)	Ministerial Champion
Economic strategy	NPh Strategy, November 2016	ME Strategy, March 2017
Devolution: Mayoral Combined Authorities	Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, Tees Valley, North of Tyne, Sheffield City Region	West Midlands
Transport		
Stated government investment 2015-20	£13 billion	£5.2 billion-
Transport body	Transport for the North (TfN) (2014) (statutory since April 2018)	Midlands Connect (2014)
Strategy	Strategic Transport Plan (2019), £70 billion	Midland Connect Strategy (2017)
Selected major science and innovation investments	Sir Henry Royce Centre for Material Research (£235 m); small modular reactor development and nuclear research programme (£250m); National Graphene Institute/Graphene Engineering Innovation Centre (£45 m); High-value manufacturing catapult (£38m)	Energy Research Accelerators (£60m); Defence & National Rehabilitation Centre (up to £70m); UK Mobility Data Institute (£20m)
Research partnership	N8 (8 research-intensive universities)	Midlands Innovation (university and innovation partnership involving 8 universities)
Enterprise and innovation	NPh Investment Fund (£400m)	ME Investment Fund (£250m)
Trade & inward investment	NPh Region (DIT)	Midland Investment Hub (DIT)
Education	Northern Powerhouse Schools Strategy (£70m)	Midlands Skills Challenge (£20ml)
Culture and arts	The Factory, Manchester (£78m); Great Exhibition of the North (£5m); Great Exhibition Legacy Fund (£15m); Hull City of Culture (£13m)	Commonwealth Games Athletes Village (£165m); Coventry City of Culture (£8.5m)

Source: author's research

Figure 2 Devolution and Combined Authorities in the Northern Powerhouse

