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## **New East Manchester: Urban Renaissance or Urban Opportunism?**

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**Abstract** - In this paper we ask how a shrinking city responds when faced with a perforated urban fabric. Drawing on Manchester's response to its perforated eastern flank - and informed by a parallel study of Leipzig - we use the city's current approach to critique urban regeneration policy in England. Urban renaissance holds out the promise of delivering more sustainable - that is more compact, more inclusive and more equitable - cities. However, the Manchester study demonstrated that the attempt to stem population loss from the city is at best fragile, despite a raft of policies now in place to support urban renaissance in England. It is argued here that Manchester like Leipzig is likely to face an ongoing battle to attract residents back from their suburban hinterlands. This is especially true of the family market that we identify as being an important element for long-term sustainable population growth in both cities. We use the case of New East Manchester to consider how discourses linked to urban renaissance - particularly those that link urbanism with greater densities - rule out some of the options available to Leipzig, namely, managing the long-term perforation of the city. We demonstrate that while Manchester is inevitably committed to the urban renaissance agenda, in practice New East Manchester demonstrates a far more pragmatic - but equally unavoidable - approach. This we attribute to the gap between renaissance and regeneration described by Amin et al (2000) who define the former as urbanism for the middle class and the latter as urbanism for the working class. While this opportunistic approach may ultimately succeed in producing development on the ground, it will not address the fundamental, and chronic, problem; the combination of push and pull that sees families relocating to suburban areas. Thus, if existing communities in East Manchester are to have their area buoyed up - or sustained - by incomers, and especially families, with greater levels of social capital and higher incomes urban policy in England will have to be challenged.

Key words: urban renaissance; Manchester; Leipzig; sustainable population growth; families

## **New East Manchester: Urban Renaissance or Urban Opportunism?**

### **Introduction**

What does a shrinking city do when faced with a perforated urban fabric? Shrinking cities are increasingly attracting the attention of researchers and urban policy makers and not without reason. Although not unique to Europe, as an aging continent where many nations are barely - or are failing to - reproduce themselves, the question of shrinking cities is likely to become increasingly pressing over time (Hall & Pfiffer 2000). Leipzig is an often cited example, which is known locally to as the shrinking city. It was included in Germany's Federal Ministry of Education and Research recently completed project 'Stadt 2030', which sought to model the future of the participating cities in 2030. A related study funded by the Anglo- German Foundation – and which informs this paper - asked what lessons Manchester and Leipzig could learn from one another as shrinking cities (Mace et al 2005). Shrinking cities have attracted attention for a number of reasons, an earlier article in *European Planning Studies*, for example, considered whether shrinking cities sprawl differently from growing cities (Couch et al 2005) and indeed there is now an interdisciplinary website dedicated to the subject ([www.shrinkingcities.com](http://www.shrinkingcities.com)).

This paper focuses on how Manchester has responded to its perforated urban fabric to the east of the city. Covering some 1,900 hectares and largely comprising former industrial land, this is now the location of a suite of regeneration projects that loosely come together under the banner New East Manchester. In this paper we argue that the city's pragmatic response to its fragmented urban fabric reveals the limits of current urban policy in England. As Cochrane (2003) has noted, urban policy is an ill-defined concept but we use it here to refer to, 'the sum of the initiatives that have been given the urban label.' (ibid 2003: 224). Urban policy, as currently formulated in England, places cities at the centre of the sustainability debate, however, a set of policies focus on the role of cities in addressing issues of environmental and social sustainability (for example the Urban Task Force report 1999, DETR 2000, ODPM 2003). These

environmental and social policies are linked by a common - compact cities – solution, which arguably, is driven by the demands of an over-pressured southeast. In seeking to promote the compact city, urban centres are now at the heart of, not only the environmental agenda (taking pressure of the countryside) but are also central to an attempt to achieve an urban form that can socially engineer a more inclusive, mutually supportive society. This, it is argued here, places demands on cities that are - at best – ambitious and at worst could undermine the attempts of northern cities to close their perforated spaces. Manchester’s approach in New East Manchester has been to cover the open spaces with land hungry uses (such as sports stadia) and with high-density residential blocks which ape the booming city centre market for apartments. In this respect Manchester is drawing on the Leipzig approach which is open to the notion of a looser city (Doehler-Behezadi & Schiffers 2004). While the recent development in New East Manchester contributes to a growing sense of the successful transformation of the city’s fortunes, both the stadia and the apartments reveal the limits of the government’s urban agenda. Sports stadia, super casinos and ‘out of town’ superstores fill the gaps but do not sit easily with the urban renaissance vision, which laments ‘the loss of fine urban grain’ (Urban Task Force 1999: 50) found in locations such as Notting Hill, an early inner-London suburb. Such a vision, of the compact inner-suburb, makes sense in the hot housing markets of the southeast. However, in this paper we contend that Manchester’s pragmatic attempt to cover its perforated eastern inner-suburb with land hungry, relatively low density uses makes sense within its regional setting. Yet this leaves unanswered an important question. A key appeal of the compact city for the present government is that it has the potential to reduce social exclusion through creating more balanced communities, although Burton (2000) demonstrates that this link is far from being clear it remains an alluring possibility. The belief is that new households with greater social capital can buoy up entire areas by enhancing social, economic and environmental sustainability in one strike. But, if the future for New East Manchester – as evidenced to date - is a centre of land hungry regional functions, inter-dispersed with exclusive flats, what

of the existing residents in neighbourhoods such as Beswick? Is their route to social inclusion to lie simply in servicing a series of leisure complexes that have been parachuted into their midst? The perforated city will be built over, and there may also be economic regeneration, according to some measures. But there is no necessary link between these improvements and the destiny of the existing residents. This is a risk already highlighted by a number of commentators (Amin et al (2000), Mellor (2002) Ward (2003)). We suggest that bringing the family market into the area would be a difficult, yet essential task if there is any real chance achieving the government's goal of balanced and inclusive communities. Here we find common cause with Manchester's present approach to its perforated areas. Families have tended to move out of the city and inner-suburbs, they do not form part of the booming city centre housing market (Schoon 2001, Allen & Blandy 2004); what does Manchester have that will entice them back? It is unlikely that the higher density build favoured by the government (centred in an increasingly pressured southeast) will bring families back into Manchester. Therefore, we argue that Manchester should continue to utilise the single greatest asset that it has in New East Manchester, namely space, to attract families into housing built to lower densities than those promulgated by the new urbanists in central government.

### **Cities as solutions – a crisis of southern England**

Two sets of national forecasts had a profound effect on the political climate in England, preparing the way for the urban renaissance agenda. First was the white paper *Roads for Prosperity* (DoT, 1989), which forecast a doubling of road traffic in the following twenty-five years. A massive road-building scheme was proposed to protect Britain's economic performance. Middle England found itself aligned with eco warriors against the bulldozer. The Conservative's Government's road building programme was doomed after the notorious carving up of Twyford Down. Eco warriors and Middle England were, unusually, united and the road-building lobby were forced to retreat (Schoon, 2001). Ten years later another set of government predictions, this time for housing, had middle

England once again manning the barricades. The Crow Report (1999) indicated the need for 55,000 new homes annually in the South East. Once again, left wing environmentalists and more traditional rural lobby groups – notably the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) - made surprising bedfellows. This unexpected confluence of interests between left- and right-wing political groupings created an effective coalition against mass road-building and then mass house building that was hard to ignore.

Between 1998 and 2002 the Urban Task Force developed its report *Towards an Urban Renaissance*, which set the scene for a number of pro urban events including an Urban White Paper (DETR 2000). The concept of urban renaissance has been critiqued by Lees (2003) who argues that it engages in a middle class discourse of the city – as a gentrification charter. Still, if the city were to be more thoroughly gentrified, then something would have to be done about the deprived already in situ. The second strand of urban policy has centred on the concept of regeneration. New Deal has sought to return people, or in some cases to introduce them to employment. The Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) of which New Deal is a part, pursues a range of geographically based initiatives that seek to reduce social exclusion and tackle poor service delivery by the state sector in deprived areas. These initiatives have been the subject of criticism by Imrie & Raco (2003) who argue that communities are being constructed as both the mechanism for solving social problems *and* the problem itself. Ward (2003a) demonstrates how this has played out in the east Manchester area, arguing that communities are now expected to conform to alien social norms. Notwithstanding these critiques, the thinking behind the present raft of policies is likely to persist for the foreseeable future. For the purpose of this paper it is the distinction made by Amin et al (2000) that is most pertinent; that urban renaissance is largely for the middle class while urban regeneration concerns itself with the working class. We may take this point further, In future cities, comprising the very rich and the poor (Hamnett 2004), the renaissance will

define how the city will be and regeneration will ensure that the poor have some part to play in it.

Cities then, have turned from being the problem to the solution. The growing pressures surrounding new roads and rural housing can be met by returning people to the cities and once there, these new mixed tenure communities living at higher densities offer up the promise of securing the social and economic sustainability of previously deprived neighbourhoods. It would be wrong to suggest that the government's attempt to achieve a virtuous circle of sustainability – by repopulating and re-densifying cities - is entirely housing-led, but with the publication of the Communities Plan (ODPM, 2003), the UK government has placed housing at the centre of its urban policy. The Communities Plan, including interventions such as the housing market renewal fund (HMRF), along with other government policy advice on housing (e.g. PPG3, (DETR 2000)), seek to transform the relationship of the English to their cities. The aim is to arrest the long-standing tendency to counter-urbanisation in the UK (Champion, 1998, 2000). Given the weight of policy that now resides behind the urban renaissance movement, and the promise of solving so many problems with one big idea, it was perhaps hardly surprising to find that officials in Manchester were implacably committed to the growth agenda. Perhaps more surprisingly, Leipzig too was only planning for population growth. But how realistic is this shared aim and what are the implications?

### **Manchester – pre-shrunk and perforated.**

Manchester may seem an odd inclusion in the canon of shrinking cities. It is perhaps more accurate to see it as having already shrunk and as being on the cusp of renewed and sustained growth. It would be churlish not to acknowledge the transformation of the city centre and a number of inner city locations such as Hulme, but it is still the case that population recovery across the city is weak. These mixed fortunes have led to Manchester being described as, ‘the fastest growing shrinking city in the world’ (Ferrari & Roberts 2004: 50). For now, it is sufficient to chart the causes of past decline that have led to the current perforation of the city in New East Manchester. We will return later to consider the nature of Manchester’s current resurgence.

#### The rise and fall of Manchester

The city was at its height between 1890 and 1915. The opening of the Manchester Ship Canal in 1894 assisted by making Manchester a major inland port with the city at the hub of a complex canal network and growing rail system. Since this time Manchester has suffered a huge loss of jobs and fundamental shifts in types of employment - especially during the second half of the twentieth century. Between 1971 and 1997 employment fell in Manchester by 26% (from 344,739 to 254,550 jobs). The manufacturing sector was particularly hard hit and the period 1981 to 1997 saw a huge decline in manufacturing jobs in Manchester; male jobs in the sub-sector declined by 64% while for females the decline was 60%.

There have been substantial shifts in employment patterns which have led to marked changes in: first, the geography of employment, with Greater Manchester generally gaining more employment than the city itself and second, the gender balance of employment, with females in the workplace outnumbering males since 1994. Third, there has been a shift from full time to part time employment. Along with ‘banking and finance’, ‘Public Administration, Health and Education’ was the

only other growth area. This sector offers a useful illustration of the shift both from full time to part time work and from male to female employment (table 1).

**Table 1:** Manchester - changes in employment in Administration, Health and Education sub-sector - 1981 – 1997. (Source: Giordano B., & Twomey L., 2002)

Male fulltime	Female fulltime	Male part time	Female part time	Total Increase Male	Total Increase Female
- 3 300	3 200	745	1 800	2 555	5 000

Finally, although higher-order financial services have been identified as a strength (Kitchen 1997), it is important to remember that manufacturing still employs 24,400 people in Manchester and over 400,000 in the North West region. Although the city council now makes much of Manchester’s high-technology and service sector led future, it would be wrong to assume that Manchester has abandoned entirely its manufacturing tradition.

Manchester has lost population in part because of these changes in employment, but also because of housing policy which in the past has sought to solve slum housing problems by suburbanising the population. Between 1951-1981 Manchester’s population declined by one third from 703,000 to 462,700. This loss has continued and Manchester’s population now stands at 414,819 (Census 2001). It is important to appreciate that Manchester’s housing market varies greatly across the small area that the authority covers (Ferrari & Roberts 2004). The turnaround of the city centre housing market is associated with the Central Manchester Development Corporation (CMDC). CMDC can be crudely summarised as a central government regeneration agency that worked in partnership with the city between 1988-96 and which attracted £350m investment into central Manchester, created 4,500 new jobs and saw the development of more than 100,000m<sup>2</sup> of office space. Most significantly, for this paper, it primed the current boom in city centre living in Manchester. Under the CMDC 2,500 new

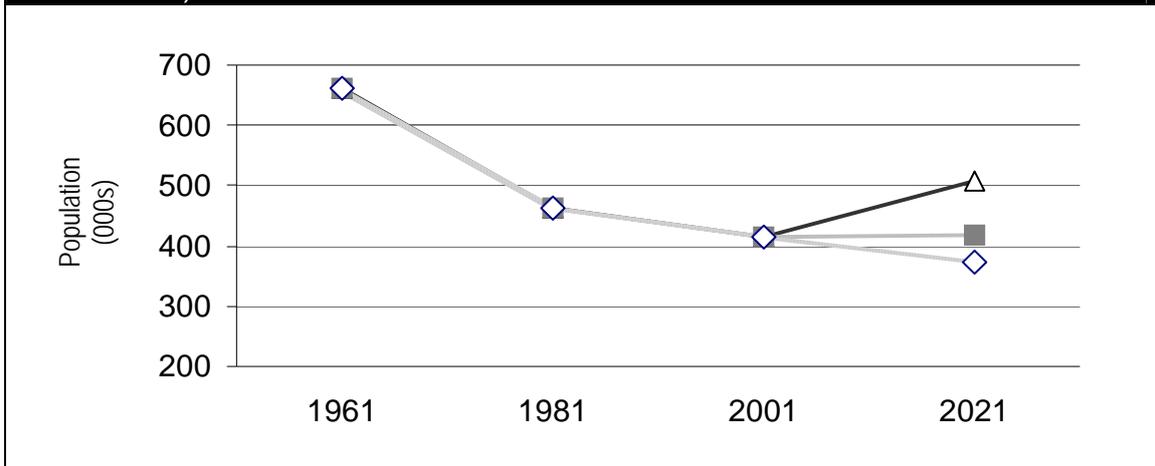
residential units were developed, largely in the historic Castlefield area of the city centre (Deas et al 1999). There continues to be a strong demand for city centre living and there are now about 15,000 people in the city centre. This is expected to rise to 20,000 by 2010, this from a base figure of around 250 when CMDC was established in 1988. We now consider the changes in Manchester's residential population in more detail.

### **Repopulating the city**

The loss of population from UK cities has a long history and is often explained as a culturally-led phenomenon associated – *inter alia* – with the rural preferences of the landed gentry and the mimicking of this power base by the successful industrialists of the nineteenth century (Schoon, 2001). Others have charted the important part that the romantic vision of the countryside plays in the native English psyche (see for example Newby, 1988). Arguably, this rejection of the city finds expression through planning in Ebenezer Howard's concept of the Garden City. In describing some of the disadvantages of the city Howard refers to murky skies, an army of unemployed, and to slums and Gin Palaces; there was much worth rejecting (Howard 1898 cited in Hall 1992). Half a century earlier, Engels had graphically described the misery of Manchester's Little Ireland. Here families sometimes lived in cellars originally excavated to solve damp problems in the poorly built, single-skin terraced housing that had multiplied as Manchester became the first industrial city (Kidd, 2002). By the 1950s, Manchester, along with many other English cities, was seeking in earnest to address this legacy of slum terraces. A typical approach was to move people out to traditional housing in more suburban locations, such as Wythenshawe - ironically, now the location of England's second most deprived ward (National Statistics, 2004). Suffice to say, there has been a longstanding English tradition, both official and individual, of moving from cities when the opportunity arises. The official drive to move people from cities is certainly over, a similar change in individual behaviour is not so certain.

Calculations for the parallel study with Leipzig only produced a strong gain in population if assumptions were made that 70% of all new housing development were to take place in city authorities such as Manchester, with only 30% occurring in more suburban, neighbouring authorities (Mace et al 2005).

**Figure 1: Population scenarios – Manchester 2021 (Source: Census 2001<sup>1</sup> plus calculations)**



### The Family Market?

What then for the future if Manchester's population is only likely to increase significantly if there is a strong urban renaissance – if people with choices start to move back into cities? We would argue that an essential part of this new market would be families; we outline our reasons for this below and then demonstrate the enormity of the task that Manchester and other English cities face if social sustainability is to rest heavily on an urban renaissance. While the future of the city centre housing market may remain the subject of conjecture, it is certain that it is not a family-led revolution (Allen & Blandy 2004). Neighbourhood statistics for Central Ward in Manchester show that under-16s are strongly underrepresented (13.7% as against 21.1% for the city and 20.2% for England) while households in their twenties are strongly over-represented (27.9% as against 19.9% in the city and 12.6% in England). In the family-age group (30-59

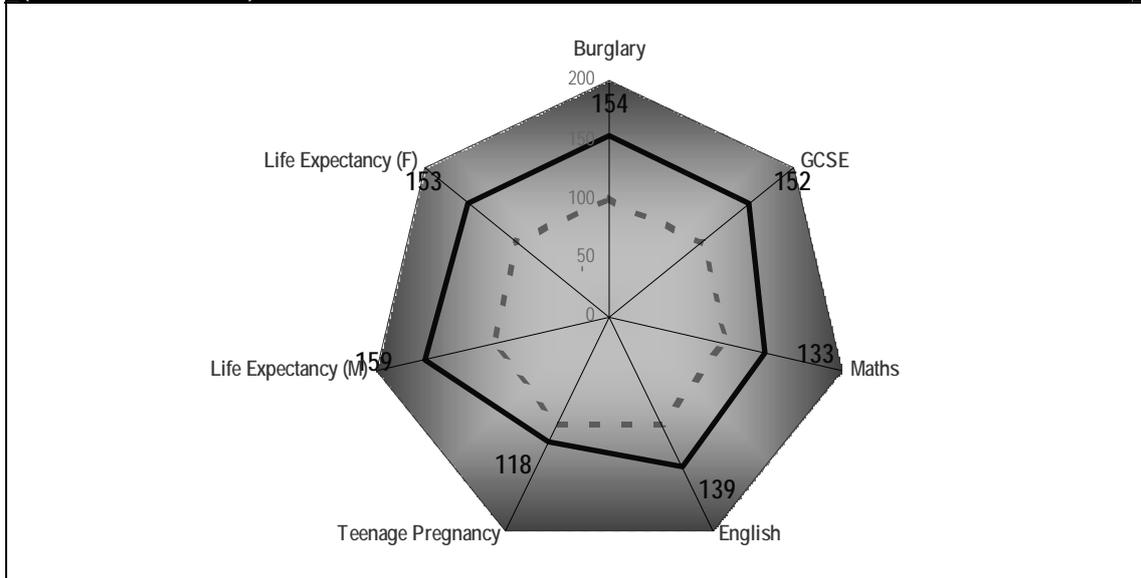
<sup>1</sup> Census output is Crown copyright and is reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO and the Queen's Printer for Scotland

years) the Central Ward is once again under- represented (33.6% as against 35.6% in the city and 41.5% in England) (Neighbourhood Statistics 2004). With the BBC announcing at the end of 2004 its intention to move thousands of staff to Manchester, city officials are keen to take this opportunity to encourage movement into the New East Manchester area rather than to the traditional property hotspots in the city (personal communication). While not wishing to make assumptions about the profile of these employees, the danger is that even if it were successful, such a tactic would only fuel the city centre type market. Yet the family market (we are using family as a shorthand here for people with dependent children) is likely to form an essential part of any plan to create sustainable and mixed communities rather than gentrified ghettos of advantage. Essentially, the family market holds the promise of resolving the divide between urban renaissance and regeneration. If, as Amin et al (2000) contend, renaissance is largely for the middle class and regeneration for the working class, then it is the family market that may best bridge this gap. The family market is less likely to be footloose as are the various child-free groups described by Allen & Blandy (2004). Further, they are more likely to have a stake in local services – such as schools and medical services – and so will have an interest in driving up the quality of these. This, of course, is not a given, but pioneering families moving into edge of centre locations such as East Manchester may be more inclined to commit to the area rather than to contracting out through, for example, private education. Finally, the family market may be less inclined to seek a ghetto of exclusivity -with a focus on enhancing property prices through neighbourhood makeovers - than upwardly mobile professionals (for a description of this phenomenon see Fraser, 2004)

We contend that it is important that families buy in to urban areas as they offer stability and the prospect of a truly inclusive renaissance of our cities. Yet it is exactly this market that is most amenable to suburban living, drawn there by higher standards of education, relatively safe and plentiful open space for children (Schoon, 2001). Here then is a problem. If English cities are to look to

repopulation to transform presently excluded communities, then it is likely that a good proportion of this new population will have to be families for such a policy to succeed, for the reasons outlined above. Yet it is this market that is likely to be the most difficult to attract. Central government and local authorities will both have to get right a number of elements in inner-city locations if these locations are to compete for skilled families who presently live outside of the city. The scale of the challenge is graphically illustrated in Figure 2, which shows Manchester's performance in a number of fields relative to the English average: scores greater than 100 reveal that an authority is performing below the national average in that field. As can be seen, Manchester is under-performing across a range of measures. This performance in part reflects the fact that Manchester is an inner-city area and has a very limited suburban area within its borders, to balance out the poor figures (typical for inner-city areas across England). Nevertheless, it is against these figures that Manchester will be judged when it seeks to retain and also to draw in families.

**Figure 2:** Manchester's status against a range of performance indicators 2002 (Note: Figures greater than 100 indicate worse than the English average) (Source: GONW)



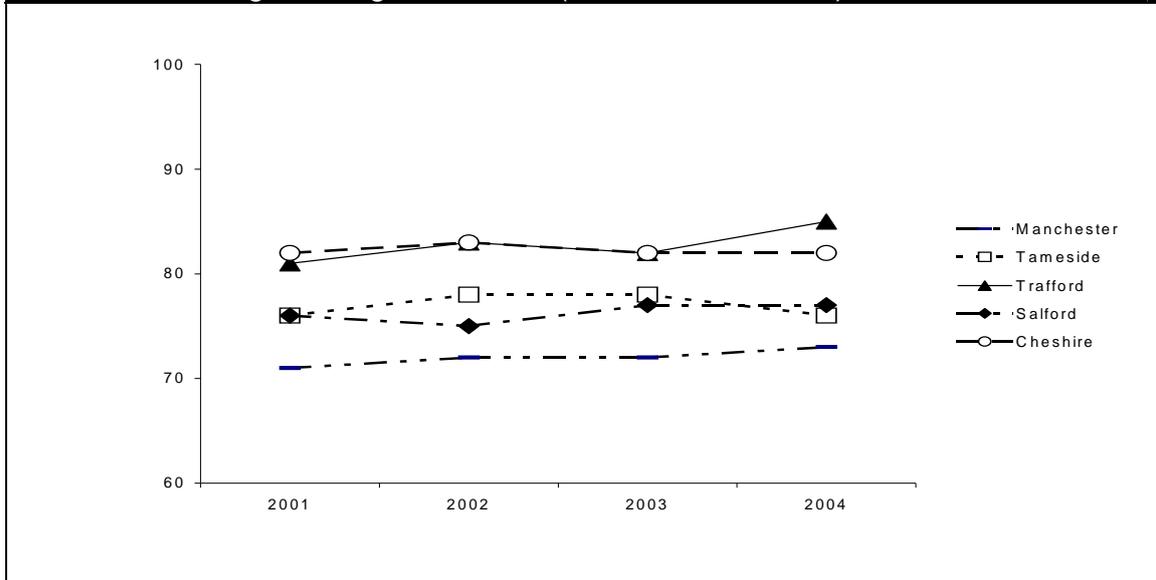
Education will be a key factor in bringing families back in to the city. Improvements in educational performance will require not only a long-term

commitment from Government, but also – more problematically – meeting the challenge of producing high-achieving, yet fully inclusive, inner-city schools that are competitive with suburban schools which higher-income families have already self-selected. Two statistical measures will demonstrate the magnitude of this task.

First, test scores vary widely across the Manchester CPA area and within the four constituent authorities. SATs tests at age 11 record the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level 4 in Literacy, Numeracy and Science. While scores for Manchester pupils have improved more than those in neighbouring authorities Manchester, in absolute terms, still has a considerable way to go (Figure 3). For example, when results for 2004 are averaged across the three subjects only 73% of Manchester's pupils achieved the expected level as opposed to 82% in Chester and 85% in Trafford (DfES, 2004).

Second, a report for the Audit Commission rated the Education Departments of all local authorities on a four-point scale on which 1 was lowest and 4 highest. Manchester and Salford scored 2, Tameside and Trafford 3; in comparison Cheshire scored 4 (Audit Commission, 2003). If state education in inner-city areas is not to become the repository of high-need, low-opportunity children and their families, then it is essential that the education system in each of the Manchester CPA authorities matches both the best among them, and even more so the standard of its neighbouring authorities. This will represent a major challenge.

**Figure 3:** Proportion of Key Stage 2 (pupils aged 11) achieving the expected Level 4 in SATs averaged across Literacy, Numeracy and Science in Manchester and selected neighbouring authorities. (Source DfES, 2004)



A similar gulf exists between the housing offer of much of Manchester and the suburban areas. On a positive note, Manchester and Salford have confirmed their leading position in regeneration by being the first of the Housing Market Renewal Fund (HMRF) pathfinders to complete a successful bid worth £125 million. This will allow the authorities to attempt to ease the supply and demand mismatch in areas such as East Manchester. Their role will include the compulsory purchase and clearing of thousands (1,700 in the first three years) of Victorian terraced houses regarded as surplus to requirements, as well as the demolition of unwanted council estates. It is too early to know how effective the HMRF will be, but it certainly addresses a key housing issue in the area – that of needing new housing to meet modern demand, while having an excess of stock in absolute terms. But it is at this point that the issue of density becomes critical. It could be argued that a city with swathes of brownfield land and a need to attract families back to live within its borders might see an opportunity in offering the type of housing that is broadly equivalent to the suburban offer. Such a product might lure some families back in and start to achieve the social mix that is sought. Leipzig's planners, faced with a similar predicament, are considering

the possibility of lower density housing within the city boundary precisely because it may be attractive to the family market that traditionally has looked to suburbs to meet its housing need (Lütke Daldrup 2004). Recent new build in East Manchester includes a canal-side apartment block near to the former Commonwealth Games stadium in Beswick. Nearly half of these have sold off-plan and so could be seen to prove that the English have been converted to high-density living. However, this is one development, and it is not apparent that it is bringing in the families that the city will eventually need to sustain its future. Rather, it seems more likely that these high density apartments will be successful because they ape the city centre boom (based on childless 'twenty-somethings' and the investment market) rather than because they are drawing in families. As noted above, the present education provision in the area would only act as a deterrent to family incomers; it is hard to imagine that the offer of high-density housing is going to do anything to counter the education disincentive to the family market.

While education and housing demonstrate the magnitude of the task facing any agency seeking the urban renaissance of inner-city areas such as East Manchester, it is also possible to argue that even this is mere detail compared to more fundamental flaws in the urban renaissance agenda: the assumption that given the right housing choices, people will live close to their places of work. As Breheny (1999) notes, there is little evidence to support such an assumption. Rather, the evidence is that an increasingly white-collar workforce is ever more mobile, while, ironically, it is those who are on benefit and/or experiencing social exclusion who tend to lead the most localised existence (Hoggett, 2001). Although it may offend the sustainability/urban renaissance agenda, Will Alsop with his vision of hugely distended cities spread along motorway networks (including an M62 super-city) may more accurately reflect the reality of how many working people are living their lives; establishing a relatively permanent household from which commutes can be made to comparatively temporary places of employment. Travel to work figures for Manchester show the extent to

which Manchester is already more an employment destination than a residential location.

**Table 2: Gross and Net Commuter Flows Manchester City Pride Area 1991**  
(Source: North West Regional Housing Need and Demand Research / 1991 Census)

	Out-migration	In-migration	Net-migration	Net as % of economically active persons
Manchester	3275	14881	11606	70.6
Salford	3254	3907	653	6.71
Tameside	3388	1378	-2020	-14.26
Trafford	3530	4338	808	8.0

Source: North West Regional Housing Need and Demand Research / 1991 Census

This is supported by the notion of the emergence of the Global City region (Scott 2001). The Merseyside, Manchester, Leeds and Sheffield City Regions have a total 2002 population of 9.3 million (ODPM 2004). This polycentric super-region depends on flows of labour between highly networked cities and features intensive development alongside major transportation corridors: a Europe wide phenomenon characterised by Ipenburg et al (2001). How then, are these various elements playing out in Manchester's current big regeneration project, New East Manchester. We argue below that the city has demonstrated a good grasp of the limitations of English urban project and that it is following a longstanding tradition in the city of forming a practical response to the regeneration of New East Manchester. This approach is considered below and, in particular, the social implications of this approach are examined.

### **New East Manchester – turning policy into opportunity**

Manchester has long been seen as the definitive entrepreneurial city (Quilley 2000, Williams 2003). Yet one might suppose that the foregoing assessment

would lead to the conclusion that the prospects for Manchester – beyond the booming city centre – are gloomy. Notwithstanding our population projections (figure one), we suggest that on the ground the response is far more opportunistic and so, in some senses, more optimistic. We use East Manchester as an example of how the city has appropriated the central government's agenda, talking of a 'New Town in the City' (New East Manchester 2004), while producing something that is quite likely to become quite different; something that will look far more like an out of town service city. Arguably, New East Manchester is merely demonstrating a sound understanding of the limitations set out above and has set about a very practical response that pays lip service rather than stands in servitude to central government policy.

This area has traditionally been the site of both light and heavy engineering companies, chemical and textile companies and of coal mining. Industrial decline started in the 1960s with the closure of the Bradford Colliery in 1968. This was followed by the closure of a steel and a gas works in the seventies. The decline continued through the eighties with twelve major firms closing between 1979 and 1983. The area lost 60% (20,000) of its jobs between 1971 and 1985. The closure of much of the area's heavy industry has resulted physically, in 250 hectares of vacant industrial land and socially, in the area suffering from a numerically declining population; those who remain typically experience high levels of unemployment, poverty and poor health.

The area has been home to a number of smaller regeneration projects before New East Manchester was established in 1998, for example the East Manchester Initiative (1982-1989) and, during the early to mid 1990s, the East Manchester local action team and East Manchester development strategy. These interventions produced some limited benefit, especially in terms of land decontamination, but were roundly criticised by current practitioners in the area as a waste of money as they were on too limited a scale (personal

communication). The decontaminated sites had been left after the clean up and so remained as a visual and psychological drain on the area.

New East Manchester, covers some 1,900 hectares; it stretches out from the edge of the booming city centre along three arterial roads to Tameside in the east and the M60 orbital motorway. It is this location that was the focus of the comparative study with Leipzig, as it is here that there is a collapse in the housing market, excluded communities, abandonment and hectare upon hectare of vacant brownfield land; surely, a site for which the government's policy of a return to city living might have been specifically designed. New East Manchester (an Urban Regeneration Company) that oversees the various initiatives in the area has planned outputs that include:

- doubling the population to 60,000 in 10-15 years;
- up to 12,500 new homes;
- improvement to 7,000 homes;
- educational attainment above the city average.

(New East Manchester 2004)

But it would be wrong to view this as a homogenous area; rather, it is a series of locations with quite different characteristics. The area includes New Islington (master planned by Will Alsop and being redeveloped by Urban Splash) and Ancoats Urban Village, a potential World Heritage Site. These sit beside Manchester's inner ring road, and so are ideally placed to benefit from the booming city centre; both should achieve sufficiently high densities to satisfy the government's sustainability/urban renaissance agenda. New Islington is a millennium village whilst Ancoats is a designated Urban Village although, when pressed, those working in regenerating these two areas were clear that Millennium and Urban village designations were more about funding streams than any particular ideals attached to the title, thus reflecting the successful tradition of 'grabbing grants' in Manchester (Jones and Ward 1998).

Repopulating Ancoats and New Islington should not be an onerous task, it builds on the tradition of Castlefield and is likely to attract a similar market. The prospects become quite different as one moves away from the city centre through New East Manchester. Beswick sits more or less centrally in the New East Manchester area. Here, the most obvious assets are large tracts of underused land and a good supply of trunk roads. Following an opportunistic approach, Manchester is exploiting these assets by locating here service activities which are land hungry and that cater for a regional or wider population. The Asda/Walmart store and adjacent Sportcity serve as good pointers to the future: At 180,000 sq feet, the store is equivalent to approximately twelve of the metro (or inner-city) type stores that have been springing up in English cities over the last few years in response to changes in planning policy that have set onerous planning restrictions on the further development of out of town shopping. Despite the claims of Manchester planners that this is a local store, it sits on the junction of an arterial road (Ashton New Road) and a ring road (Alan Turing Way) and is of a scale that surpasses any local need. Sportcity emerged from the Olympic bidding process which led to Manchester hosting the Commonwealth Games in 2002. The 59 hectare site now includes the stadium for Manchester City football club. A newly announced development for the area contributes to the development of what is effectively an out of town development, as Sportcity is to be joined by Gambling City. Exploiting an expected change in Britain's gambling laws, Manchester has indicated interest from operators, Kerzner International / Ask Developments in locating a £250 million 'destination casino' and leisure operation in the area. This would include hotels and other servicing facilities. The Chief Executive of New East Manchester, Tom Russell, is quoted as saying that "The scheme will enhance and extend Sportcity's role as a catalyst for social and economic improvements for local people" (Manchester City Council 2004). It is clear that these developments are not simply designed to meet local needs. Indeed, some work in the area suggests that Beswick residents are unlikely to gain greatly from either Asda/Walmart or Sportcity; the former

reportedly encourage overspending while the latter is too expensive to access (WTF. 2003).

It seems then, that East Manchester's single greatest asset, land, combined with excellent road transport connections, will continue to drive the opportunistic pattern of development in the area. Aside from New Islington and Ancoats Urban Village, both bordering the city centre, New East Manchester's future is surely as much as a destination as it is a residential location. Given the finding from our earlier research, we would suggest that this is an entirely practical response to the reality of Manchester, a city that draws in nearly three-quarters of its workforce from outside its own borders. But where does this leave the vision of an urban renaissance, as opposed to the practicality of urban regeneration? What will the new community look like in New East Manchester? The answer to these questions could be quite different if Manchester were to turn from its opportunistic approach - attracting in land-hungry uses - to one that truly seeks a widening the population base, including families. This may be more likely to bring it into conflict with central government as attracting families with choice will require central government to support a massive, and disproportionate, investment in services (especially education) to pump-prime locations such as East Manchester. Further, it may be necessary for Manchester to take a lead from Leipzig and to challenge the present agenda that equates the urban with increasing residential density; is an essential policy for the southeast of England also the best fit for northern cities? As noted earlier, the current rediscovery of the urban is based on a reaction to earlier opposition to road building programmes in the 1980s and to greenfield house building in the 1990s and driven by the demands of the southeast. This has informed a very particular view of the urban; but it is a one size fits all view that may not achieve the desired outcomes in northern cities.

## **Conclusion**

Manchester and Leipzig have a common opportunity, to reconsider how a city can best use a rare advantage yet a mixed blessing, namely space. Along with other cities beyond Europe's pentagon (Kirk 2005) – bounded by London, Paris, Milan, Munich and Hamburg – the challenge is often to deal with a perforated urban fabric. We would suggest that, while Manchester may officially be seeking to re-grow its population, the city is in fact pursuing a far more pragmatic solution. We have argued that this pragmatic response is wholly reasonable within the regional setting that Manchester finds itself. Essentially, as the key northern city, Manchester is increasingly becoming a commuting and tourist destination, it serves as a hub within a mega-city region that stretches across the Pennines. However, importing land hungry uses circumvents rather than serves central government's urban policy agenda: which presupposes that people will return to cities, choosing to live close to their work. This would perhaps not matter if it were not for the residual neighbourhoods that – according to government thinking – will depend on residential incomers to provide the catalyst for the regeneration of hitherto excluded neighbourhoods.

We have suggested that if Manchester is to make the link between the improving fortunes of New East Manchester and the existing residents, then bringing in the family market is essential. However, we have also shown that this will be a difficult task and – in common with Manchester's stadia approach – will also require a challenge to the government's urban policy. Attracting in families will require the realisation of a looser city; anathema to the urban renaissance lobby. But without this, the regeneration benefits of neither the family market nor the stadia market are unlikely to be realised.

As Tony Blair has avowedly linked himself with delivery, and distanced himself from policy niceties by declaring that 'what matters is what works' (Kendall 2001), we conclude that it is likely that Manchester's practice of repairing its perforated

fabric with land hungry uses, effectively producing a low-density inner suburb, will eventually force a change in policy that allows northern cities to join Leipzig in being more openly creative in conceiving their future as shrinking, or shrunk cities.

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