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No.5 City Regions and Social Exclusion:  
Seven Reasons for a New Approach to  
Governance

**CLES RAPID RESEARCH**



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## Introduction

This Rapid Research focuses on the increasingly pertinent topic of city regions. In recent months, a number of strategic and research documents have been produced by amongst others the ODPM<sup>1</sup>, the Local Government Association<sup>2</sup> and the Institute for Public Policy Research<sup>3</sup> on the perceived benefits of a city regional model of governance. Coupled with the enthusiasm placed on the agenda by the former Minister for Local Government and Communities, David Miliband, city regions are expected to form a key strand of the Local Government White Paper expected later in the year.

This CLES research paper is inspired by recent interest in city regions and the continued government focus on social exclusion. For us at CLES, whilst the ongoing debate and consideration of city regions is a fascinating policy development, we are prompted in this work, to think through how elements of social exclusion could be addressed more adroitly by city regions. In short, what does it add to existing activity in relation to social exclusion at the regional scale?

## The continuing problem of social exclusion

Nearly 1 in 4 people in the UK – or around 13 million people – live in poverty, according to the latest figures. This includes almost 4 million children.<sup>4</sup> Pockets of deprivation, in our towns, cities and rural areas leave large numbers of people excluded from mainstream society. This exclusion takes many forms and impacts upon a wide range

of issues, including amongst others, health, housing, employment and living environment. Despite 30 years of policy and practice working to ameliorate the conditions in which the poorest people live, little has changed; the gap between rich and poor continues to grow.

Indeed, Central Government awareness and commitment towards tackling social exclusion appears to have intensified in recent weeks with the appointment of a Minister for Social Exclusion, namely Hilary Armstrong MP.

In thinking through the relationship between City regions and social exclusion, there is one clear factor, which is vital in considering what benefits city regions could bring - that is - the rethinking of scale and geography. At present strategic and policy related decisions, for instance, neighbourhood renewal, are confined and constrained by geographically ascribed boundaries. Local authorities and other service providers view challenges framed within the geographies that they administer, and naturally find it difficult to look at impacts and connections beyond their immediate geography. Furthermore, other social exclusion policies, particularly as regards worklessness and health are often the reverse, in that they are 'place blind' and give too little consideration to the spatial aspects of these issues (i.e Jobcentre Plus and Primary Care Trust).

CLES has therefore decided to focus this research on how elements of social exclusion could be addressed more adroitly, by city regions, than is presently the case. The research looks at the impact of city regions across several aspects of social exclusion, including transport, social enterprise, health, worklessness, skills, active citizenship and rural development.

## Why bother with City Regions?

CLES welcomes the focus on city regions as a form of governance more in tune with modern lifestyle patterns and reflects that for some issues primarily in regard to increasing economic competitiveness that the local or city level is too small to effectively deliver change. In contrast, as has been highlighted in the decision to abandon plans for elected

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<sup>1</sup>Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2006) *A Framework for City Regions*. London: ODPM

<http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1163567>

<sup>2</sup>Local Government Association (2006) *City Regions and Beyond*. London: LGA

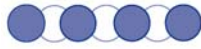
<http://www.lga.gov.uk/Documents/Publication/City%20Regions%20and%20Beyond.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>Marshall, A., Finch, D. and Urwin, C. (2006) *City Leadership: giving city regions the power to grow*. London: Centre for Cities

<http://www.ippr.org.uk/shop/publication.asp?id=342>

<sup>4</sup>Department for Work and Pensions (2005) *Households Below Average Income 1994/95 to 2004/05* London: DWP

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/hbai/hbai2005/chapters.asp>



regional assemblies, particularly as a result of the 'no' vote in the North East, that models of regional governance are not really identified with by local people. In many ways city regions appear to be the logical linkage between the local and regional level. Indeed many of the activities we participate in our everyday lives seem to fit with the imagined geographies of city regions. We often work, shop, participate in leisure activity and live in different local authority areas, thus contributing to a mixture of economies. It is this 'natural economies' argument that shapes much of ODPM and other thinking about city regions, as it is seen as a core method of reducing performance, productivity and competitiveness gaps, not only between England's regions but also with major European and Global competitors.

A review of recent publications (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, the New Local Government Network, the Local Government Association and the Institute for Public Policy Research) have highlighted three core benefits or lenses where city regions could have an impact, these are:

- Enhancing Economic Performance;
- Improving Service Delivery;
- Devolving Democratic Decision Making.

In looking at these three lenses or factors we have identified seven core ways that City regions would benefit the city region as a whole and later they will shape discussions of what city regions could mean for the socially excluded.

### *The economic ripple*

The city, therefore, is economically porous, in that it draws in factors - making the city economically vibrant and pushes out elements that have a ripple effect on the neighbouring areas, including other towns and villages far beyond its administrative boundaries. Thus the logical policy conclusion to this porosity is to look at ways in which we can gain knowledge and then develop strategy and implement policies that understands and reflects this porosity - thus assisting in driving up economic performance for both the city and its environs.

### *Socio-economic networks*

As work from the *Framework for City Regions* demonstrates, dense social networks and informal contacts operating in close geographic proximity are important to a range of economic activities. Clearly, at present, the city scale, whilst demonstrating these facets, could be built upon with new emerging clusters and social networks developing as part of the city region. This could increase as individuals, communities, policy makers and businesses begin to conceptualise and intuitively operate within social networks, which have a city region rather than a city or local authority frame of reference.

### *Understanding and trust means better services*

The opportunity offered by a city region with the same shared service boundaries and some powers are significant, for both city regions and the people who live and work within them. They offer the opportunity to align real political boundaries of the city with those of statutory partners such as Primary Care Trusts and Jobcentre Plus, and also reflect how people already use and perceive their city region. This could result in simpler relations between partners, thus enabling agencies to prioritise their work more efficiently and overcome some obvious administrative barriers (i.e. different areas). All of which is likely to result in better policy making that is more able to meet the needs of the most socially excluded.

### *Economies of scale*

Perhaps the most obvious but also most contested of the factors is that through city regions there is greater potential for economies of scale and greater strategic integration and coordination of activities across the city region. Spatial planning, housing, transport and waste management are all better and more efficiently dealt with on larger city region scale where they are able to have a more significant impact on social exclusion. City regional governance is also better placed to ensure that there is no overlap in provision or services and conversely to ensure that gaps are not created on or around the boundaries of authorities. Thus, improving the service received by the most socially excluded.



### *Tidying up 'messy' Governance*

Existing governance arrangements are at times confusing and in many instances bear little resemblance to the reality of everyday lives. The current division of English local authorities, is based on pre-industrial geographies, and takes little account of today's more complex and interrelated lives. This is clear when looking at the boundaries of the City of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire County Council, which effectively cut through the heart of the city, separating it in two. Of course there is both cooperation and synergy between the two partners, but a city regional model of governance could build on this. City regions could also formalise these patterns of activity, thus linking population movement to service delivery. Therefore the city regions governance model seeks to strike a balance between city and regional governance and thus aim to tidy up a sometimes confusing and messy set of circumstances, which do not reflect individuals spatial experiences.

### *Heightened identification with city regional politics*

There is a perception, amongst both individuals and service providers that neither local authorities nor regional governments are able to have a significant impact on the lives of 'real people'. This has led many individuals and policy makers to question who is best placed to govern local areas and develop local economies. A city region style of governance seeks to devolve some of the key democratic decisions away from the centre, as well as pooling local authority knowledge and skills to provide services more in line with the aspirations and lifestyle patterns of the residents of city regions. City regions, therefore, in their smaller scale and possibly more strategic involvement and interaction with existing agencies, partners and levels of government have the potential to impact directly, the most socially and economically excluded people, and potentially provide a fill up to local democracy in terms of involvement.

### *Appropriate scale*

The recent IPPR report, *City Leadership*<sup>5</sup>, has argued that city regions are the right level for many

governance activities – regions are often too big and local authority areas too small. They are the appropriate size for a range of strategic issues such as transport, health, environment and economic development. This is set out by the ODPM in their *Framework for City Regions*. In addition, the city region debate also fits in with the wider Localism agenda being pursued by the Government. Processes such as Local Area Agreements, which look to devolve greater power to local areas, give local authorities, alongside local communities, greater input into their priorities for action. However, too often this process has been often constrained by unhelpful administrative boundaries, which exclude people living outside one local authority's boundaries but whom utilise their services. Using a City Region Agreement approach, could enable authorities to collectively set priorities and targets and pool funds in order to tackle the problems in a way that is joined up and beneficial not only to the local area but also to the city region.

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<sup>5</sup> Marshall, A., Finch, D. and Urwin, C. (2006) *City Leadership: giving city regions the power to grow*.

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London: Centre for Cities  
<http://www.ippr.org.uk/shop/publication.asp?id=342>



### *Progress to Date*

Speculation around the development of city regional governance, in particular in the Core Cities has been heightened by the submission, to the ODPM, of detailed strategies by amongst others the West Midlands, who have proposed an 'imagined' City Region and Greater Manchester who have proposed a voluntary cooperation model. Whilst city regions have been seen by European cities, such as Lyon, Stuttgart and Frankfurt as a key way of devolving decision-making and service responsibilities, it is only in the last twelve months or so that the agenda has truly made it onto the Whitehall agenda.

Birmingham is one of eight cities in England outside of London which form the Core Cities Group. The purpose of the core cities group is to attempt to address some of the economic inequalities which exist between other regions and London and the South East. Birmingham have used the platform of the Core Cities Group to kick-start the city regions agenda in the West Midlands. The focus on the economic benefits of city regions has enabled all eight local authorities in the 'imagined' city region to become involved in various city region working groups: one consisting of local authority leaders; one consisting of local authority chief executives; and one consisting of core local authority policy officers. The groups have been used to shape a business case for a West Midlands City Region which has been submitted to ODPM and which is set to form part of the forthcoming Local Government White Paper.

Like Birmingham, Greater Manchester has also used the Core Cities meetings to kick off their involvement in the city regions agenda, and at the end of March 2006 presented their initial plans to the former Minister for Local Government and Communities, David Miliband. The model put forward by Greater Manchester centres on an executive board, comprising elected leaders and executive members from the 10 existing Greater Manchester authorities, in addition six thematic boards; Transport, Economic Development; Environment; Health; Housing and Strategic Planning; Public Protection. The plan looks to make more of the natural geographies of the city region,

by increasing the extent to which the administration fits with the reality of peoples everyday lives and by making more explicit the decisions that are made at the city region level.

The East Midlands City Region (known as the 'Three Cities Partnership') is based on partnership between the 3 cities of Nottingham, Leicester and Derby and is supported at Leader and Chief Executive level and by a number of other partners including 3 Urban Regeneration Companies, East Midlands Development Agency, Government Office East Midlands and Nottingham East Midlands Airport. The partnership is looking for the 3 cities to grow together as a 'Tri-Centric' City Region with an economic catchment of 2.4 million people. In order to achieve this growth the Three Cities Partnership are pursuing three major programmes of work:

- A 'Growth Point' bid to ODPM to enhance economic performance and support the sustainable communities plan in the South East.
- A Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) bid, to jointly plan the transport infrastructure improvements needed for growth.
- A joint bid to round 2 of the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI), to connect local people and businesses from the most deprived communities to opportunities being created at the city regional level.

### **Reducing social exclusion – What role for city regions?**

#### **Better and Better Coordinated Transport**

*Issue.* There are two core issues with regard to transport facing the socially excluded in England. First, the most deprived people living in the most deprived areas often have difficulty in accessing services such as jobs, learning, healthcare, food shopping or leisure as a result of a lack of connected and integrated public transport services. Second, the governance and decision making with regard to transport is highly centralised in England with the exception of Transport for London, which restricts spend on new infrastructure on proposals such as the extension of the Metrolink in Manchester.





***The City Regional Solution: An opportunity to connect the socially excluded to employment.*** CLES research argues that the development of city regions could lead to more cross local authority employment opportunities for the most deprived as a result of more integrated transport services. For example, a deprived area on the edge of Manchester, may be 10 miles away from the employment opportunities of the city centre, and transport by bus may be infrequent, costly and taking a long time. However two miles down the road at Handforth, in the Borough of Macclesfield, there is an out-of-town retail development with key job opportunities and services. Yet because the deprived area lies within Manchester's boundary and because a different transport provider operates bus services there is no bus link between the deprived area and the out-of-town retail development. City regions or a Passenger Transport Executive with power equivalent to those of Transport for London, have the opportunity to identify barriers such as these, and in cooperation with the relevant providers address the problem. For those living in deprived areas this may mean greater access to potential job and service opportunities.

***The Policy Makers View.*** Whilst agreeing that city regions could indeed have the opportunity to connect the socially excluded to employment, our respondents argued that city regions had the opportunity to connect areas of growth and deprivation on a series of different scales. For example, city regions may contain areas of economic growth, areas of housing growth, and areas of service industry growth. Linking economic 'hotspots' and areas of housing growth through city regional governance and transport connectivity could lead to economic restructuring, and in particular job opportunities for the most deprived, in very different ways to that which might result from linking up areas of existing employment and enterprise.

The Three Cities Partnership are already seeking to link deprived communities and employment opportunities through the provision of 'skylink' bus services between all three cities and the Nottingham East Midlands Airport. This service is

a key feature of the joint LEGI bid and the joint TIF bid. Joint planning and decision making at the city regional level clearly could have significant benefits in the East Midlands, particularly with the development of pre-recruitment employment programmes, targeted at the hardest to reach groups in coordination with a consortium of airport employers.

### **Tackling Worklessness**

***Issue.*** There are currently around 2.7 million non-employed adults in the United Kingdom claiming sickness related benefits. The areas with the highest levels of sickness related benefit claims are characterised by three factors. They are the cities hardest hit by economic restructuring and the loss of traditional industries such as Liverpool and Manchester. They are isolated, former coalfield areas such as Easington and Barnsley. Within these areas they are the people most affected by social exclusion: those aged over 50 not involved in employment or retired; disabled people; and lone parents.

***The City Regional Solution: Greater powers for Jobcentre Plus.*** CLES research argues that city regions could enable the role of Jobcentre Plus and the Connexions service to be expanded to cover a wider city regional area. Whilst employment agency roles are currently confined to local authority or district level boundaries, a reorganisation of, for example, Jobcentre Plus through city regional governance could broaden opportunities for jobseekers to cover not only opportunities in city and district centre localities but also in peripheral areas. This could be particularly effective for the socially excluded when linked to city regional transport connectivity advantages. A better-connected transport and employment service through city regions could impact significantly on current levels of worklessness. Also, a clearer geographical process could reduce incidences of 'place blindness' currently faced by employment related agencies and departments.

***The Policy Makers View.*** The West Midlands City Region is currently talking to Jobcentre Plus about strategic involvement in city region proposals,



development and delivery. With the West Midlands having submitted to ODPM a business case for a city region, they are now looking to bring together all relevant partners, which they believe can contribute to city regional delivery. In relation to employment, the Learning and Skills Council and the Regional Development Agency form part of the city regional partnership together with 8 local authorities. West Midlands want to ensure Jobcentre Plus involvement to enable the objectives of Jobcentre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council to be more joined up. This joined up approach could have significant implications on both employment levels and skills development, potentially leading to more opportunities for the socially excluded. Greater Manchester are using city regions to also pursue the development of City Employment Trusts, both separately and as part of the city region plans put forward to government. Others, whilst they felt that a more coordinated approach to dealing with worklessness was important at the city region level, also felt that the levels of worklessness in some inner city areas is so high that a more place specific approach, taking into account local priorities, was needed than that which is currently offered by national and regional government.

### **A Potentially More Active Citizenry**

*Issue.* In today's society, by and large, we are passive citizens with decisions about public services and their delivery made on our behalf by local and central government, with relatively little input from individuals or communities. The activeness of citizens across the range of political spectrums is also dependent on status with the most socially excluded and those living in the most deprived areas having far less involvement in formal and informal decision making. Previous attempts to address democratic deficits through, for example elected regional government have failed, most dramatically in the North East referendum for an Elected Regional Assembly.

*The City Regional Solution: Recognition of identity.* CLES research argues that increasingly, as a result of out of town retail centres, regional airports, a national motorway network, out of town leisure facilities, and rapid urbanisation,

communities and individuals identify with a far larger area and use services across a wider level than their own neighbourhood. City regions appear to be the logical boundary for modern lifestyle patterns and something, which local people could significantly identify with. CLES research argues that if city regions are handed real powers that local people can identify with, the city regional governance model could be a contributor to reducing the democratic deficit. Increased connectivity based on modern lifestyle patterns and recognition of an accountable body representing the city region could lead to improved recognition of governance.

**The Policy Makers View.** Whilst agreeing that city regions could indeed foster increased recognition of governance arrangements, one of our respondents felt that the benefits of this would take time and would not necessarily be immediate, primarily as a result of people identifying with different geographical scales. Using the example of the West Midlands City Region, it was stated that people often identify with the town they live in, rather than the local authority, particularly authorities such as Sandwell, which contain several towns. In other outlying county authorities such as Warwickshire people, as a result of working in Birmingham, tend to identify with the city centre. It is argued that a West Midlands city region could solve the identity crisis that some towns in the West Midlands, such as Dudley currently have. Having a city regional model of governance and associated better connectivity could enable those currently unemployed in Dudley to identify better with the city region and access opportunities across the wider area. City regions could particularly increase the identity of younger people as a result of city regions being more in tune with their lifestyle patterns.

Other respondents felt that whilst city regions could result in a more active citizenry, it was also risky because it may also result in city region residents feeling more remote from their administration. In particular, there were concerns that people may feel that the city regional administration has little electoral accountability and may result in increased feelings of remoteness from decision-makers at this level particularly as the core cities are not taking



forward the Directly Elected Mayor model. And whilst Directly Elected Mayors are far from a panacea for this it becomes more obvious to the 'ordinary' citizen when governance and decision making is transferred to this level.

### **Higher Skills and More Coordinated Training**

*Issue.* Recent evidence suggests that people who live in physically and socially disadvantaged areas have disproportionately low levels of skills. There are a number of sectors of the population, which have historic levels of low skills, notably men aged over 50, men who have worked previously in heavy industry or coalmining, and young men aged 16-24. Whilst there are national patterns of low skills as identified above, a number of local factors also contribute to the skills gap. Most notably and particularly evident in cities, the local skills base is not correlated with existing and emerging employment opportunities.

*The City Regional Solution: Enhancing further education and competitiveness.* CLES research argues that through increased connectivity city regions present the opportunity to link young people with lower skills to sub regional further education opportunities. This in turn could lead to an improved skills base, increased levels of enterprise development and improved competitiveness regionally. There is an increased emphasis being placed nationally on entrepreneurship and social enterprise as ways of reducing social exclusion, and improving neighbourhood, local, regional and national competitiveness. City regions through a focus and powers for skills development could contribute significantly to this enterprise challenge by working with the Regional Development Agency and local communities. City regions also present the opportunity to effectively join up a host of local and regional strategies for worklessness, skills, education and economic development. Providing more effective linkages between these strategies at the city regional level could allow skills, worklessness, education and economic development to be effectively correlated for the benefit of the most socially excluded.

*The Policy Makers View.* Whilst recognising the importance of linking the skills aspirations of those living in deprived areas and further education opportunities, one of our respondents recognised the need for city regions to go further with regard further and higher education and skills for the benefit of the city regional economy. It was stated that city regions could lead to the retention of graduates of further and higher education, leading to further inward investment, and research and development which could lead to opportunities for the socially excluded. A city regional focus on skills was also felt to be important because people do not live and work within the boundaries of a single authority. By working with employers as well as employees across the city region to identify key sectors that would drive the local economy and gaps in skills and skills provision could be extremely useful and could lead to improved economic performance as well as higher skills levels and lower levels of worklessness.

Another of our respondents felt that there was a need for skills policy to be effectively focused to meet the needs of each individual city in the city region and then take a networked approach for the city region through programmes such as the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative.

### **Deeper Commitment to Social Enterprise which Fits the Natural Economy**

*Issue.* The core issue for social enterprises is that the market for social enterprises is too small to enable business sustainability, as are support networks and understanding surrounding social enterprise activity. In addition, social enterprises have specific support mechanisms and needs which require their own bespoke range of service support which has an appreciation of the unique needs, market and social economic ethos of social enterprises.

*The City Regional Solution: alignment of social enterprise strategies, support and networks.* CLES research argues that by conceptualising the needs of enterprise and implementing policy at a city regional level there could be alignment of strategies that support networks of social enterprise activity. Policy and support alignment in terms of specific support for clusters or networks that cross a city





region will also help with the creation of connections, knowledge transfer and will assist in the development of the social economy more generally.

Whilst closely aligned to formal business support through business link and small business support, it is necessary that social enterprises receive their own bespoke range of support, which appreciates the benefit likely to be gained from a city region perspective, and which strategically understands the social economy. Indeed, a city region with its ability to draw on a bigger pool of understanding and networks such as volunteer labour, ethical finance and community sponsored facilities is vitally important in allowing the social economy to draw on the strength of its understanding of social needs and the gaps in the mainstream market.

*The Policy Makers View.* One of our respondents agreed that there was a need for social enterprise activity and economic development activity to be aligned at the city regional level. They stated that aligning national, regional and local social enterprise investment at the city regional level could lead to significant increases in entrepreneurial activity, small business start up and employment levels. With social enterprise activity rooted in developing community enterprise and often in the most deprived areas, there is a significant opportunity for aligned investment through city regions that could impact upon the socially excluded.

### **Better and More Coordinated Health Services**

*Issue.* A confusing web of service provision, procurement and management in cities makes health governance complex. In addition, health inequalities are exacerbated by deprivation and social exclusion. For example geographical and social circumstances impact significantly on the life chances of the most excluded.<sup>6</sup>

- Death rate from coronary heart disease for under 65s is almost three times higher in Manchester than the London Borough of Kingston Upon Thames;

- Death rate from stroke is 1.5 – 2.5 times more likely for people born in the Caribbean and the Indian sub-continent than those born in this country;
- Children under 15 years of age from unskilled families are 5 times more likely to die from unintentional injury than those from professional families.

*The City Regional Solution: simplified governance arrangements and improved economic competitiveness.* CLES research believes that health governance could be simplified and therefore improved by city regional arrangements, which with coterminous administrative boundaries could marry the management of acute care, primary care, the ambulance service as well as hospital trusts with one and other and the administration of the city region as a whole.

Improved city regional competitiveness and economic performance could as has already been seen improve the quality of life of the most excluded as well as improving the employment and educational opportunities available. Therefore, city regional governance could also raise life aspirations and self-esteem of the most excluded people and communities within the city region. This would impact on the population's health by encouraging and facilitating healthier lifestyle choices and a more positive approach to personal health, particularly as regards lifestyle issues such as obesity, smoking and sexual health.

*The Policy Makers View.* One of our respondents stated that as with many of our research findings that there was a need for themed issues to be looked at in a joined up way if city regions are to have greatest impact on the socially excluded. They stated that the issue of health needed to be looked at in relation to both transport and employment, arguing that city regions and increased transport connections could enable the jobless to be connected to areas of economic and job growth and thus could impact upon health. They also stated that city regions could contribute to the health of the socially excluded, not only in 'traditional' health issues such as cardio-vascular disease, but also as a result of improved opportunities in terms of safety

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<sup>6</sup> [www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk)



and security. A strategic health board and city regional health governance was felt to be important because of the possibility to counter balance national priorities for health with locally determined priorities, including those which have the biggest impact on the most deprived communities, for example heart disease. This could then allow for a greater role for funding and policy making based around the locally determined priorities and ultimately lead to improved health provision in our cities.

### **Rippling Benefits Out to Other Rural Areas**

*Issue.* The unique circumstances of many rural communities and the way rural policy has been decided thus far mean that city regions are particularly important in light of the growing rural population<sup>7</sup> and the changes in funding for rural economic development and regeneration activity that now sees delivery of rural regeneration the responsibility of the RDAs. In addition, the rural poor are in most cases a minority in more affluent areas and as such doubly excluded.

*The City Regional Solution: connect more effectively economically isolated rural communities and a focus on community outcomes.* CLES research argues that the economic competitiveness of a city region is dependant on a much wider area than just the urban core. As such socially excluded rural communities and the economies of these communities could be more appropriately linked to the economies of the city region. This would facilitate the development of sustainable rural economies and improved competitiveness by improving linkages and allowing rural areas to attract staff, inward investment and indigenous business and enterprise. All of which would improve competitiveness and the circulation of money flows. It would also allow the most deprived to interact with the economy in a more productive manner and the rural economy to shift away from an overemphasis on agriculture.

Larger than the local authority but smaller than the regional, city regional wide delivery of services is also a more appropriate scale at which to facilitate rural and peri rural development. By linking into the wider city region economy and allowing service providers to benefit from the shared intelligence about local communities and operate with coterminous boundaries, the city regional administration is better placed to ensure that the needs of the rural community, and in particular the most excluded are more effectively met. In particular coterminous boundaries could help to reduce social exclusion by more effectively connecting rural and peri rural communities to their urban counterparts, allowing them to share policy prescriptions and learn from the, sometimes more developed, urban approaches to dealing with social exclusion. A city regional governance model would also be directly accountable to the communities they serve particularly the most socially excluded.

*The Policy Makers View.* Whilst the respondents we spoke to felt that greater connectivity between rural hinterlands and the urban core, drawing the outer lying areas was indeed useful, particularly for areas in Cheshire and areas of the High Peak. It was also felt that at present cities were trying to move forward the agenda as far as possible without the need for legislative changes, however it was felt that this would be difficult to do.

One of our respondents felt that a connected economy was particularly important in their city region where a vast majority of the population relied on connections with cities for work, leisure, culture and a variety of other services. They felt that city regional governance would be especially effective in strategic working around transport and economic development when it came to connecting rural areas to cities.

### **Conclusion: What next for City Regions?**

The aim of this rapid research was to highlight and explore seven solid ideas as to how city regions could make a difference to social exclusion. These included:

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<sup>7</sup> Commission for Rural Communities (2005) *State of the Countryside 2005*.

<http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/article.asp?aID=56&pID=1>



- City regions could connect the socially excluded to employment;
- City regions could mean greater powers for Jobcentre Plus;
- City regions could mean heightened identification with local, city regional and regional governance;
- City regions could enhance further education and competitiveness;
- City regions could align social enterprise strategies, support and networks;
- City regions could simplify health governance arrangements;
- City regions could connect more effectively economically isolated rural communities and ensure a focus on community outcomes.

In this, it is evident that as regards to reducing social exclusion, there are a range of potential advantages offered by city regions, and as plans for city regions continue to be developed and firmed up, particularly with the publication of the Local Government White Paper later this year, it is important to remember that they have a wider significance than just economic development and as such could play a significant role in reducing social exclusion.

Our respondents felt that whilst it was still hard to say exactly what the White Paper would involve, it was certain that it would contain reference to city regions. They expected the White Paper to formalise city region criteria and create the opportunity for city regions to move forward proposals for powers and changes to service delivery when they are ready. Whilst it was felt that Greater Manchester and the West Midlands are in a position to meet the city regions criteria, the other 6 core cities are not yet at that level. However, it is expected that the White Paper will allow these cities to meet city regional criteria in the future and develop further, their initial proposals.

In this, the merging of Local Area Agreements, for instance, and the powers over funding, including the ability to pool funds, should greatly assist in the strategic prioritisation and adroit positioning of city region policy. Furthermore, if one considers the potential of some alignment with neighbouring funds, then the potential impact city regions might

have could be even greater. Finally it is important to reiterate, that many of the proposed advantages are predicated on an increase in city region powers, with particular emphasis on powers in terms of regeneration and economic development both of which are considered core to tackling social exclusion in our cities and their hinterlands.

## Further Information on City Regions

Local Government Association (2006) *City Regions and Beyond*. London: LGA

<http://www.lga.gov.uk/Documents/Publication/City%20Regions%20and%20Beyond.pdf>

Marshall, A., Finch, D. and Urwin, C. (2006) *City Leadership: giving city regions the power to grow*. London: Centre for Cities

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This piece of rapid research has been prepared by Victoria Bradford and Matthew Jackson at the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES). To obtain a full copy of CLES research on city regions: (Bradford, V., Jackson, M. and McInroy, N. (2006) *Tackling Social Exclusion: What Difference can City Regions Make?*), please contact Victoria or Matthew on 0161 236 7036 or email [victoriabradford@cles.org.uk](mailto:victoriabradford@cles.org.uk) or [matthewjackson@cles.org.uk](mailto:matthewjackson@cles.org.uk)

CLES can also provide policy advice to authorities and organisations on all aspects of regeneration,



local governance and economic development policy, including recent developments. If you have a query about an aspect of policy or the role of your organisation in policy developments please contact Victoria or Matthew to discuss bespoke briefings, policy guidance, tailored workshops, and CLES contributing to your events. For example you may wish to look at how your organisation fits into the city region agenda.