

## Chapter 18

# Rising Northern Light: A Systems Outlook on Manchester's Knowledge-Based Capitals

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### ABSTRACT

*One of the difficulties in creating and sustaining knowledge cities is the lack of benchmarks to identify those cities and regions that are generating knowledge-driven initiatives, triggering development and collective value. One of such benchmarks is the value-based Generic Capital System (GCS) taxonomy. The rigorous application of GCS to cities in European contexts has already yielded its initial fruits, with Manchester as one of the cities in which a deeper perspective can be gained through the GCS lens. In this chapter, the author aims to introduce GCS as an integrative system of capitals for the case of the Greater Manchester city-region and its journey into developing its knowledge capitals. Through the lens of the GCS generic KC capital system taxonomy, some of Manchester's systems of information, systems of learning and systems of knowledge are expected to emerge as a comprehensive meta system articulated by the extensive life-long learning initiatives implemented by Manchester's development-based Knowledge-City schemes. The GCS lens will be introduced within the different system layers interacting in the city in order to discover how they tie the City's learning, communicating and knowledge-sharing dynamics together in the emerging context of knowledge-based development initiatives. The chapter will attempt to highlight how ICT connectivity systems (managing information) could be viewed as closely linked to skill development (managing learning) and people's management of tacit and explicit knowledge (knowing), with visible regional aspirations for development. Such systems view aims to cover a wider (although still limited) range of the instrumental, human and meta capitals observable in the city in a simultaneously rich mosaic of different layers. The city's traditional and knowledge-intensive hubs, its communications and infrastructure, its identity, traditions and cultural diversity within the Greater Manchester city-region could therefore exemplify the consistent building of a system of capitals in a demanding knowledge-intensive context.*

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## INTRODUCTION

During the last two decades, the Greater Manchester city-region has deliberately sought to become an economic epicentre in the Northwest of UK. This northern city has unmistakably emerged from industrial decline into Knowledge City (KC) renewal in recent years, especially since its 1990's inner city regeneration push. Seemingly, Manchester's knowledge-intensive elements such as its property-led investments, the strong social capital of its historic movements, its partnerships and long-term city leadership, plus internationally connected ports and increasing connectivity have put Manchester at the threshold of knowledge-based development success.

As the world's first industrial city, Manchester retains a strong manufacturing base, along with its original technological vocation. But the city has also developed a solid service industry of regional and national scope, as well as a retail, leisure and cultural reputation. It has also become the main regional centre for key public services, especially within the higher education sector. In a number of knowledge-based fronts, the city is actively seeking to reach its full post-industrial potential, while at the same time building a unique city brand through its proven resilience capacity for development. The result is a progressively complex tapestry of innovative efforts with long-term consequences that are worth monitoring, recording and evaluating. Indeed a challenging task for research.

Keeping such challenge in mind, this chapter advances an integrative system of capitals perspective in order to facilitate the observation of (some aspects within) the Greater Manchester city-region and its journey into developing its multiple traditional capitals into knowledge-based potential. Through a generic KC capital system lens, the chapter will attempt to create a panoramic view of how Manchester's *systems of information*, *systems of learning* and *systems of knowledge* are articulated within the deployment

of a knowledge-based strategy of Manchester under its projected KC scheme.

The first section of the chapter will therefore introduce Manchester as a Knowledge City-region, along with the theoretical frameworks that support such characterization. It will be followed by the introduction of the systemic taxonomy used to observe Manchester as a KC. The second part of the Chapter will present and discuss some of the different system layers interacting in the city, as an example of how they tie the learning, communicating and knowledge-sharing dynamics together in the emerging context of its knowledge-intensive initiatives. The chapter will thus highlight how ICT connectivity systems (*managing information*) could be viewed as closely linked to skill development (*managing learning*) and people's management of tacit and explicit knowledge (*managing knowing*), with visible regional aspirations for development. Such *systems* view aims to cover a range of the instrumental, human and core *meta* capitals to be observed in a rich mosaic of multiple layers.

How is a generic, comprehensive, integrative and systematic account of capitals shaped in the context of the Manchester city-region? This chapter will bring about some clues to such issue: the city-region's mix of traditional and knowledge-intensive hubs, its communications and infrastructure, its identity, traditions and cultural diversity are some of the elements that have seemingly positioned Manchester as a knowledge capital in the European arena, and as a determined player in the knowledge-revolutionary times to come.

## 1. MANCHESTER AS A CITY-REGION

Researchers and practitioners have agreed that one of the difficulties in creating and sustaining knowledge-based city-regions is the lack of benchmarks to identify those cities and regions that are generating knowledge-driven initiatives, triggering development and collective value (Chase,

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