

## State-guided city regionalism: the development of metro transit in the city region of Nanjing

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### Abstract

Geographies of city regionalism are variegated. In developed market economies, the provision of regional transport infrastructure has been affected by territorial politics, which reflects the nature of collective provision. Today, territorial politics are the foundation of city regionalism, and involve a wide range of stakeholders. In China, the city region has recently been selected as a new development strategy; accordingly, the development of regional transport infrastructure in China has been driven, partly, by national policies. Given the various stakeholders involved in such processes, this study sought to illuminate the processes of city regionalism formation in China. We used the case study of the development of metro transit infrastructure in the city region of Nanjing, which revealed that city-regionalism is state-guided and involves coordination between administrative commands from different levels of government, negotiations between local governments, and an overall shift in policy sentiment from competition to collaboration. Ultimately, our study ascertains that while trans-border transit projects are primarily state-guided (involving upper government intervention), they are also constituted by bargaining between local governments in the city region.

**Keywords:** city regionalism; scalar politics; regional transit infrastructure; regional cooperation; Chinese city region

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## Introduction

‘City region’ refers to the economic or relational space beyond an urban jurisdiction (Scott 2001; Hall and Pain 2006), which emerges with the spatial concentration of economic activities (Scott 2001; Scott and Storper 2015), intensified cross-city interactions, and enhanced learning between cities (Cooke and Morgan 1998; Asheim 2018). In the West, the city region model has proven to minimise the multifaceted transaction costs inherent in post-Fordist economies, and to nurture organisational, technological and cultural innovation (Florida 2002; Scott 2019). Today, the mega city region is considered the most competitive and efficient urban form worldwide (Scott 2001). In response to this growing recognition that city regions are fountainheads of power and influence, many countries are now pursuing political rescaling projects (Brenner 2004). State and local authorities are applying the city region model to make their development strategies more competitive (Harrison 2008) and improve regional internationalisation (Li and Jonas 2019) across different scales (Brenner 2004; Pearce and Ayres 2009).

While the growth of a city region involves a flourishing economy, it also entails multiple problems of governance (Scott 2019; Jonas, Goetz, and Bhattacharjee 2014). More specifically, inconsistencies between the boundaries of functional economic and administrative spaces pose challenges for contemporary urban governance systems, especially in the overall governance of regional public affairs such as collective infrastructure provision and environmental protection (Scott 2019; Jonas, Goetz, and Bhattacharjee 2014; Jonas and Ward 2007); for example, a regulatory deficit at the regional level can gradually exacerbate uneven development and awkward administrative boundaries. Such challenges have provoked a debate on the politics of the construction of city regions (Jonas and Moisió 2018; Jonas and Ward 2007; Moisió and Jonas 2018).

What is important to note about this debate for our purposes is that scholars advise that city regionalism corresponds to specific scalar logics (Wu 2016; Wachsmuth 2017), involving scalar politics characterised by political games and power struggles (Jonas and Ward 2007). In other words, both horizontal and vertical scalar relationships among stakeholders influence the process of city regionalism (Li and Wu 2018). Empirical research emphasises that regional governance is rooted in different historical-geographical contexts and inherited

political-institutional scaled structures (Brenner 2004; Jonas 2013; Li and Wu 2012b). As Scott (2019:570) notes, ‘any attempt to centralise the governance to the city region is apt to face resistance from those vested interests in prior’. Obviously, the process of city-regionalism must undergo the politics of scale. In order to better understand the governance construction of city regions, specific empirical research on this abstract concept is urgently needed. Methodologically, we believe that effort is needed to examine the concrete process of city regionalism through understanding the role of the state and interactions among stakeholders in a contextually specific political environment.

Chinese city regionalism practices over the last decade – whether top-down or bottom-up (Harrison and Gu 2019; Li and Wu 2018) – offer a wealth of compelling cases for investigating the scalar politics of city regionalism. Two points of departure for cross-jurisdictional transport infrastructure need clarification here. First, in China, the construction of cross-border transport infrastructure is mainly promoted by the government and involves multi-level governmental institutions and multiple departments; accordingly, the Chinese context powerfully reflects multi-scale and multi-agent interactions and games (Li, Xu, and Yeh 2014). Previous studies focus on regional cooperation in system design on the premise of the principle of interest sharing (Xian, Chan and Qi 2015; Zhang 2006); concrete cooperation and negotiation processes and potential conflicts of interest have received little attention (except Xu and Yeh (2013)). Second, trans-boundary transport infrastructure is an important physical linkage between cities. However, broken roads, which bottleneck regional integration, exist across China’s city regions. While Liu (2019) identified the spatial characteristics of broken roads in China’s city regions, no scholar has yet revealed the governmental rationale for broken roads.

To bridge this gap in the existing literature, this study unpacked the regional development plans of Nanjing, a city region in China a few hours west of Shanghai, to uncover why inter-city infrastructure has been difficult to connect. Of course, such connectivity issues are not unique to Nanjing: regional infrastructure integration is a global problem (Jonas, Goetz and Bhattacharjee 2014). Therefore, while our case study focuses on the development norms of city regionalism in the Chinese context, it nevertheless offers insights that enrich understandings of city integration across the globe.

This paper is organised as follows. The second section reviews existing literature on regional

infrastructure provision and its impact on city regionalism; because we use a Chinese case study, this section focuses on the growing body of literature on Chinese city regionalism. The third section provides a research framework based on the literature review. The fourth section introduces the methodology and the case study area. The fifth section analyses the case study to uncover notable changes in the governance of infrastructure and state-guided processes of cross-border transit development. Finally, the sixth section concludes the paper and advises how it contributes to literature on Chinese city regionalism and the role of the state in the territorial politics of regional infrastructure provision.

### **Literature review: the state and city regionalism**

The strategic development of city regions involves the efforts of state and non-state actors, including academics, policymakers and planners, to build cooperative, effective and durable governance frameworks (Jonas and Ward 2007). City regions, due to global localisation and state re-territorialisation, are produced through material politics and struggles between different geographic scales (Brenner 2004). Along these lines, early work in economic geography situates the city region as an autonomous political and economic entity which weakens the nation state's regulatory and territorial administrative powers (Scott 2001). Based on these phenomena, the notion of 'politics of scale' provides a conceptual framework for deciphering the agents and tensions inherent in the processes of state rescaling and city region development.

Influential literature on the politics of scale focuses on rescaling and seeks to identify how regional scales of governance are constructed (Brenner 2004). Notably, this approach to scalar politics suggests that city regionalism represents a new form of 'spatial selectivity' by the state and is the result of the rescaling of state power, strongly reflected in direct administrative intervention at the sub-national regional scale, such as national strategies, regional policies and adaptive changes in administrative divisions (Brenner 2004). Behind the dynamics of regional governance lies the state's orchestration of the construction of new governance scales to tackle changing political and economic problems. For example, China's administrative adjustment was affected by pre-existing power structures and relations (Wang and Shen 2016; Xian, Chan and Qi 2015) and such administrative adjustments in turn reshape power dynamics.

Undoubtedly, the discourse and vision used in the construction of governance scales matter; indeed, metropolitan regions are essentially imaginary (Chung and Xu 2016) because they emerge when local actors produce blueprints to justify building in a particular area (Harrison and Gu 2019). Because regions are therefore discursively constructed, they always emerge with the biases of their activating discourse. For example, turning to the Chinese context, we may note that political actors in the Pearl River Delta used scaled strategic discourse to win debates and thus reconstructed the governance structure of environmental planning (Chung and Xu 2016). Accordingly, narratives that present a particular regional scale can be used to legitimise regional building initiatives. Enabled by regional regulatory deficits under neoliberal policy, local governments create city regions that upscale existing state structures to remain competitive; in North America, this trend is called ‘competitive multi-city regionalism’ (Wachsmuth 2017). In situating ‘city region building’ as a process that responds to political conflicts by integrating initiatives involving various actors and interest groups across different scales, we must remember that city regionalism is accordingly always an outcome of changing power structures and relations.

Although extensive work has been done on city regionalism across the world (Jonas 2012; Jonas and Ward 2007; Jonas and Moisiu 2018), including in China (Wu 2016; Li and Jonas 2019; Li et al. 2014; Xian, Chan and Qi 2015), existing literature tends to focus on state rescaling (Brenner 2014) and regional metagovernance (Jessop 2016). While the role of the state is associated with geopolitics (Jonas and Moisiu 2018), insufficient attention has been paid to negotiations between states (Fricke and Gualini 2017). As noted above, rescaling is often understood as involving a state’s changing role in governance. As such, scholars working from the Western democratic context assume that metropolitan regions are also discursively constructed (Fricke and Gualini 2017) and affirm competitiveness, but they do this on a larger scale (Wachsmuth 2017); meanwhile, scholars working in the Chinese context stress the ways in which regional planning is orchestrated by the state (Harrison and Gu 2019; Wu 2016). What remains to be seen are the dynamics of regional building processes; moreover, it is important to identify these without suggesting that they always yield a particular kind of city region – a certain style of regional composition can never be guaranteed. A helpful way into such an inquiry is to turn to a particular city region building process, such as one focused on a particular form of infrastructure. Because city regions always face public service provision problems such as issues related to transport

infrastructure, cross-border transit provides an excellent case study for unpacking the material processes of region building. Accordingly, this study turned to Nanjing's transit structure to identify the politics of the city region building processes constituting its troubling bottleneck.

## **Research framework**

Based on China's administrative system, we situate city regionalism as a process of combined commands from upper-level government, negotiations between local governments with different 'administrative rankings', and changing central city development strategies and visions. This section outlines the implementation processes involved in infrastructure projects that form city regionalism. The process is intertwined (Figure 1). The situation becomes complicated when cross-border issues arise. Notably, solving cross-border issues requires breaking the fundamental association between power and territorial space. However, the governance of cross-border public affairs does not solely involve negotiations between city governments: over the last decade, provincial and national governments have been paying more attention to coordinated regional development. However, given China's decentralising reforms, the power arrangements and responsibilities of cross-border public affairs governance are not clear. To sketch these arrangements, we must develop a sense of the complex economic and geographic interdependence between cities as well as the administrative management of the different scales in regional public affairs governance. The following subsections unpack these nuances.

[Figure 1. The framework of state-guided city regionalism]

### *Top-down administrative commands*

Top-down administrative commands in city regionalism usually appear in literature on state-orchestrated rescaling or state re-territorialisation emerging as administrative annexation (Zhang and Wu 2006; Wu 2016), regional institution building (Harrison 2008; McGuirk and Dowling 2011), or regional spatial planning (Luo and Shen 2008; Li and Wu 2018; Harrison and Gu 2019; Wang and Shen 2016), and tend to relate to government reform. In nation states, especially more centralised systems, governmental interventions usually work well to

moderate vicious inter-city competition, foster world-class economic growth poles, and deal with crises of economic decentralisation; however, this effect differs with land ownership (public or private) (Li, Wu and Hay 2015), financial strength, and the degree of decentralisation.

### *Negotiation between local governments*

Next, we turn to the negotiations involved in regional collaboration. Usually, after an economic depression (Wachsmuth 2017) or during experiments in regional governance (Scott 2019), local governments and departments from different scales and regions jointly make decisions and implement projects conducive to their common future. The focus of such negotiations is usually the redistribution of political and economic interests such as those related to taxation (Jonas and Moisiu 2018; Jonas, Goetz and Bhattacharjee 2014) and project construction cost-sharing (Zhang, Xu and Chung 2020). However, vicious inter-regional economic competition and vested political interests or falling into ‘soft government doctrine’ can disrupt relatively loose cooperative partnerships such as growth alliances or cooperation platforms. Empirical studies in China show that regional cooperation projects are mainly achieved through administrative orders or spatial planning (Li and Wu 2012b; Luo and Shen 2008; Harrison and Gu 2019). However, in actual city regional projects, the above scalar political practices usually overlap and interact. Relatively speaking, there has been no durable, sustainable city regional government (Lim 2017).

### *Changing development visions*

A central city’s development vision may change from pursuing inter-city competition to regional collaboration because cities realise that collaboration enhances regional competitiveness (Wachsmuth 2017). Such a shift may also change the mentality or discourse governing city development (Chung and Xu 2016). With a growing awareness of the need for collaboration, more attention has recently been paid to regional coverage, especially regarding environmental governance and transborder infrastructure.

Regional planning and policy strategies formulated by governments or NGOs serve as legal bases and action guidelines for regional cooperation (Li and Wu 2018; Harrison and Gu 2019). Local governments or regional growth coalitions (Xian, Chan and Qi 2015) use

discourse to garner upper government support for financial and policy initiatives in developed market economies (Jonas, Goetz and Bhattacharjee 2014) as well as in China (Li, Wu and Hay 2015; Xian, Chan and Qi 2015). For example, regionalist actors may use the media to propagate a particular vision of city regional communities and establish an identity for the public living in these city regions. To some extent, regional plans for a metropolitan area can guide city regionalisation. Accordingly, a local state strategy may integrate regionalism into a regional development mentality or discourse.

This framework of state-guided city regionalism can be applied to an examination of the phenomenon of ‘broken roads’. Broken transport infrastructure in Chinese city regions is not only due to a lack of administrative arrangements but also to the succession strategies of local developments. As a late-rising country, China has benefited from the dividends of reform and opening up; indeed, its fiscal decentralisation in the 1990s spurred incredible local economic development and entrepreneurialism – it took China 30 years to complete an urbanisation process that took the US and developed European countries over 200 years. However, there is a lack of regional governance in China today. In step with its rapid development, China’s administrative system emerged only recently and is notably fragmented. Today, local governments compete in a zero-sum game for tax sources. The interests of local government and the benefits of regional scale are inconsistent at times due to the uncertainty of economic geographic agglomeration and diffusion. Therefore, local government cooperation in public affairs involves grappling with conflicting interests.

In China’s current administrative management system, the arrangement of power and the financial rights related to inter-city roads are not clear. A lack of communication between cities about their spatial plans and China’s one-party administrative system and highly centralised hierarchical system has normalised efficient and close vertical links and relatively weak horizontal interaction. When formulating urban development strategies and spatial planning, local governments do not consider surrounding areas, resulting in disconnections between the spatial plans of adjacent jurisdictions. Meanwhile, there is a lack of legal provision for the construction of the broken roads. The central and provincial governments are responsible for planning and constructing highway and railway networks at the national and provincial scales as well as investing resources in such projects. Municipal and county-level governments are responsible for the planning and construction of highways and rail transit systems within their jurisdictions. Broken roads usually appear on the borders of

cross-provincial, cross-city and cross-county (district) areas where the backbone transportation network and the local transportation network connect. Moreover, China uses a separated financial system for infrastructure investment. The expenses involved in connecting broken roads fall, to a certain extent, under the scope of public goods provision, and local governments have a ‘free rider’ psychology in terms of broken road construction owing to the split financial system. Additionally, uneven regional economic development means that the urgency of the need to connect broken roads is differently distributed across regions.

Governments at different levels of the administrative hierarchy and in different regions in China have different objectives, functions and interests. From the perspective of the province or central state, connecting inter-city broken roads is consistent with the long-term interests of the whole city region. However, from the perspective of individual cities, this is not necessarily advantageous; whether an individual city would do well to connect a broken road depends on its comparative advantage regarding economic development and dependency upon neighbouring cities. At the same time, China’s leadership primarily limits its ambitions to a five-year timeframe. Accordingly, local government decision-makers tend to focus on short-term development goals. Additionally, as noted above, local government authorities in adjacent administrative regions compete in a zero-sum game for political resources, which leads to insufficient incentives for cross-border infrastructure cooperation subject to strong externalities. Under these premises, local governments will trade off potential threats, costs and benefits. If a region’s expected benefit is lower than the cost to be paid, then the region is likely to adopt a ‘passive’ or ‘boycott’ attitude towards cooperation.

What, then, are the potential costs, risks and benefits of connecting the broken roads to individual cities? First, it requires local governments to undertake infrastructure investment, and they cannot internalise the investment externalities of cross-border infrastructure. Given limited annual investment budgets, such projects always involve opportunity costs. Second, individual cities prioritise investment in broken roads based on whether fixing the road aligns with their development strategies and would meaningfully improve their traffic volumes – a pragmatic local government will not waste financial resources on an unprofitable broken road. Third, successful cooperation requires concerned governments to pay high institutional transaction costs such as those involved in treaty negotiations, rule-making and institutional adjustments during the negotiation process. Finally, with the reform of China’s market economy, the obstacles to the process are being gradually eliminated. Once a broken road is

connected, the local government may lose a tax base. Local protectionism tends to keep population, enterprise and investment within its jurisdiction (Zhang and Wu 2006). Cities that cede interests or lose resources are prone to generate moral hazards in the process of cooperation. Accordingly, broken roads can be subject to ‘anti-regional integration development strategies’ after trade-offs.

### **Methodology: study area and research method**

Turning to the site of our case study, Nanjing is the capital city of Jiangsu Province. Adjacent to its eastern part is Jurong, a county-level city affiliated with Zhenjiang City. Nanjing and Jurong’s civil societies closely interact. For example, in 2018, 60% of vehicles registered in Jurong were owned by drivers with Nanjing licences. Additionally, due to their geographical proximity, many Nanjing residents buy houses in Jurong, especially in the cross-border area. For our purposes, it is important to note that the Nanjing-Jurong city region (Figure 2) is a key area for regional integration. After its proposal in 2010, regional cooperation in the Nanjing city region progressed, although it still encountered many obstacles. Today, most cross-border transportation infrastructure projects between Nanjing and Jurong (shown in Table 1) are in a slow or stagnant state. This speaks to the broader trend of broken roads across China (Liu 2019). While many regional cooperation agreements have been signed, as evidenced by government documents and news reports, they have also proved difficult to implement, and such difficulties are major roadblocks in the integration of Chinese metropolitan areas. The S6 subway line is the first cross-border subway line successfully connected as a result of regional cooperation in the Nanjing metropolitan area. Installing this line took nine years from proposal and negotiation to construction, vividly reflecting the evolution of the relationship between the core city and the surrounding areas in the metropolitan area. The cooperative process underpinning the installation of the S6 subway line is an important historical reference for other metropolitan areas undergoing infrastructural negotiations.

[Table 1. Overview of the construction of cross-border traffic lines between Nanjing and Jurong since 2010]

Source: cross-border transportation planning documents and interview data

[Figure 2. Location of the Nanjing city region in China (a); location of Nanjing-Jurong in Nanjing city region (b); location of the S6 subway line in Nanjing-Jurong (c)]

To understand the change from non-cooperation to cooperation and its influencing factors as accurately as possible, we collected our research materials through the following steps. First, we gathered documents about inter-city transit from local governments to develop an initial sense of key stakeholders. Second, we compiled a recording of a government symposium on cooperatively mending broken roads in the Nanjing Metropolitan Area, finalised our identification of local government stakeholders with a snowball strategy, and conducted 23 semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders. Third, we conducted semi-structured interviews with the public, small shop owners and staff in real estate sales offices living near broken roads. Fourth, we sorted through public commentary on the S6 subway line and the government's replies from the Nanjing and Jurong City People's Government websites. The key stakeholders we interviewed included decision-makers, coordinators and executives involved in the cooperative process of fixing inter-city broken roads as well as the actual beneficiaries of the broken roads. It should be emphasised that their views are authoritative.

### **The development of Nanjing's metro transit**

When it first emerged, the S6 project was both an opportunity and a challenge. It was an opportunity because it responded to China's strategic intention to integrate and develop the Yangtze River Delta (YRD) region. The preliminary idea was developed in 2009, when the Nanjing Development and Reform Committee (DRC) drafted the Nanjing Metropolitan Area Rail Transit Plan (2008–2020) following an agreement on transportation integration reached during the third Nanjing Metropolitan Mayors' Summit. Together, a group of experts and planners outlined ideas for 15 railway channels, including the S6. Additionally, the YRD Regional Plan was promulgated shortly after in 2010, with the State Council requiring Nanjing to become a more competitive core city, in part by accelerating the construction of its metropolitan area. Responding to the policy requirements of the Chinese central government, Nanjing decided to develop the eastern region first as the core of Nanjing Metropolitan Area to economically benefit its nearest county-level city, Jurong, whose top leader had initiated a campaign compelling Nanjing to integrate with Jurong at the Fourth Mayors' Summit of the Nanjing Metropolitan Area. Because S6 stood to be a major physical

channel between Nanjing and Jurong, it was written into the Nanjing Municipal Master Plan (2011–2020) in 2010 and approved by central agencies in 2012 under the joint concern of two city leaders.

Meanwhile, the S6 project was a challenge because it was caught up in an atmosphere of fierce regional economic competition among the city's hinterlands which emerged amidst economic globalisation. In 2010, with the rise of the Shanghai metropolitan area and the southern Jiangsu city region, Nanjing's economic hinterlands began to touch its eastern administrative boundary. Nanjing was facing an embarrassing situation in that its eastward hinterland had been claimed. To make things worse, the development of its eastern part became trapped in a bottleneck, characterised by multiple managerial actors, sectoral segmentation and low competitiveness. This decentralisation of power and the diversification of management resulted in weak functional links between districts and generally low efficiency. In response, the Nanjing Municipal Government sought to simultaneously integrate the development space in eastern Nanjing and consolidate its hinterland by prioritising the S6 project.

#### *Before city regionalism: administrative fragmentation in infrastructure provision*

Although the transit project was approved by the National NDRC, it was not implemented in time. This was due to widespread administrative fragmentation in infrastructure provision across China (Zhang and Wu 2006; Li and Wu 2012a; Liu 2019). Because China's central government plays a leading role in national transport infrastructure, which includes high-speed railways, local governments required assistance from the central government to solve Nanjing's coordination issue. However, because such regional infrastructure projects require local state actors at different levels to coordinate, difficulties such as unstable local leadership, conflicting development schedules and local protectionisms often emerge.

Notably, unstable mayoral leadership has been a major issue in Nanjing. In 2013, the mayor of Nanjing, who had promoted the S6 subway line, was imprisoned for corruption. Consequently, the construction of the S6 subway line was paused. Because China's political culture adheres to the concept of 'one leadership, one development idea', which encourages project continuity and stability, this was a major disruption:

It is no surprise to see this situation, since a cross-border co-operation project, especially infrastructure, usually lasts for 5–8 years from its proposal to its construction. Actually, most of this time was spent on the negotiation stage. However, changeable leadership increases the uncertainty of co-operation. (Interview with an official from Maanshan Transport Bureau, April 2019)

In fact, from 2010 to 2019, the top leaders of Nanjing City changed a total of ten times. These leaders had different preferences and development philosophies; this was reflected in several shifts in Nanjing's spatial development strategy. After the leadership changed, the region prioritised for development also changed to one that did not include the inter-city railway. What hindered the project was not that the officials changed but that the new officials were primarily concerned with perceptions of their political performance: utilitarianism makes new leaders pursue political achievements during their tenure, which often discourages them from following through with their predecessors' plans, since they are unlikely to benefit their own political record.

Accordingly, the cross-city line project did not progress after it was permitted by NDRC until 2014. The Jiangsu Provincial Government issued the first city region integration development plan, 'Ning-Zhen-Yang City Region Integration Development Plan', which proposed the acceleration of the preparatory work for the S6 line. At that time, almost 80,000 people were commuting between Nanjing and Zhenjiang, especially from the five towns of Jurong (OD travel data from BaiDu); this commuter traffic was a result of manufacturing gradually moving out of central Nanjing to its suburbs, adjacent to Jurong. Subsequently, local community forums and the mayor's office began to receive complaints about the inconvenience of commuter traffic between the two cities.

In addition to changing mayors, the project was also troubled by the local states' failure to coordinate a development schedule, even though they both faced strong public pressure about the issues regarding commuting. A senior political figure from Nanjing's municipal government expressed Nanjing's considerations:

To be honest, there is also a problem of uneven development within Nanjing. And Nanjing's investment in urban construction is limited. At the same time, all the cities in

the metropolitan area want to cooperate with Nanjing in terms of transport infrastructure. We should always have a sequence. Moreover, it is impossible for Nanjing to put a large amount of investment in border areas without high-quality development in its own region. (Interview with an official from Nanjing's municipal government, April 2019)

Objectively, there have been differences between the two cities' spatial development pace. According to the cities' transportation infrastructure investment plans, the construction of the S6 metro line was arranged in their 13th and 12th Five-Year Plans respectively. However, neither city was willing to modify its plans for the sake of the other city. This example demonstrates that cross-city conflicts in spatial development schedules can cause structural obstacles in regional cooperation.

In 2015, under the organisation of the Nanjing Metro Group, the DRCs of the two cities and concerned district and town governments participated in the negotiations for the S6. However, the whole negotiation process was prolonged by different attitudes towards cooperation. During this period, Jurong repeatedly expressed a desire in its official planning documents to integrate its transportation with Nanjing's network. Moreover, the Mayor of Jurong promoted the S6 metro line and another high-speed railway as major development opportunities. Nevertheless, Nanjing was not enthusiastic about constructing the cross-border metro line.

Nanjing's resistance was due in part to its long-time protectionist attitude of being cautious and passive towards regional cooperation. Indeed, the proposed subway was notably poised to primarily benefit Jurong: 40% of the line's length would pass through Jurong's bustling downtown area while the remaining 60% would be Nanjing's suburbs. As a result, Nanjing was hesitant to cooperate in the project. However, the below interview shows that Nanjing's negative attitude did not only stem from this reason:

Financially, there is no problem with the two cities building this metro line. The project's challenge is [historically inherited] administrative division [(i.e. separate GDP, separate finance, separate public affairs, but unified evaluation system)], which makes it so that we only mind our own business....Nanjing and Jurong are physically close, but Nanjing's housing (land) prices are three times those of Jurong. Once the

broken roads are connected, population and investment will naturally flow to sites with low housing (land) prices and convenient transportation facilities. (Interview with an official from Nanjing planning, January 2019)

However, the project was also perceived as an opportunity for Nanjing to engage in industrial upgrading:

This is an ideal possibility in theory, but not in reality. There is still fierce competition for resources in the YRD region; high-end industries and talents prefer Shanghai over Nanjing. You will agree with me if you look at urban population growth in the YRD region. (Interview with an official from Nanjing planning, January 2019)

Notably, because the installation of the S6 would give locals the opportunity to purchase cheaper housing outside of Nanjing, the project would place Nanjing at a disadvantage in the competition for the tax base on which it depends. Rail transit is like a valve; once opened it will accelerate the loss of the tax base. Thus, Nanjing's passive attitude towards cooperation is in part a way to mitigate the risks of cooperating in such a project.

Meanwhile, the differences in the administrative levels of the cities – Jurong is a county-level city, while Nanjing is the capital of Jiangsu Province – hampered fair negotiations. Although there is no direct administrative order between Jurong and Nanjing, in China entities at higher administrative levels enjoy a higher status and therefore higher levels of power. In other words, the two sides involved in the negotiation had different powers of discourse. Nevertheless, the negotiations went smoothly thanks to the coordination of the Jiangsu Provincial DRC.

#### *After city regionalism: state-guided cross-border transit development*

Below, we discuss the three core aspects of city regionalism as per our framework of state-guided city regionalism.

First: *administrative commands*. Cross-border transit developments are ultimately answerable to upper-level government administrative commands. Due to differences in the two cities' needs for route alterations, investment splits and construction schedules, the coordination of

the Nanjing Metro Group and the transport planning committee was far from adequate. In June 2017, NDRC, the Ministry of Housing and Urban–Rural Development (MoHURD), the Ministry of Transport, the National Railway Administration, and the Railway Corporation jointly issued *Guiding Opinions on Promoting Urban (Suburban) Railway Development*, requiring all provinces and cities to promote an orderly development of urban (suburban) railways and guide the mode of operation, the operation compensation mechanism and the modes of investment and financing. Subsequently, as a direct regulator of regional cooperation projects, the Jiangsu provincial DRC began to intervene at Jurong’s request. Finally, in November 2017, the two municipal governments signed the co-construction agreement dividing the investment according to the number of stations and mileage within the administrative boundary, resolving the land acquisition, demolition and land indicators separately. With the provincial DRC as witness, the state-owned enterprises directly managed by Nanjing Municipal Government and Jurong Municipal Government jointly established a development company responsible for the construction, development and management of the S6 line. Nanjing holds 58.7% of the shares in this company and Jurong holds 41.3%. As Jurong City and even Zhenjiang City still do not have a subway, the S6 subway line continues to be operated by Nanjing Metro Group. Thus, the joint construction of this subway line was successful under the direct intervention of the administrative order of the Jiangsu provincial DRC:

It is hard for the co-construction project to succeed without upper-level government co-ordination. However, many senior officials are promoted from Zhenjiang City in Jiangsu Provincial Government – as long as the issue gains attention from senior leaders, the project is likely to be successful. (Interview with Nanjing development and reform commission, November 2019)

The plan for the Nanjing-Zhenjiang area was compiled eight years ago, but it lacks the attention of high-level leaders from the two cities and the provincial government does not take it seriously. We have been mobilising the provincial government for the cooperation and co-construction of the S6, and thankfully it has started to work. Now, the Secretary of the Provincial Party Committee, Lou Qinjian, has begun to pay attention, and the provincial government has established a special leadership organisation to promote the Development of Nanjing–Zhenjiang–Yangzhou Regional Integration. As soon as this high-level leadership organisation was born, it

immediately implemented the Nanjing–Zhenjiang–Yangzhou inter-city cooperation project. This evidences the importance of top-level design. (Interview with Jurong DRC, May 2020)

These interviewees make clear that Jurong’s work to mobilise the provincial government aided cooperation around the S6. The central state’s guidance regarding the co-construction of metro transit in the city regions enabled the local governments to resolve their issues. Notably, the Secretary of the Nanjing Municipal Party Committee within this leading group, Zhang Jinghua, once served as the Secretary of the Zhenjiang Municipal Party Committee; moreover, the deputy mayor of Zhenjiang, Xu Shuhai, also once served in Nanjing. We speculate that the cross-region work experience of these local decision-makers influenced regional cooperation.

Second: *negotiation between local governments*. Although administrative command reflects that city regionalism is often guided by the state, the process also relies on negotiations between local governments. Notably, location of transportation stations has proved to be a highly contentious planning issue (Zhang, Xu, and Chung 2020). Accordingly, negotiations regarding transit mainly revolve around line direction and station setting. Each town in these two cities wants to install more underground stations within its jurisdiction, provided that spatial planning and engineering technology make such ambitions feasible, to increase land values to facilitate more development opportunities. Municipalities and counties bear the costs of metro line construction, and the number and placement (e.g. above ground or underground) of stations greatly impact these costs. Often, municipal and county governments decide which major infrastructure projects to pursue; however, town governments can also influence final infrastructure plans through their own means such as social networks. As an official of the finance department remarked, ‘Whoever has more power will get more benefits.’ The deeper point here is that the decision-making process for the route of the S6 subway line is as tortuous as the rest of the negotiation process. Consensus is sometimes preceded by strenuous efforts on behalf of multiple governments to persuade their upper-level counterparts.

Negotiations also involved another highly controversial topic: two municipalities working out how to split investment costs. According to *The Regulations on the Administration of Rail Transit in Nanjing*, Nanjing at one point proposed that it would pay for the construction of the

entire subway line, provided that Nanjing Metro Group could obtain the commercial development rights of the lands around all subway stations to subsidise the subway construction and operation costs. Jurong's municipal government rejected Nanjing's proposal as an unfair contract:

The target of this proposal is the land of Jurong, because Nanjing Metro Group is in fact subordinate to the Nanjing Municipal Government. This proposal has interfered with Jurong's territorial interests. But in terms of GDP per capita, Zhenjiang is no worse than Nanjing; we can develop our land resources by ourselves, Nanjing has no right to interfere. (Interview in Zhenjiang, October 2019)

Notably, Jurong has faced difficulties with its annual tax income. While it seems reasonable that if 'Nanjing contributes money, Jurong should contribute land', we must not ignore the geopolitical relation between Nanjing and Zhenjiang; the municipal government of Zhenjiang, the prefecture to which Jurong is subordinate, worries that Nanjing will annex Jurong. This fear has in fact been circulating since Nanjing became a city region. Consequently, Zhenjiang's municipal government is fiercely concerned with territorial rights; they are really Zhenjiang's bottom line. However, Zhenjiang admits that:

In this cooperation process (of the S6 subway line), Nanjing holds the initiative to negotiate and Jurong is the weak party. The latter must compromise on other interests if it wants to cooperate successfully. This kind (of deal) is common because of the complex interest linkages between two adjacent administrative units. For example, Nanjing once attempted to use connecting broken roads as a bargaining chip in exchange for the construction of a waste incineration plant on the border between the two cities. As a result, due to strong opposition from the citizens living in the surrounding area, the project was eventually built in Maanshan City, which has a level of economic development far from that of Nanjing. (Interview with an official of Zhenjiang municipal government, October 2019)

Jurong's government hoped that the S6 subway line would benefit its jurisdiction by creating a trickle-down effect from its richer neighbour; however, cities are interdependent, especially in terms of economic development. Obviously, Jurong is more dependent on Nanjing, and this is one reason why Jurong has been willing to compromise in negotiations about the S6.

Apart from economic development, improving resident satisfaction and maintaining social stability are also principal priorities for local governments. In China, social conflicts have become a significant barometer of whether to legitimise or reject particular projects, and thus considerations of social stability further complicate the dynamics of regional cooperation.

Implementing regional cooperation projects requires not only a willing attitude but also organisation. Before examining whether the regional coordination mechanism of Nanjing city region has worked, we need to determine what it is and how it functions. As early as 2013, the top leaders of eight cities established a Nanjing city region alliance to carry out regional cooperation projects. This works through a three-level operating mechanism (Figure 3), which consists of the decision-making, coordinating and executive layers. The decision-making tier, composed of eight cities' party secretaries and mayors, is responsible for approving the professional commission's proposal concerning inter-city co-operation, with its work platform Joint Party and Government Meeting. The coordinating tier, consisting of eight cities' DRCs, is accountable for coordinating the work of different departments in their respective cities, and Nanjing DRC was set as the Alliance Secretariat. The executive tier, including fourteen professional commissions, proposes cross-jurisdiction co-operations, and is subordinate to the decision-making layer. This three-layer operation mechanism is entirely founded on consensus, without any legal binding.

[Figure 3. Three-level operation mechanism of Nanjing city region alliance]

However, this informal institution arrangement does not work as intended, facing coordination difficulties:

The development of inter-city metro-lines is chaotic. First, there was a lack of communication during the stage of planning. These cities have different plans. Second, the two cities have different preferences. Although in the city region of Nanjing there is a transport planning committee consisting of eight cities' transport departments, it does not belong to any level of administrative hierarchy. It cannot require these two cities to collaborate. It does not have the authority to approve projects. The collaboration is dependent upon the stakeholders. (Interview with a director of Nanjing Transport Bureau, March 2018)

Moreover, the construction of regional infrastructure such as inter-city railway involves a great variety of governmental departments. For example, the transportation department takes responsibility for location planning, the construction department is in charge of project management, and the financial department should take the initiative to raise construction funds. However, the main coordinating organisation, namely the transport planning committee, does not include personnel from the construction department nor from the finance department. (Interview with a director of Nanjing Transport Bureau, April 2018)

The above interviews recall that adjacent cities rarely communicate during the planning stage. Worse still, weak horizontal linkages between different government departments in one city increase the difficulties involved in cross-city coordination. As a result, bottom-up regional cooperation is rather sporadic, especially in jointly constructed infrastructure projects, even though these projects are written into local government documents and regional plans. Thus, the Nanjing Metropolitan Area does not have a clear arrangement of powers for the governance of the regional public good.

Third: *changing local development visions*. So far, we have discussed upper-level government commands and negotiations between local governments. What really furthers a cross-border transit project, however, is a central city's desire to collaborate in developing a large region because it will benefit its economic competitiveness. We suggest that this key driver is centred upon the local state's development strategy. Notably, the regionalisation of urban space increases commuter traffic between the central city and surrounding areas. Meanwhile, as detailed above, the huge difference in housing prices between the two sides of the administrative boundary in our case study has attracted a large number of residents unable to afford a house in the central city area of Jurong, who must endure a long commute. For communities on city fringes, the S6 subway line plan was good news – especially for the handful of enthusiastic citizens who had been urging the mayor to implement the S6. Such bottom-up appeals have been facilitated, as the Nanjing DRC reports, by the rise of online platforms for user-generated content. Nevertheless, most property owners in these fringe communities believe that 'even if complaints are invalid, it is not a matter for the public to decide'. Additionally, one must remember that public demands rarely influence government decisions.

Meanwhile, real estate developers along the proposed subway line are the biggest beneficiaries of subway construction and are accordingly very keen to publicise the benefits of the subway. Since the S6 was included in the Nanjing Rail Transit Plan, Jurong real estate developers have been selling houses using the slogan ‘Just in Nanjing, next to the subway’. They have also made full use of their social media platforms to hype up the idea of living next to the subway to encourage sales. As one leader of the Nanjing DRC said: ‘Although real estate companies cannot directly influence government decision-making, the marketing behaviour of companies invisibly puts pressure on the government.’

Both public opinion and real estate marketing have influenced the discourse around inter-city transit development. Local governments recognise that a complex and complementary relationship exists between the central city and its suburban communities. The central government hopes that the YRD, as the most developed urban agglomeration region in China, will be a key player in China’s international competitiveness. Accordingly, since 2000, the Chinese central government has issued three regional plans (shown in Table 2) to promote the integrated development of the YRD region. As an important part of the YRD, Jiangsu Province has also issued three regional plans (shown in Table 2) to guide the integrated development of the Nanjing Metropolitan Area. Under the orchestrated policy arrangements of the central and provincial governments, inter-city cooperation projects such as line S6 have gained a certain legitimacy. In 2019, the central government issued *Guiding Opinions on Cultivating Modern Metropolitan Areas*:

The publication of this document means that China’s urbanisation process has moved from an era of single-city competition to a new era of regional coordination, regional competition and cooperation. The central government has been deliberately guiding economic competition from single city scale to metropolitan areas or urban agglomerations to alleviate excessive competition among single cities. (Interview, a leader of the Central Committee of the Chinese Democratic League, July 2020)

[Table 2. Mainstream regional plan/policy for the Nanjing-Jurong city region]

Source: compiled from <http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/index.htm>, and <http://www.jiangsu.gov.cn/col/col176703/index.html>, and <http://www.nanjing.gov.cn/index.html>, accessed on 7 Aug, 2019.

Relying on these top-down guiding policy documents is not enough to complete the regional construction. Nanjing makes full use of scientific research and education resources to initiate an open forum on the development of the Nanjing metropolitan area, inviting frontline staff engaged in regional cooperation, elites from metropolitan industry associations and scholars in related research fields. In addition, the forum also welcomes the public and the media to participate in discussions on the wonderful vision of the integrated development of the Nanjing Metropolitan Area, summed up in the catchphrase ‘interconnected infrastructure, shared public services, co-governance ecological environment, and coordinated industrial development’. In this process, the area’s local governments have gradually realised what we have called above the complex and complementary relationship that exists between core and peripheral cities in metropolitan areas, and the area’s public have gradually realised that the development of regional integration is closely related to their own interests.

After many negotiations between city and district governments, the lines and stations of the S6 subway were finalised at the end of 2016. In November 2017, the two cities reached agreements on construction cost-sharing and land development rights and accordingly signed a joint construction agreement under the coordination of the Jiangsu Provincial DRC. In February 2018, state-owned companies in the two cities jointly funded the establishment of Ningju S6 Rail Transit Co., Ltd., and the S6 line project officially entered the routine approval process. Finally, in December 2018, Nanjing and Jurong started construction of the S6 subway line at the same time. All in all, the growth of public commuting demand, the promotion and marketing of real estate developers, the construction of top-down policy, and the formation of a bottom-up regional development consensus together constituted the rationality and legality of the construction of the S6 inter-city rail transit project.

The changing discourse led to the changing attitude of Nanjing towards collaboration. Jurong’s attitude towards the joint construction of the S6 line has always been proactive. The successful cooperation was largely facilitated by the shift in Nanjing’s attitude towards cooperation. Because Nanjing’s regional development strategy has prioritised development in its eastern areas, eastern development is a necessary prerequisite for successful cooperation. Notably, this eastward development strategy stems from competitive development pressure in the YRD region, which makes local authorities very anxious. Although it is the capital of Jiangsu Province, Nanjing’s GDP has always been lower than that of Suzhou City – in 2018,

Nanjing's GDP was 520 billion yuan less than Suzhou's GDP. Along these lines, Nanjing has developed at a slower pace than other areas in the YRD region, and it has been notably overshadowed by Hangzhou, the 'leading area of digital economy'. Among all provincial capital cities in China, Nanjing has the lowest economic primacy – a ranking that earned it criticism from the central government's Inspection Team. Meanwhile, even though Nanjing has the most universities in China after Beijing and Shanghai, the title for most comprehensive national science centre was 'stolen' by Hefei, Nanjing's direct competitor. All these things are rather embarrassing for Nanjing and its decision-makers; this has driven Nanjing to actively seek change. In the No. 1 government documents released in 2018 and 2019 respectively, the Nanjing Municipal Government made building an innovation city its top priority and proposed to make the area east of Zijin Mountain – Zidong New District – a space for 'innovative development' and a new economic growth pole. This strategy attempts to improve Nanjing's embarrassing position in Jiangsu Province's and the YRD's broader development patterns:

Actually, as early as 2017, Zhang Jinghua, the new decision maker of Nanjing, began to orchestrate eastward development. Subway Line S6 (Nanjing-Jurong) and Subway line S5 (Nanjing-Yangzhou) are just preludes to Nanjing's long-term strategic layout. The 'Rise of East Nanjing' initiative seeks, on one hand, to cultivate a new regional growth pole for the Nanjing Metropolitan Area, and on the other hand, to enhance the urban primacy of Nanjing in Jiangsu Province. (Interview with an authority on Nanjing's planning, April 2019)

With Laiwu (a prefecture-level city of Shandong Province) merging into Jinan (the capital city of Shandong Province), Nanjing's urban primacy ranked near the bottom of all provincial capital cities in China. As a result, Nanjing Municipal Government's leaders are facing tremendous pressure from the public and the central government. This has forced Nanjing to look for new opportunities for economic growth. (Interview with an authority of the Nanjing Development and Reform Commission, January 2019)

Meanwhile, among all the economic space sectors in Nanjing, only the Zidong area is driven by bottom-up development. This has caused problems such as a lack of overall planning, poor internal traffic, severe spatial fragmentation and weak urban functions. In light of these

issues, Nanjing proposed the ‘Rise of Zidong’ (literally, the eastern part of Nanjing, closer to Jurong where the transit links) to solve the problem of uneven development in its jurisdiction. From a more macro perspective, the integration of Nanjing, Zhenjiang and Yangzhou, which is an important part of the integration of the YRD, is emphasised by the Jiangsu Provincial Government. However, the spatially dispersed Zidong area has become a fault zone that hinders Nanjing’s development to the east. In order to enhance Nanjing’s economic primacy, Nanjing mobilised the Jiangsu Provincial Government to issue *Several Guiding Opinions on Improving Nanjing's Function as a Provincial Capital City and the Priority of a Central City*, which clearly stated that Nanjing could explore the possibility of establishing special cooperation zones with neighbouring areas, such as Jurong, Liyang and Yizheng. These development measures make clear that Nanjing’s eastward development is far more than simply integrating fragmented space; it is the beginning of the expansion of Nanjing’s economic space.

To summarise, our case study suggests the phenomenon of widespread broken roads and railways in city regions is not only due to the absence of regional government, but also to administrative fragmentation and local protectionism in the context of economic decentralisation. In China, cross-border cooperation projects are constituted not only by top-down regional plans issued by central and provincial governments, but also bottom-up negotiations between municipal governments. Because there is no city regional government, the process involved in cooperation projects is deeply embedded in the existing administrative system. However, China’s territorial administrative divisions have required local governments to focus on localised interests even at the expense of wider regional development. Inconsistent development paces between cities, rooted in uneven development, cause mismatched spatial planning and conflicting development timetables. Changing local leadership, which in all likelihood means different urban development strategies, has brought great uncertainty to inter-city cooperation, especially in time- and money-consuming infrastructure projects. Concomitantly, the zero-sum competition for tax bases and powers among entrepreneurial urban governments exacerbates geopolitical tensions and local protectionism, which further hinder non-cooperation. Each of the above complex factors makes regional cooperation projects difficult to implement.

In order to overcome these differences and conflicts, local governments have persistently sought to establish an informal three-level coordination mechanism that involves meetings

between metropolitan mayors. However, this approach to coordinating interests has not worked well due to weak horizontal connections between cities, a lack of assessment mechanisms and inadequate legal binding. Helpful to note here is that the Nanjing city region alliance is regarded as a non-government cooperative organisation without financial and administrative power, rather than as a single consolidated directorate above city-level government. In reality, the executive order still plays an important role in regional coordination, even though negotiations have become more flexible and bilateral to promote cooperation. Simply put, the process often unfolds as a business deal between rational governments exchanging interests to reach relative justice. Ultimately, the Nanjing city region is still figuring out its regional governance style; no clear arrangement of power and institutional structure yet exists. The success of its regional cooperation depends on the local government's willingness to cooperate and on regional development needs.

It is worth noting that cooperation does not mean that competition disappears, but rather that it rises to the regional scale, that is, to pursue 'regional competitiveness'. On the one hand, a city government can obtain more resources and enhance its discursive power by transforming land from neighbouring cities in ways that provide it with a competitive economic advantage. On the other hand, the central government also tends to foster the development of city regions as key contemporary growth areas, and this has gradually improved the zero sum game-style relationship between the core and the surrounding cities of metropolitan areas. As a mayor in Nanjing city region remarked, 'Only if the core city becomes bigger and stronger can the surrounding city be better.' The shift in local decision-makers' understandings of regional competition and cooperation is closely related to the central governments' long-term efforts to normalise city regionalism.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has used the development of metro transit in the city region of Nanjing to uncover facets of the formation of city regionalism in China. In particular, we unpacked the process of inter-city transit development in the Nanjing-Jurong region. We explained why it has been difficult to connect inter-city transit infrastructures in the past and how city regionalism has been applied to developing transit infrastructure. We also noted that while in more developed market economies the collective provision of regional transport infrastructure is affected by

territorial politics (Jonas, Goetz and Bhattacharjee 2014), in China the central government and its ministries encourage city regions as part of their new development strategy (Wu 2016). Thus, the development of regional transport infrastructure is also driven by national policies and stakeholders at the national and provincial levels (Li, Xu and Yeh 2014). Along these lines, we found that infrastructure projects were guided by upper government requirements as well as bottom-up negotiations between local governments. We also identified the obstacles and impetuses of inter-city cooperation. Negotiations between Nanjing and Jurong regarding the transit plan involved different levels of administrative hierarchy and dealing with inequities in administrative powers and resources between the two cities. In this way, our case study serves as an example of regional cooperation between strong and weak cities.

The trend of broken transport infrastructure across Chinese city regions demonstrates a lack of infrastructure governance at the city region scale (Liu 2019). Namely, no standard power arrangements exist to facilitate the planning, investment or legal elements of the construction of inter-city roads or transit. Because local governments have some discretion on how to address disconnected roads and transit systems, they can favour anti-regional integration development strategies. Typically, entrepreneurial local governments are likely to refuse to connect broken roads to protect their tax sources from being siphoned off or diffusing (Liu 2019; Zhang, Xu and Chung 2020; Li, Xu and Yeh 2014).

Three scalar political practices which can reverse passive attitudes to cooperation have proven to be effective. First, the weaker co-operator can promote cooperation by mobilising high-level leaders who have an executive order relationship with the stronger co-operator (Li and Wu 2012a). In our case study, administrative commands from the upper provincial government were important in the development of Nanjing's inter-city transit. Second, the weaker collaborator can exchange interests with stronger collaborators outside the cooperation project through conflict negotiation to promote cooperation. Our case study revealed that negotiations between Nanjing and Jurong played an important role in the transit construction. Third, the promulgation and prioritisation of regional cooperation policies and regional plans (Li and Wu 2018; Harrison and Gu 2019) contribute to regional cooperation in construction by endowing regional cooperation projects and encouraging local authorities to favour collaboration over competition. Along these lines, Nanjing understands that the transit system will benefit it by enhancing its competitiveness. Such changes in local government

attitudes proved to be the most critical factor in facilitating construction.

Moreover, while we found that successful regional cooperation in China remains influenced by administrative orders, we uncovered that regional cooperation is also facilitated by negotiations between local governments. Accordingly, we argue that regional transit development is an outcome of state-guided city regionalism because the process involves administrative commands, conflict negotiation and changing policy environments. As there is no regional government at the city region level (e.g. the de facto Nanjing Metropolitan Area), transit infrastructure governance is not institutionalised and still requires constant negotiations between states regarding its development, maintenance and management. The institutionalisation of regional governance is far from complete. The process is more state-guided, involving not only intervention from upper-level governments but also bargaining between local governments in the city region. In our case study, these factors enabled the completion of trans-border transit.

At a larger scale, the development of mega-regions is both discursive and actual, and involves extensive regional policies and plans, which play a critical role in the formation of regional imaginaries (Harrison and Gu 2019). For example, while the YRD's regional plan defines a framework for regional collaboration (Li and Wu 2018), our analysis of the transit development between Nanjing and Jurong revealed that cross-border collaboration is not significantly led by planning. By exploring this case study from this city region scale, we observed the actual practices of region building. While infrastructure plans remain important, projects at this scale are activated less by planning and more by bottom-up activities; ultimately, our case study suggested that cross-border transit development is deeply tied to negotiations and deals across scales (Li, Xu and Yeh 2014; Li and Wu 2012b).

Notably, both scales adhere to the norms of state-guided regionalism since the role of the state across different administrative levels in China remains visible and critical. The three critical factors listed above – namely, administrative commands, negotiations and changing development visions – all reflect state guidance and steering. Therefore, while it is useful to think about regionalism in the post-reform era as a process of economic decentralisation, the spatial logics of socioeconomic regulation are more complicated than rescaling (Lim 2017b; Wu 2016; Li and Wu 2018). In the sphere of urban development, strategic state guidance is combined with market-oriented development under so-called 'state entrepreneurialism' (Wu

2018). The case of metro transit development in Nanjing involved both intense local negotiation as well as upper government intervention. Similar to regional planning and building at a mega-regional scale (Harrison and Gu 2019; Li and Wu 2018), city regionalism goes beyond decentralised decision-making in China. Although the construction of cross-border transit involves territorial politics (Jonas et al. 2014), Chinese city regionalism is more reflective of state-centred politics (Wu 2018), which reinforces the claim made by Jonas and Moisiso (2018, 315) that ‘city regionalism is becoming an important medium through which the state exercises its powers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century’.

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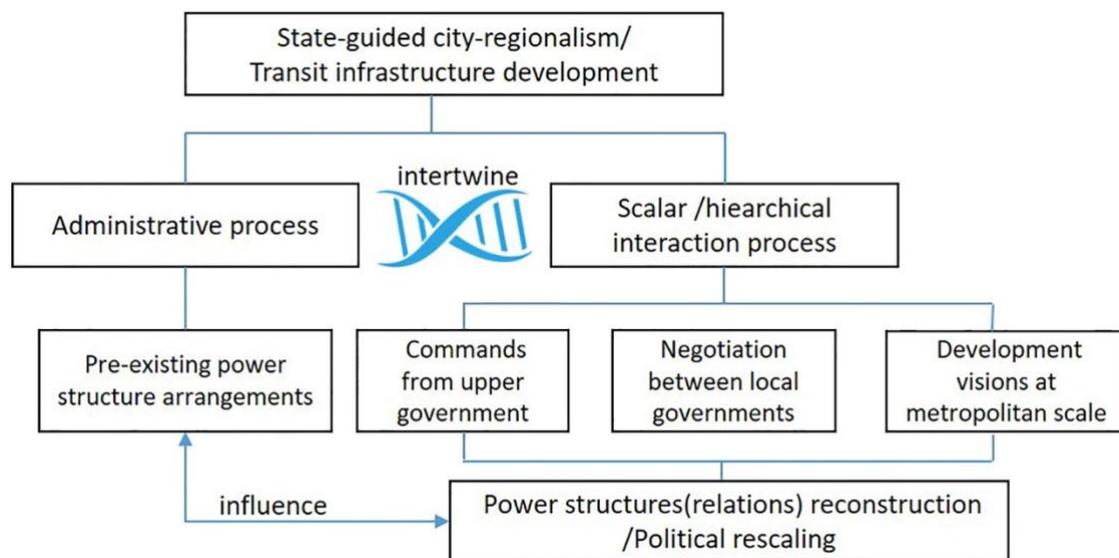
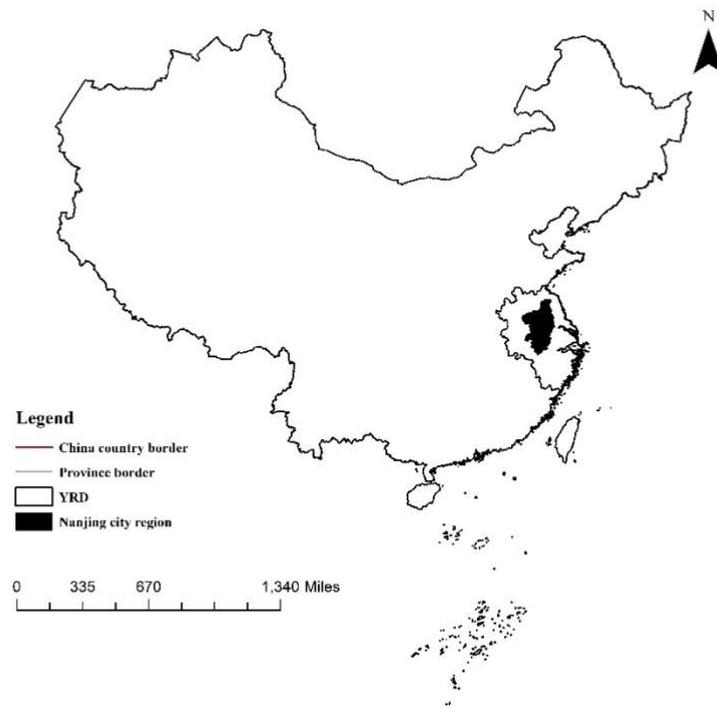
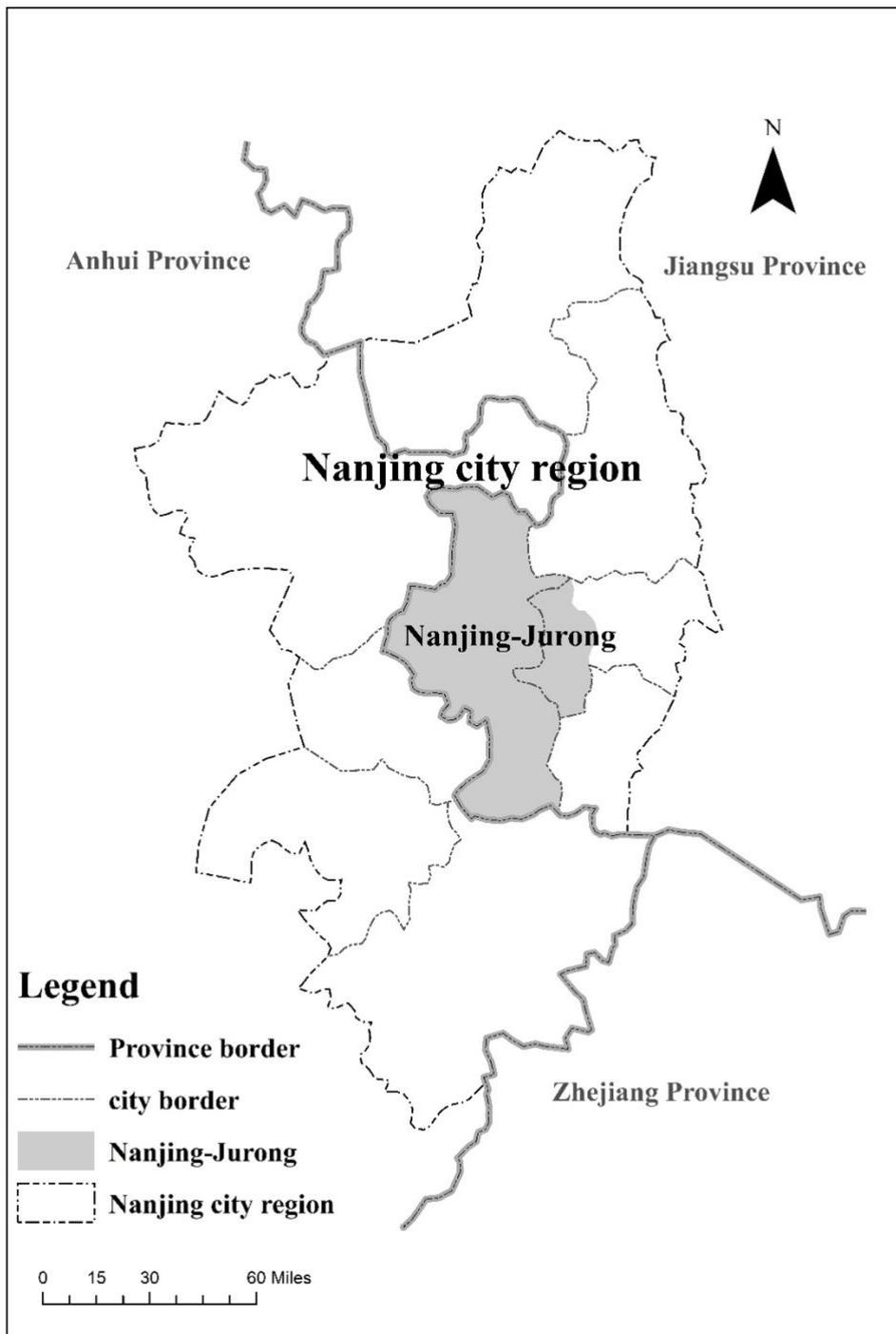


Figure 1. The framework of state-guided city regionalism



**a**



b



Figure 2. Location of the Nanjing city region in China (a); location of Nanjing-Jurong in Nanjing city region (b); location of the S6 subway line in Nanjing-Jurong (c)

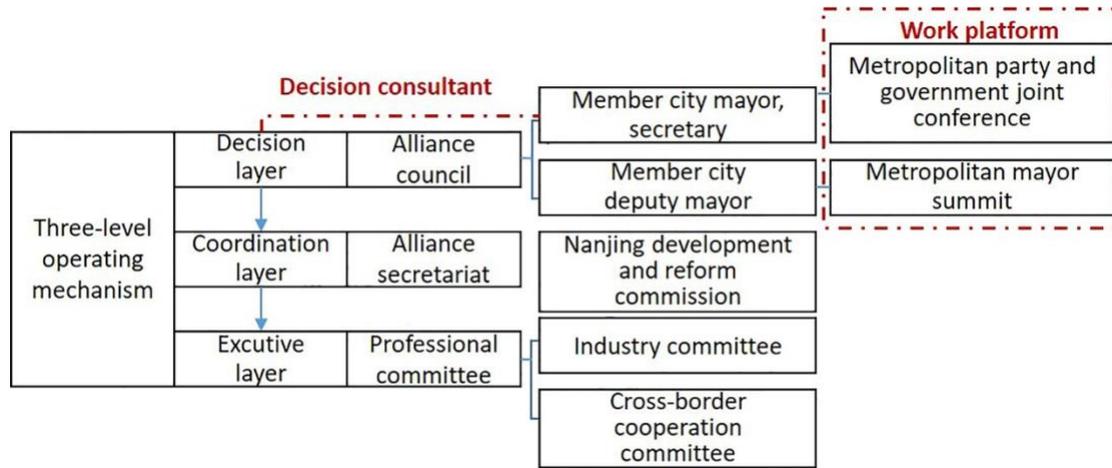


Figure 3 Three-level operation mechanism of Nanjing city region alliance

Table 1 Overview of the construction of cross-border traffic lines between Nanjing and Jurong since 2010

<b>Cross-border road type</b>	<b>Cross-border road name</b>	<b>Duration of cooperation</b>	<b>Status of cooperation</b>
Subway line	S6 new construction	9 years	Under construction
State road	G312 rapid transformation	8 years	Nanjing section has not been completed yet
Provincial road	S122 rapid transformation	9 years	Complete the transformation
City road	Xianlin Avenue east extension	5 years	Construction complete
	Jingtian Road east extension	5 years	Under construction
	Mudan West Road west extension	5 years	Broken road

Source: cross-border transportation planning documents and interview data

Table 2 Mainstream regional plan/policy for the Nanjing–Jurong city region

Year	Regional planning and policy	Issued by
2003	Planning of Nanjing Metropolitan Area (2002–2020)	Jiangsu Provincial Department of Housing and Urban-Rural Development
2008	Guiding Opinions of the State Council on Further Promoting Reform and Opening-up and Economic and Social Development in the Yangtze River Delta	State Council
2010	Regional Planning of the Yangtze River Delta (2011–2020)	State Council
2013	Nanjing Metropolitan Area Regional Planning (2012–2020)	Nanjing Metropolitan Party and Government Joint Committee
2014	Nanjing-Zhenjiang-Yangzhou Integration Development Plan	Jiangsu Provincial Government
2016	Development Plan of the Yangtze River Delta City Agglomeration	State Council
2019	Outline of Regional Integration Development Plan of the Yangtze River Delta	Central Party Committee and State Council

Source: compiled from <http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/index.htm>, and <http://www.jiangsu.gov.cn/col/col176703/index.html>, and <http://www.nanjing.gov.cn/index.html>, accessed on 7 Aug, 2019.