

The importance of civic institutions at the neighbourhood scale

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SHAPING DEVOLUTION: THE ROLE OF COMMUNITIES AND CITIZENS

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

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Locating localism: Statecraft, citizenship and democracy

A fast-moving policy landscape – devolution and localism (and Big Society)

Research into shift in state-led policy and practice, with impact on citizenship

‘Top down’ reform

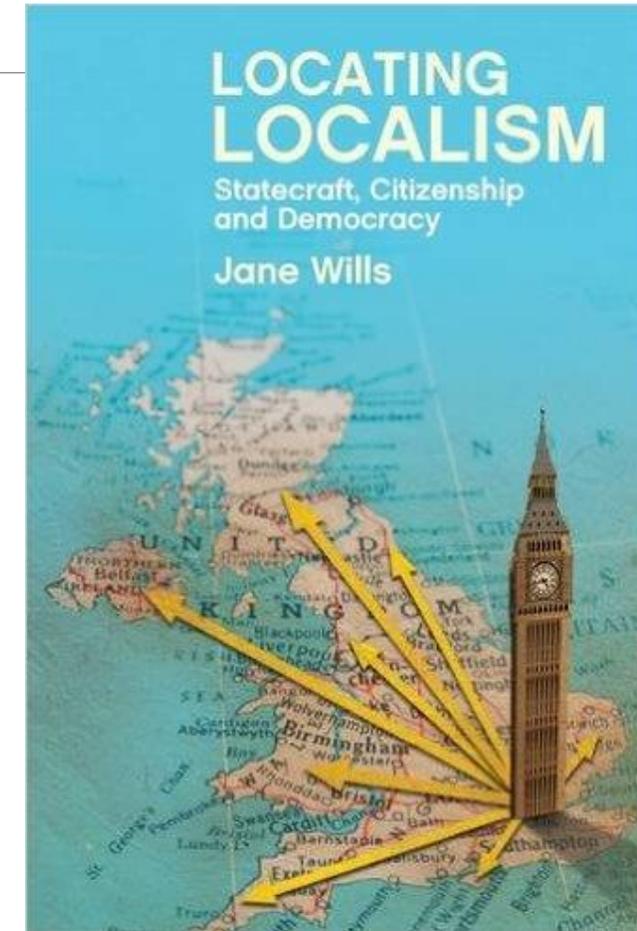
- Neighbourhood community budgets – Poplar NCB in east London (2012-13)
- Lambeth’s cooperative council – neighbourhood working – in south London (2014-15)

‘Bottom up’ engagement

- Neighbourhood planning in urban areas – Exeter St James; Highgate, north London; Holbeck Leeds (2012-15)
- Community organising in east London (2001-15)

new community councils – Queen’s Park in West London

non-partisan political organisation – Frome in Somerset



A new geography of statecraft?

	Centralism (c20th)	Localism (c21st)
The vision	National standards and uniform delivery	Subsidiarity
The means	A national strategy, targets, audit and local compliance	Local democracy (politicians, voters, lay representatives and community voice)
The fears	The postcode lottery	The lack of local capacity
The risks	Being out-of-touch and unable to meet the challenges faced; the democratic deficit	Providing an uneven and uncertain landscape for business and life; that the loudest voices determine what's done
The goals	Social and spatial equity in access, experience and outcomes of services	Locally determined and accountable activity and outcomes

Implications for new practices of statecraft and citizenship

The Civic Offer	Civic Capacity
The freedom and willingness of different parts of the state to work with diverse local interests and citizens	The capacity of the local state, local organisations and the local population to respond to the civic offers being made to engage
The institutional infrastructure of state, market and civic society at multiple scales	The institutional infrastructure that exists and/or can be generated
The practices being developed to secure new ways of working	The mechanisms developed to secure ongoing relationships and engagement
The culture of relationship building	The capacity to formulate an agenda, act and make change
The emergence of vision and shared identity around collective problem solving and governance	The ability to sustain this work over different projects, over time, in place

Headline findings

Good intentions were thwarted by:

1. The absence of a local **neighbourhood forum** - **basic civic infrastructure**
2. The absence of **sufficient community organisation and capacity** to underpin such a forum
3. The inability of statutory bodies to work in partnership with community groups/neighbourhood forums – **unequal power relationships between state and citizens**

So, what is needed for this to work in every locality?

1. **a representative and independent neighbourhood forum** – including residents groups and local associations, and active citizens, with the ability to formulate a position, negotiate, act and mobilise
2. **support for community organisations and their capacity** in places where they are weak so people can then create and sustain a neighbourhood forum
3. **a shift in culture** on the part of the state – mutual recognition and joint working between the state and the forum

Concluding comments

A new **geo-constitution** – with a new balance of power?

- A new chapter in the long history in central-local relationships

Can be understood as **liberal institutionalism** ... freeing things up but requiring institutions to mediate devolution/localism and its outcomes

With major implications for the **culture of public services** and the **practice of citizenship** – state and people - still to be tested

- Major questions remain about the **commitment of national government** – reverting to type
- And, the **willingness/capacity** of local statutory orgs and citizens to engage
- We don't have the **civic infrastructure** required to do this in every location
- Nor, the **non-partisan political culture** it implies

