

Local Government: Does it Still Exist in Scotland?

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The Shape of Government in Scotland

- Dependent and Subordinate Institutions
- The Power to Spend without the Discipline of Taxation
- Does structure matter?
- Is there 'Parity of Esteem' ?
- Best Value as a Quasi-regulatory Pressure

Dependent and Subordinate Institutions

- Scottish Parliament's tax power merely symbolic
 - Local Government's tax power casually surrendered
 - Form of taxation in the gift of Holyrood
 - The Concordat: purest form of the 'Instrumental' view of local government
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The Power to Spend without the Discipline of Taxation

- Irresponsible Government at Holyrood
- Barely responsible local government
- Council tax freeze MAY drive efficiency
- Council tax freeze DOES limit local government discretion and choice
- Council Tax freeze may lead to opportunistic cuts rather than permanent efficiencies

Does structure matter?

- Not according to the Concordat!
- Depends what local government is for
- Localism may point towards more and smaller
- Efficiency may point towards fewer and bigger...
- ...But the Concordat makes the debate illegitimate

Is there 'Parity of Esteem' ?

- Remember McIntosh...
- Single Outcome Agreements incompatible with parity of esteem
- Local Government 'co-opted' to a Scottish Government view of the future
- Tax power given up in exchange for an end to specific grants
- Parity of esteem hardly consistent with 'selling the jerseys'

Best Value as a Quasi-regulatory Pressure

- Can anything be salvaged?
- External pressure for efficiency and effectiveness
- The Possible Power of Best Value
- Ending the fiction of no league table
- Experience of comparative competition as an efficiency driver

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