

# **The Limits of Devolution**

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# The other side to Barnett – ‘Need’

- Needs in UK territorial financial arrangements
- The relationship of convergence to need
- Devolution, transparency and new ‘needs’ in England
- Needs and ‘territorial justice’, or: why should South East England pay?

# Unity vs. diversity I

- An everyday conundrum for decentralised systems of government:
  - *What is the appropriate balance to strike between territorial social diversity, which implies that different places should address policy problems autonomously, and the logic of membership of a common state, which implies that there should be statewide solidarity in dealing with policy problems*

# Unity vs. diversity II

- Striking the balance is a *normative* challenge
- Common understandings on balance emerge through debate
- Understandings may change over time
- The role of 'entrepreneurs' for change

# **The UK debate I - diversity**

- Plenty of entrepreneurs for change ... but of a certain kind
- The drivers of devolution in Scotland and Wales
- Policy divergence in Scotland and Wales
- Northern Ireland
- The English regions

# The UK debate II - unity

- What's it *all* for?
- The role of the centre
- Blair and devolution
- Tony Wright: the constitutional revolution that nobody noticed

# The Problems

- Has the centre really changed?
  - ‘control freaks’ in Labour
  - devolution ‘illiteracy’ in all GB parties
  - ‘metrovincialism’ in the UK media
- The insularity of the territories
  - Can they really celebrate diversity while claiming recognition of their special needs?

# Outlook

- Complacency and drift ...
- ...which probably works in a benign climate where Labour governs everywhere
- But will it when Labour doesn't?
- The need to build common understandings to deal with conflict
- 'Talking up' devolution and its implications