

Not so much 'more for less', it is now
time for more and more local

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3 theoretical positions align

Socio-technical

New institutional

Localism and subsidiarity

Reduced state spending implies:

- More focus at the most local ends of central decisions on isomorphic (and probably inappropriate) patterns
- Simply less of what may well have been sub-optimal spending in the first place – causing even greater problems
- Accentuated demand for locally responsive spending – “give us the money”

From this conjunction, there are indications that a new 'new localism' is back:

A case is being made for Public, or collective disbursement of very scarce funds, at appropriately local levels – where conditions and patterns may differ from the national, regional or urban/rural scale

A strong claim has been made since the mid 1980's, that similarities between CPR (common pool resource) issues, and collective or public spending (Ostrom, E.) are clear enough for empirical and theoretical work from the CPR universe to help inform the public tax and spend debate

Ostrom, in particular, posited that 'rules' that govern self-managed resource systems may be singularly appropriate for high-subsidiarity disbursement of collective goods/services

BIG government (at whatever scale of iteration) will probably get it wrong, or generate sub-optimal solutions for increasingly detailed and more granular local need -

In much the same way as coercive authorities are sub-optimal in resource system management

Quantitatively smaller zones encapsulate:

- Greater transparency
- Stronger likelihood of ex ante 'buy in' for participant engagement
- More internalised monitoring – less reliance on external monitoring
- Consequently more agreement abiding and less free riding
- Greater localised agreement on priorities
- Mix of public/private drivers for local solutions

What does this mean for public service
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- If this shift begins to accelerate and take hold, there will need to be guidance and practice skills around *successful* decentralising
- There may be two directions of flow – for example, authorities joining together (seemingly bigger scale), disbursing more locally specific activities, yet grappling with wider remits and accountabilities which are actually **diminshing** for the previous centralised system

What constitutes localisation?

- Shifts from coercive institutional bodies to collections of binding agreements – these may be a mix of private , public and third sector
- Move from broad brush policing of policies and impacts to granular monitoring and accountability assignment
- Lessening of the classic principal-agent problem
- New institutional structures designed from within, or nearer to, the affected citizens

Opportunities for leadership

- As localisation takes hold, leaders of the process will emerge –

However, just as a smaller, or more localised collective provision implies a qualitatively different nature, institutional structure or culture

There will be a need for qualitatively different leadership skills to help organise this change

- More of the same at a different scale will not suffice !
- It will not respond appropriately to the new rules of behaviour at increasingly localised recursive levels

As we stagger messily at all scales toward increased localism, Ostrum's work holds out much hope for better goods and services and more satisfied citizens

But she delivers clear warnings around the ease of reverting back to the simpler canons of central authoritative controls, or privatisation of public or collective space

Be brave, public service managers and
leaders of change !

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Thanks you

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