



## Localism: Sufficient and fit for purpose? One day RSA Conference

### **CALL FOR PAPERS**

Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2011  
University of Manchester Conference Centre  
Manchester, UK

#### **Conference Objectives**

Localism and regionalism tend to be seen as conflicting and competing conceptions of territorial organisation. Indeed, there are well rehearsed, albeit evolving, debates which engage with the theoretical and policy architectures underpinning regionalism and localism. These two forms of territorial organisation have their origins in different schools of thought, underpinned by fundamentally different ideals around the structure and role of both government and governance in territorial management, the scales at which these functions are most effectively operationalised and how they relate to each other. The current debates in the UK on Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) illustrate this.

Nevertheless, many successful economies around the world have strong local government structures which are complemented by regional structures, either in the form of federal elected regional bodies, regional development institutions, or special purpose delivery vehicles. International evidence suggests that a regional structure provides a mechanism for thinking strategically about priorities of regional significance such as economic development and transport; that it allows scope for the setting of longer-term policy priorities; and that it can coordinate and frame collective arguments and priorities, and in doing so can provide a conduit through which to lobby national government and, increasingly, international agencies, yet also organise a plethora of local interests. This raises a crucial question which will form the theme for this conference: can localism deliver effective interventions and outcomes at a time when economic shifts have forced an adjustment to social, political, and cultural norms to which places must respond?

#### **Target Audience**

The conference is open to all: academics; policy makers and practitioners; and we especially encourage early career researchers, including individuals who are currently undertaking an academic degree or post-doctoral studies, to attend and use this opportunity to present their research.

#### **Programme:**

The day will consist of both parallel workshop sessions and plenary sessions.

#### **Plenary speakers:**

##### **Morning Session**

- **The Politics and Governance of Territorial Development under Localism**  
Professor Gerry Stoker, University of Southampton
- **Sub-National Economic Development and Localism**  
Professor Mike Raco, Kings College London
- **Planning, Regeneration and Localism**  
Dr. Hugh Ellis, Chief Planner, Town and Country Planning Association

##### **Afternoon Session**

- **Localism and the Environment**  
Dr Richard Cowell, Cardiff University

Leading the discussion: Baron Frankal, Research Director, New Economy, Manchester

#### **Contributions are welcomed on the following themes:**

- **The Politics and Governance of Territorial Development under Localism**  
Regionalism and localism have their roots in very different conceptualisations of the roles and structures of political and governance architectures that underpin territorial development. There has been a shift in recent months towards a post-regional policy framework in England, and with this shift, there has been increasing emphasis placed on enhancing participatory democracy at the local level. In the English context localism is seen to offer a framework for achieving the decentralisation of power; the realisation of development driven by neighbourhoods and local

authorities; and increasing accountability at the local level. These changes raise interesting questions around the coordination of territorial development, the role of politics and governance as well as fiscal responsibility in this coordination exercise which may be locally or centrally defined. For example, what is the role of professionals, policymakers, local authorities, communities and NGOs in coordinating and delivering territorial development within a localism framework? Who will champion strategic priorities? What are the opportunities and challenges that participatory democracy present for the achievement of territorial development goals? This track is interested in understanding the nature of this emerging localism architecture and its contrasting form and function to that which underpins regionalism and will interrogate localism as a framework for facilitating and managing sustainable territorial development.

- **Sub-National Economic Development and Localism**

There are well-established and ongoing international debates being had around the viability and sustainability of local and regional economies. What is apparent from many of these debates is that there are recurrent policy fluxes taking place as policy agendas are shifted and shuffled across scales and between actors. The emphasis that has been placed on localism as opposed to regionalism by the Coalition Government in the UK might be said to represent such a shift. This track will seek to reflect on the role of localism in underpinning economic development at the sub-national level and will seek to elucidate the implications of adopting a strategy of sub-national economic development that is underpinned by a localism agenda.

- **Planning, Regeneration and Localism**

The role of planning and regeneration in making places has been debated far and wide. Planning and regeneration take many different forms and their fluidity means that planners, policy-makers and politicians continually adapt planning and regeneration functions and policies to drive and influence specific political visions. The emphasis that has been placed on 'neighbourhood planning' in the UK and what might be seen to be a rolled-back approach to planning and regeneration (at least in the UK context) represents something of a departure from the previous approach. This track will seek to interrogate the impact of localism on planning and regeneration, and will seek to debate the implications of localism on future planning and regeneration agendas, including their funding.

- **Localism and the Environment**

International debates around localism and the environment suggest that localism can strengthen the economic position of locally owned businesses and local government by offering an alternative economic development strategy to that of the high-tech, export-oriented manufacturing cluster development by implementing measures and mechanisms to support independent retailers, businesses and agriculture. As such, it has been argued that localism can foster environmental benefits by reducing transport dependency for export and consumerism and by increasing environmental awareness. However, the evidence base underpinning this contention is variable and, given that current global economic pressures are being played out with intensity across different scales, suggests that the relationship between localism and the environment will be a complex one. This track will seek to explore the relationship between localism and the environmental agenda, and the potential effects of localism on the realisation of environmental sustainability.

**Travel Bursaries:** A number are available – contact the RSA office for more information.

**Registration and submission:**

Please submit offers of papers in the form of 400 word abstracts through the Regional Studies Association on-line conference portal by Monday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2011. Your MS Word file should contain your name, telephone, fax and e-mail details. To submit go to [www.regional-studies-assoc.ac.uk](http://www.regional-studies-assoc.ac.uk) Proposals will be considered by the Conference Programme Committee against the criteria of originality and interest, subject balance and geographical spread.

**Networking:** There will be opportunities throughout the day including a closing session with a glass of wine.

**Prices:** RSA Student Member £30, RSA Early Career/Associate Member £50 and RSA Individual/Corporate Member £95. Non-members: Student £40, Early Career/Associate (retired) £65 and Individual/Corporate £120

**Local Organisers:** Stephen Hincks, Michael Hebbert and Cecilia Wong

**RSA Organiser:** Lisa Bibby-Larsen