

**Review of Public Administration**

**Briefing Paper: Multi-level Governance**

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26 September 2002

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A thorough examination of the whole system of public administration in Northern Ireland is long overdue. As part of the Programme for Government, the Review of Public Administration will wish to consider aspects of how the devolved institutions relate to the extended system of sub-regional governmental arrangements. Any recommendations should be informed by agreed principles and those tasked with undertaking the Review should be conversant with key concepts. Chief among these is the term ‘**multi level governance**’ (MLG). However, the concept itself remains ill defined, leaving its immediate relevance to the Review of Public Administration unclear.

Government is becoming more variegated within different levels of government (horizontally differentiated or, in other words, *provided by* multiple agencies). In short, what government does, for whom, and how it does it, have all also been subject to considerable scrutiny, often culminating in major change. Hence, it is increasingly common to speak of *government* having been superseded by *governance*. Moreover, government is also becoming more geographically diverse (vertically differentiated or in other words, *conducted on* multiple levels), hence the term *multi-level governance*.

In terms of the above changes, the traditional understanding of how the UK is governed – based on the Westminster model – has been challenged by the major constitutional changes that have transformed the nature of its territorial government. Instead, the UK is becoming a differentiated polity. Put simply, government and policy in Britain have become messy. Indeed, British territorial governance is rapidly becoming a case of ‘all exceptions and no (certainly fewer) rules’. Whereas ‘government’ is concerned with the formal institutions of government, ‘governance’ signifies a change in the meaning of government, focusing upon wider processes through which public policy is effected. It refers to the development and implementation of public policy through a broader range of private and public agencies than those traditionally associated with elected government. Thus, government is increasingly characterized by diversity, power interdependence and policy networks. There is a hollowing out of the nation-state as functions are either pooled upwards to supranational bodies like the EU, downwards to devolved administrations and regional bodies, and outwards to civil service agencies or even removed from direct public sector involvement altogether by privatization.

*Multi-level* governance stresses the complexity of policy-making, implementation and accountability relationships between a variety of state and societal actors at the levels of supranational activity (EU), central government, devolved administration, local authorities and quasi-government. It denotes a highly fluid and potential unstable institutional and policy matrix in which the powers and responsibilities of different actors and tiers of government are in flux. Increasingly, too, the new governance encompasses a wide variety of actors and processes beyond the state in which the relationships between state and non-state actors become less hierarchical and more interactive and the essential business of government is the regulation of public activities rather than the redistribution of resources. Underpinning the outplay of MLG in the EU is the rather elusive principle

of ‘subsidiarity’, essentially, that decisions are made at the lowest possible level consistent/commensurate with them being effective.

MLG is not the product of a grand plan or blue print. In both structures and processes, UK governance has changed and continues so to do. Reversing much of what has been done is well nigh impossible, even if it might be felt desirable.

Northern Ireland is no different to other parts of the world in respect of much of the foregoing. However, Northern Ireland provides a fascinating ‘working model’ of MLG in practice. The Belfast Agreement creates a broader more flexible political space, the elasticity of which has been and will continue to be tested. It relaxes, if not blurs Northern Ireland’s exclusive identify with any one state. It is the antithesis of those who cleave to the notion of an exclusive form of territorial sovereignty. In a sense, therefore, Northern Ireland illustrates MLG while its uniqueness is the very justification for introducing such multi-level arrangements, in a prime example of circuitous logic.

As part of MLG, the Province’s devolved institutions must relate to other tiers of government. There are four main aspects, namely, relations with the EU, relations with the UK, cross-border relations with the Irish Republic, and relations internal to Northern Ireland with sub-regional units. In terms of the Review of Public Administration, the most pressing relationship concerns how devolution affects the internal sub-regional governance of Northern Ireland - the future of local authorities and the extended network of non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs or quangos) is crucial.

Evidence from Great Britain demonstrates that there is no automatic trickle-down of devolved power into local government. On the contrary, devolution *may* crowd out the effective political space for local government. Moreover, there is no automatic case for vesting the functions of quangos with local authorities. What constitutes greater ‘democratization’ of the quangos is unclear and highly vexatious – it could involve subsuming quango functions within Stormont departments, returning them to local authorities, or introducing/increasing the proportion of elected representatives on to such bodies. Essentially, there are competing and conflicting imperatives of democracy and efficiency to be addressed.

One potential solution to the pivotal conundrum of reconciling democracy with efficiency is to accept a localized form of MLG wherein might co-exist directly elected local authorities at a highly local level to ensure maximum representativeness but which are not necessarily vested with functional responsibilities. In a pyramid effect, each council would be represented on those sub-regional/intermediate level authorities tasked with discharging public services (a form of indirect election). An expanded network of joint boards, comprising members drawn from a group of local councils within the operational area of the body concerned could be developed. An alternative variant on this model would involve the creation of council clusters, each cluster possibly varying in composition, subject to the particular needs of the component councils. For certain, as with the UK and European levels of governance, sub-regional arrangements within Northern Ireland appear destined to remain complex in a localized version of MLG.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 A thorough examination of the whole system of public administration in Northern Ireland is long overdue. As part of the Programme for Government, the Review of Public Administration will wish to consider aspects of how the devolved institutions relate to the extended system of sub-regional governmental arrangements. In so doing, it is only reasonable that the Review's recommendations should be informed by agreed principles and that those tasked with undertaking the Review should be conversant with key concepts. Chief among these is the term '**multi level governance**' (MLG). However, while both scholars and practitioners increasingly use the idea of MLG, the concept itself remains enigmatic and rather ill defined, leaving its immediate relevance to the Review of Public Administration unclear.
- 1.2 To best understand MLG, some appreciation of how the concept was conceived with respect to the everyday term 'government' is appropriate. The political arrangements in place to oversee, lead and regulate societies – in other words, 'government' - have shown a remarkable diversity. That said, within the family of western nations, especially those within the European Union (EU), certain common features obtain, namely, liberal democracy and capitalist 'mixed' economies in which the state plays a major role. Traditionally, the principal unit of analysis in government has been the nation-state. However, this concept is relatively recent. Historically, it would have been commonplace to focus upon cities and regions, often but not exclusively within empires that were frequently multi-national and multi-lingual in nature. For the foreseeable future, while the nation-state is set to remain the pre-eminent unit of government, the emergence of 'regionalisation' and 'Europeanisation' mean that it is becoming necessary to analyse government across different geographic multiple spaces – local, regional, national, and international.
- 1.3 Such developments alone might merit being denoted 'multi-level government'. However, even a casual glance at the academic literature will more usually refer to 'multi-level *governance*'. This is not a matter of semantics. In truth, the focus of analysis is not only becoming more geographically diverse (vertically differentiated or in other words, *conducted on* multiple levels). It is also becoming more variegated within different levels of government (horizontally differentiated or, in other words, *provided by* multiple agencies). In short, what government does, for whom, and how it does it, have all also been subject to considerable scrutiny, often culminating in major change. Hence, it is increasingly common to speak of *government* having been superseded by *governance* (Table 1). In other words, the role and nature of government has changed and, as a consequence, new explanations are required if a proper interpretation and understanding of the new situation is to be forthcoming – multi-level governance (or MLG) is one such concept (Table 2).

- 1.4 Inevitably, the emergence of MLG has altered the relationship between policy and service delivery. Moreover, the appearance of other levels of government has complicated the policy-making process in ways that are not always immediately clear. Coordinating services across functions and tiers of government is therefore made more problematic. In the context of the Review of Public Administration in Northern Ireland, this briefing paper seeks to explore MLG and its implications. To do so, it begins by explaining territorial government arrangements within the United Kingdom (UK) as they have been traditionally understood alongside more recent interpretations. Then, it examines the changes that have spawned reference to governance alongside government, as a prelude to considering MLG. Consideration of MLG ought not to be regarded as an essentially sterile debating point among academicians for, in a palpable sense, the concept melds theoretical discourse with practical experience of the changing nature of government. Thus, the paper demonstrates how Northern Ireland simultaneously exemplifies MLG as well as exploring MLG's implications for the future of sub-regional governance within Northern Ireland with reference to developments elsewhere in the UK. A glossary of key terms is also provided.
- 1.5 It should be noted that the information contained within this briefing paper is derived from a variety of academic and other sources. It does not, however, involve primary research by the author and hence, responsibility for the adaptation, relevance and interpretation of this material for the Northern Ireland context remains with the author.

## **2. CONTEXT: TERRITORIAL GOVERNANCE IN THE UK**

- 2.1 When comparisons of the internal governmental arrangements of states are drawn, typically, broad categorisations result, contrasting unitary systems with federations (see Glossary). Useful though they can be in illustrating fundamental issues of principle, the shortcomings of such generic divisions quickly manifest themselves. Thus, the UK is ordinarily assigned to the former category with the conventional wisdom underscoring most analysis being that its political system conforms to the 'Westminster model'. The Westminster model should be "distinguished from government as this has evolved at Westminster, and still more from the practice of government in Commonwealth countries". Rather it can be regarded as an ideal type, or, an "organising perspective" (Gamble, 1990). Rhodes (1997), for example, noted that the model is based on

“...parliamentary sovereignty; strong cabinet government; accountability through elections; majority party control of the executive (that is, prime minister, cabinet and the civil service); elaborate conventions for the conduct of parliamentary business; institutionalised opposition; and the rules of debate”. (p. 5).

2.2 Increasingly, while much of the Westminster model remains valid, a series of constitutional developments (minority governments and the use of referendums, for example) illustrate that the UK has steadily departed from the model. Indeed, as Massey (2001) contended, it was never fully accurate, being better conceived as a figurative map in the style of Beck's model of the London Underground - a representation of reality but not reality itself. "But just as Beck's map cannot provide a proper guide to the realities of the depths, distances and curves of the Tube, so the Westminster model no longer provides an adequate explanation as to how we are governed" (p.8). The 1997 Labour Government's programme of devolution to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland further widened the divide between established theory and contemporary practice.

2.3 An alternative perspective – the differentiated polity model (Rhodes, 1997) - has been advanced, based on the view that the UK constitutes a 'union-state' (Mitchell, 1996). In international terms, given its history and common misunderstandings about what exactly is the unit of analysis, the UK is intriguingly atypical, making direct comparison awkward. The UK is a multi-national political entity whose geographical extent has emerged over centuries. Reflecting its composite nature, many rights and institutions that pre-date the various British Unions persist in each of the UK's four component parts, as do varying degrees of policy and administrative autonomy. In truth, complete political integration and administrative standardisation have never been achieved within the UK. Political devolution since 1998 makes their attainment a still more distant prospect. Put simply, government and policy in Britain have become messy. Indeed, British territorial governance is rapidly becoming a case of 'all exceptions and no (certainly fewer) rules'. For instance, Scotland's devolved arrangements include primary legislative and tax-varying powers; Wales has neither, being confined to secondary legislative powers; and Northern Ireland has the former but not the latter, while also having an institutionalised cross-border relationship with another (sovereign) power (the Republic of Ireland). Paradoxically, despite the attention devoted to devolution, by far the largest proportion of the UK population – in England - have yet to experience any! In short, the old verities of British government have yielded to new uncertainties as the UK approximates towards a differentiated polity (see Table 3). Centralisation coexists with fragmentation and interdependence. The policy intentions of central government often drown under their unintended consequences. The attempted centralisation of political power operates in tandem with decentralisation of delivery. Government is increasingly characterised by diversity, power interdependence and policy networks. There is a hollowing out of the nation-state as functions are either pooled upwards to supranational bodies like the EU, downwards to devolved administrations and regional bodies, and outwards to civil service agencies or even removed from direct public sector involvement altogether by privatisation.

### **3. FROM GOVERNMENT TO GOVERNANCE**

3.1 Whereas 'government' is concerned with the formal institutions of government, 'governance' signifies a change in the meaning of government, focusing upon wider processes through which public policy is effected. It refers to the development and implementation of public policy through a broader range of private and public agencies than those traditionally associated with elected government. Partnerships, networks and contracts have become integral parts of the political scene. Invariably, a reduced role for government in some areas of public policy is the result (Greenwood et al, 2002).

3.2 Much of the explanation for the emergence of governance stems from the influence of what is commonly dubbed the 'New Public Management' (NPM). NPM is an amalgam of ideas derived from economics (public choice theory), politics (New Right ideology) and business organisation theory ('managerialism'). Essentially, its proponents advocate the reconfiguration of existing structures for delivering public services; the application to the public sector of various private sector management techniques; a greater use of non-state (private and/or community/voluntary) actors to discharge erstwhile public services (denationalization/privatisation) along with the introduction of ersatz or quasi-markets ('marketisation') - where appropriate - of those functions that remain within the public domain. As such, the role of state as purchaser and provider of many services should be divorced, leading to the idea of the 'enabling state' in which government concentrates on steering (or enabling) the 'ship of state' while other agents do the rowing (or providing). Direct involvement in the production and delivery of public goods and services is thereby relinquished (or at least attenuated) in a process of disengagement that restores the primacy of market mechanisms to the allocation of resources. The vocabulary of NPM is replete with reference to contracts and consumers.

3.3 A note of caution should be sounded, however. Despite the sobriquet 'new', much of the NPM agenda involves practices long established both at home and overseas. As Stoker (1996, p.1) observed of local government:

Local public functions have always been carried out by local quangos, field administration, local trusts, local co-operatives and local firms and these have been noticeable elements in society, economy and the political system since industrialization began. The use of organisational forms which are not local government narrowly defined has always been a feature of the British system of government.

3.4 Thus, diversity characterises the contemporary world of local governance in which local authorities increasingly co-exist with other bodies. The same can be said of national government and, as outlined below, at the burgeoning regional and international levels.

#### 4. MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE

- 4.1 There has never been a time when the nation-state has stood alone, totally free to determine its own fate. Other states, as well as international, transnational and multi-national bodies, have always been important. Until recently, the influence of such external forces was modelled largely in terms of nation-states engaged with intergovernmental relations with other nation-states. Changing conditions, chiefly, the growing role and influence of these extra-national actors have occasioned a revision of our understanding, however. Transnational bodies have developed a growing regulatory role in steering national governments. Thus, the term MLG was devised for use in conceptualizing the emerging system of governance within the EU (see, for example, Marks, 1992, and Scharpf, 1994).
- 4.2 Essentially, MLG is a descriptive rather than prescriptive concept that primarily serves to describe the new realities of governance. It is not usually referred to as a desired or preferred state of affairs, although those who tend to employ the term to depict reality frequently endorse the new dispensation as fulfilling their pluralist aspirations. Marquand's (1998) sentiments convey the point neatly: "power, like muck, is no use unless it be spread" (p.10). As such, MLG stresses the complexity of policy-making, implementation and accountability relationships between a variety of state and societal actors at the levels of supranational activity (EU), central government, devolved administration, local authorities and quasi-government.
- 4.3 Tommel (1998) has contended that MLG has emerged as a result of the decline of classical authoritative or even coercive decision making, these having been replaced by indirect market-led steering instruments and 'soft' forms of decision-making. Thus, there has been a shift from a hierarchical territorial modes of government based on the dominant position of the nation-state to a more non-hierarchically, functionally based system (Loughlin, 2000). The nation-state has been 'hollowed out', a process that "opens up a wide space of autonomous action to lower-level tiers and external actors" (Tommel, 1998, p.55). Additionally, "private and non-governmental actors will increasingly be involved in public decision and policy-making, particularly at regional and local level, in exchange for a more direct representation of their interests within government" (p.56). The net result is to have created what has been dubbed 'Maze Europe'.
- 4.4 Being descriptive rather than prescriptive, MLG carries no pre-judgments about the hierarchical order of institutions: global patterns of governance can hook up with local institutions just as local or regional coalitions of actors can bypass the nation-state level and pursue their interests in international arenas. MLG denotes a highly fluid and potential unstable institutional and policy matrix in which the powers and responsibilities of different actors and tiers of government are in flux. Increasingly, too, the new governance encompasses a wide variety of actors and processes beyond the state in which the relationships between state and non-state actors become less hierarchical and more interactive and the essential business of

government is the regulation of public activities rather than the redistribution of resources.

4.5 Different perspectives exist on MLG. A ‘traditional’ (possibly even ‘reactionary’) approach (associated with the British Conservatives but also with others possessing very different political outlooks) may accept the new reality of MLG but query its desirability and, if it is maintained, the loss of democratic legitimacy in some areas, as well as the emergence of overlapping and potentially contradictory spheres of responsibility. By contrast, a ‘radical’ approach (associated with British Liberal Democrats) sees MLG as a welcome development. It marks a staging post on the path to a more fully fledged federalization of the British (and European) polities involving both a ‘deepening’ and ‘widening’ - further devolution of political powers to existing devolved fora, as well as an extension of similar powers to parts of the UK not directly affected hitherto. The UK itself would become evermore entwined in an embryonic European ‘superstate’. The present Labour Government appears to be pursuing a third ‘pragmatic’ approach that tends to accept the reality of MLG but seeks to exert a measure of control over it through initiatives involving the notion of ‘joined-up government’.

4.6 In short, MLG means not only are there more levels of government but also the number and diversity of players involved has risen to include quasi-governmental and even private actors. Government has shifted from being state-centric to a more variegated and multi-faceted process of governance. The resulting increasing tension between a static ‘territorial space’ and dynamic ‘functional space’ causes many governance problems in terms of legitimacy and public accountability. Thus, the challenge is to accommodate and, if necessary adapt, the traditional systems of representative democracy associated ‘old’ government within these systems of ‘new’ and multi-level governance.

## **5. MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE: THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION**

5.1 Regionalism and European integration have steadily transformed the nature of national state and territorial politics across the members of the EU. The world’s economic order has changed radically through the combined effects of globalisation in capital flows, the muscle of multinational corporations, and extensive technology transfer. The collapse of the Iron Curtain following the Velvet Revolutions in Eastern Europe unleashed unsavoury elements of nationalism while in Western Europe, regionalism, nationalism and separatism have been given a fillip. Concurrently, intergovernmental relations between EU members have been strengthened considerably with the creation of the Single Market and Euro, not least because their implementation and consequences demand concerted action by, and impose restrictions on, national governments. Together, these developments have fashioned a distinctive European political space, meriting being styled MLG.

- 5.2 Although not a theory to explain European integration, MLG is a highly descriptive conceptual model useful for explaining Europe's new governmental architecture. Thus, for many commentators, the situation within the EU illustrates MLG in practice. Marks G. et al (1996) contended that EU policy is produced by a complex web of interconnected institutions at the supranational, national sub-national levels of government and that the locus of political control within states has shifted. A variety of channels and interconnections exist between different levels of government – supra, national and sub. No longer is there an unambiguous separation of domestic and international policies. Territorial and functional constituencies are overlapping and variable. Underpinning the outplay of MLG in the EU is the rather elusive principle of 'subsidiarity', essentially, that decisions made at the lowest possible level consistent/commensurate with them being effective (Philipart and Sie Dhian Ho, 2000). However, operationalising the term subsidiarity is not straightforward and, in truth, MLG is entrenched within EU policy making. The previously dyadic relationship between European institutions and national governments has been transformed into a triadic one among regions, national states and European actors (John, 1996). That said, there is not a homogenous tier of regions across Europe. That is, size, functions, and powers of regions vary from country to country and, indeed, within individual states, all of which serves to add to the growing complexity.
- 5.3 In terms of Member State to EU relations, Member State sovereignty has been diluted by both collective decision-making in the EU using qualified majority voting as well as the autonomous decisions of supranational EU institutions. The Centre within each Member State remains important but each has lost its respective national monopoly position. Thus, MLG conceives the EU as a post-national embryonic polity in its own right, in which power and influence are exercised at multiple levels of governance. The resulting situation – of no longer fully sovereign states alongside a not yet sovereign EU - has been styled a 'commonwealth' by MacCormick (1997).
- 5.4 Undeniably, the EU is more than just an additional vertical tier. It involves the transformation of European governance into a more federal and pluralist form. Certainly, as Hix (1998, p.54) argued, the "EU is transforming politics and government at the European and national levels into a system of multi-level, non-hierarchical, deliberative and apolitical governance, via a complex web of public/private networks and quasi-autonomous executive agencies, which is primarily concerned with the deregulation and re-regulation of the market." For example, in the EU budgeting process, "the delivery system developed for the structural funds is characterised by MLG, i.e., the European Commission, national governments and regional and local authorities are formally autonomous, but there is a high level of shared responsibility at each stage of the decision-making process. The relationship between these is, accordingly, one of partnership and negotiation, rather than being a hierarchical one (Keating and Hooghe, 2001). Moreover, EU decision-making is not only by national governments but also by EU institutions and actors at other levels. Acting autonomously, the European

Commission, the European Court of Justice and the European Parliament exert independent influence on EU policy process/outcomes. All told, Brussels is exercising an increasingly strong centrifugal force within the policy networks of the member states (Bennington, 1994).

- 5.5 Similarly, *within* each Member State, sub-national units increasingly seek to advance their interests in EU using consultants, agents or formal representation – paradiplomacy, with some having become very accomplished actors (for instance, Spain’s Catalonia and Germany’s Baden-Wurtemberg). Of course, such sub-national activity should not be confused with influence. Nonetheless, sub-national governments engage in activities not (wholly) controllable by national governments as well as in relationships with other sub national actors both with and beyond the borders of the home state. Indeed, the proliferation of networks between local authorities is foreshadowing a transformation of the existing power relations between local authorities, regional administrations, national governments and the European Commission.
- 5.6 Although there is no homogenous region model, the variety of sub-national governmental arrangements varies enormously across the different EU states. That said, Europeanisation has encouraged the erosion of the longstanding divide between federal and unitary states in the EU. In its place, a continuum has emerged. At one end of the spectrum are federal states such as Austria and Germany. Then there are ‘regionalised’ states such as Spain, Italy, and Belgium that exhibit federal characteristics but without fully fledged federal constitutions. Unitary states have become equally differentiated. Those with looser more decentralised systems include Finland, the Netherlands and Sweden while those remaining highly centralised include Greece and Portugal. The UK, so long one of Europe’s most centralised unitary states has witnessed a progressive if rather uneven form of decentralisation since the late 1990s. Thus, “the UK’s is an instance of asymmetric devolution, similar to Spain’s region-building process of the late 1970s and early 1980s, in the sense that distinct regions are being given different sets of powers at variable times and speeds” (Holliday, 2000, p.100).
- 5.7 Irrespective of its desirability or otherwise, as a depiction of the reality of contemporary governance in Europe, MLG is here to stay. British membership of the EU appears irrevocable, withdrawal inconceivable. Indeed, the UK has been drawn ever deeper into the EU thanks to the Single European Act (1986) and Maastricht Treaty on European Union (1992) which pooled collective decision-making of the Member States and diluted it through the extended use of majority voting as well as the sharing of EU legislative capacity with the European Parliament. The picture is complicated further by the fact that some states, brandishing the threat of using their veto on Treaty changes, have been granted leave to ‘opt out’ of some developments. Opting in and opting out has created a multi-track/speed Europe of variable geometry in its institutional architecture and policy transmission process. Political-judicial problems ensue such as representation, accountability and the legitimacy of decision-making. In effect,

therefore, the EU offers an emerging menu that is increasingly *a la carte* rather than a uniform *table d'hote*. Thus, even having chosen to remain outside the Euro zone for the present, the UK remains nonetheless locked into a web of European governance. Progressive federalization seems inevitable given the inescapable logic of ever-closer union although it is a novel form of federalism that is emerging, quite distinct to current working models such as the USA (see Elazar, 1996).

- 5.8 One additional factor that must also be remembered is that EU level changes are accompanied by the ramifications of the European Convention of Human Rights that have also encroached upon the powers of signatory states at all levels of government.

## **6. MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE: WITHIN THE UK**

6.1 If 'questions of territorial structure lie at the heart of the modern nation-state' (Rhodes, 1987, p.25), recent events have reinforced this centrality in the UK. That said, the UK has long exhibited some features of MLG. Although highly centralised, the British state is also non-executant, that is, the responsibility for implementation and delivery of most aspects of domestic public policy has rested with local government and other public agencies such as the NHS and public corporations. Hence, there has long been a central and local dimension. Moreover, as a union rather than a unitary state, complete political integration and administrative standardization have never occurred within the UK because a degree of differentiation has always existed. Thus, the arrangements of the administration of Ireland always differed from those in Great Britain both pre and post-Partition (considered below). Similarly, within Great Britain, Scotland possessed the Scottish Office from 1885 with Wales acquiring the Welsh Office in 1964, both of which oversaw the implementation of national UK policy within their respective territories. Formally, devolution did not affect the status of the various countries within the UK or the sovereignty of the Westminster Parliament. That said, the legal position almost certainly does not reflect political reality. Moreover, regional devolution in the UK is complicated by being inextricably bound with questions of identity and nationalism. While concern over economic performance and regional disparities both in UK as well as European terms informed the drive for devolution, the principal motivation has been political, namely, the satisfaction of national feelings and demands.

6.2 One factor that has so far thwarted the more rapid emergence of MLG in England is the fact that most English regions lack a cohesive identity, geographical coherence and background in 'nationhood', such as Scotland and Wales, or the political urgency of Northern Ireland. That said, even England has not remained unaltered in its governmental arrangements. Regional chambers have been set up to give representation to relevant local authorities and other interested parties. Fully-fledged regional councils have not emerged not least because it is almost

certain that this would prompt a major restructuring of local government. Doubtless similar pressures would ensue should the government embark on full-blown political devolution beyond the limited administrative devolution already introduced (namely the Government Offices of the Regions and Regional Development Agencies).

- 6.3 For the time being, central government administration within the UK remains within the competence of the unified Home Civil Service. That said, the Home Civil Service has already been restructured into executive agencies (some 100+) accounting for over 80% of civil servants. Devolution adds a new dimension for, as its centrifugal tendencies inevitably exert themselves (if or when different political parties come to control the central and devolved levels), then the pressure may build for separation, with a distinct Scottish (and Welsh) Civil Service along the same lines as the longstanding Northern Ireland Civil Service. To help militate any unwelcome centrifugal effects, ‘concordats’ have been drawn up designed to ensure the ground rules between the UK Cabinet Office, Whitehall departments and their counterparts in the devolved administrations. In addition, the Joint Ministerial Council (JMC) meets periodically as a forum for cooperation and problem solving.
- 6.4 Beyond the devolved regional tier, the institution of local government continues to attract interest. Devolution has also occasioned potential problems for local government within the UK’s devolved territories. Paradoxically, while John Major’s Conservative Government vehemently opposed devolution, its decision to abolish the two-tier system of Scottish and Welsh local authorities in 1996, eased its successor’s task by avoiding creating too many tiers of government. Nonetheless, adopting a unitary system left the institution of local government rather weaker and arguably less well equipped to administer services of a strategic nature (education, social work, transport, police and fire) generally held to merit large scale planning. Consequently, devolution has reinforced the pressure for an *upward* shift of competencies from local authorities to the newly devolved administrations in Edinburgh and Cardiff.
- 6.5 These changes come on top of a period when the autonomy of local government was steadily emasculated. During the Conservative Governments of 1979-97, accelerating an emerging post-war pattern, local authority functions were removed either to central government or non-departmental public bodies (‘quangos’). The local political landscape became increasingly crowded with other agencies, and local authorities have had to “share their patch” with others. Moreover, those functions that remain have been subject to an increasing range of legislative, administrative and financial controls. The statutory requirement for compulsory competitive tendering exercises as well as the narrowed scope for exercising fiscal independence (via variation in local taxes and hypothecated or ring-fenced central government grants) have combined in a pincer movement to erode local autonomy.

- 6.6 Under Labour, while the tenor of relations with local authorities has lost some of the rancour of the preceding two decades, the Government's commitment to internal reform within local government has continued or at least been encouraged. Labour wants to see more systematic and effective forms of public consultation and participation; electoral reforms aimed at making voting easier and the possibility of proportional representation; and, new political structures including directly elected executive mayors. A new vision for local government is envisaged: "At the heart of local government's new role is leadership – leadership that gives vision, partnership, and quality of life to cities, towns and villages all over Britain" (Blair, 1998, p.13). In practice, while this statement stresses the pre-eminence of local authorities as the most suitable bodies for civic leadership, it comes with a clear indication that there will be no return to the days of local authorities as monopoly providers. Moreover, within the jurisdictions now possessing devolved fora, the resolution of intergovernmental relations with existing actors within local governance is far from settled or straightforward.
- 6.7 The Conservatives took measures which, by coincidence rather than design, contributed towards effectively institutionalizing the MLG characteristic of today's British polity, notably through overseeing the expansion of the EU's decision making capacity as well as through its various public sector management reforms and privatisation. Labour's constitutional reforms consolidate this process. Thus, MLG is not the product of a grand plan or blue print. In both structures and processes, UK governance has changed and continues so to do. Reversing much of what has been done is well nigh impossible, even if it might be felt desirable.
- 6.8 Nonetheless, a big question mark hangs over the long-term viability of the current constitutional settlement, namely, the 'West Lothian' question. Bluntly, can the asymmetry of Labour's devolution programme be sustained - will those parts enjoying little or no devolution (Wales and the English regions) demand greater comparability with Scotland and Northern Ireland. Asymmetry per se need not pose insurmountable problems in territorial management. Diversity may be a necessary evil for reasons of macro-political management as well as to meet different needs, but it can also seem (and be) confusing to the uninitiated. Explaining, still less justifying, differential treatment will require skill especially when the vexed question of finance is involved. The financial dimension remains a potential time bomb, not easily defused. Notwithstanding unease in some quarters about aspects of the Barnett Formula and tax/spend powers more generally, the present fairly benign national fiscal settlement has smoothed the introduction of devolution. However, should 'hard times' return, with retrenchment of the block grant to the devolved fora, the present cordiality within UK intergovernmental relations may turn sour.
- 6.9 Amid calls for more 'joined up' government to address matters or urgent public concern, establishing a shared vision when there are so many actors is difficult. How are relationships influenced and steered to attain desired outcomes? To

avoid unwanted side effects, mechanisms for effective coordination are required. In a society where a premium is placed on instant gratification and immediacy of results, there is an inherent tendency for central government (responding to media pressure and electoral imperatives) to intervene to 'sort things out' rather than accept that some issues need time to work through. There is then the classic principal-agent problem. Governments may lack the capacity to ensure that orders are complied with. With hierarchies melting away, we may need to get used to less effective directive government in place of more cooperative arrangements if things are to be improved. In short, just as there is market failure and state failure, there is every prospect of governance failure too. Governance as a coordinating mechanism may run into difficulties if that system of governance has to resolve speedily and decisively issues an 'either-or' character - matters such as religion, race, language and ideology. Simply, the compromise or plain messiness pivotal to governance may be inadequate. There may be a lack of trust, patience and managerial capacity to join the various parts of a complex polity.

- 6.10 With such endemic uncertainty, the only certainty is further change. Some commentators favour an extension of MLG leading to federalisation as part of a general wider diffusion of power and more openness, both within the UK and the EU. Others wish to resist this argument - 'thus far and no further' being the general sentiment. The third pragmatic or managerialist approach involves managing MLG whereby the political and managerial elites of Westminster and Whitehall remain to provide a core of central direction but short of outright control. In truth, the future is unpredictable insofar as contingencies, the complexity of the forces at work and slippery nature of politics make it so. This may be especially true in Northern Ireland, to which the paper now turns.

## **7. MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE: IMPLICATIONS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

- 7.1 Northern Ireland is no different to other parts of the world in respect of much of the foregoing. Reflecting its unique political situation, it follows that its patterns of governance will be similarly unique. However, Northern Ireland provides a fascinating 'working model' of MLG in practice. The Belfast Agreement creates a broader more flexible political space. It relaxes, if not blurs Northern Ireland's exclusive identify with any one state. It is the antithesis of those who cleave to the notion of an exclusive form of territorial sovereignty. In a sense, therefore, Northern Ireland illustrates MLG while its uniqueness is the very justification for introducing such multi-level arrangements, in a prime example of circuitous logic.
- 7.2 The constitutional fate of Northern Ireland is outwith the scope of this paper, as is the viability and nature of the internal working relations between the various devolved institutions themselves. However, collectively, those institutions, must relate to other tiers of government. There are four main aspects, namely, relations with the EU, relations with the UK, cross-border relations with the Irish Republic,

and relations internal to Northern Ireland with sub-regional units (see Figure 1). In terms of the Review of Public Administration, the most pressing relationship concerns how devolution affects the internal sub-regional governance of Northern Ireland - the future of local authorities and the extended network of non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs or quangos) is crucial.

- 7.3 To inform debate, reference to the situation obtaining elsewhere in the UK is appropriate. Naturally, some parallels can be drawn with Great Britain. Immediately, however, comparisons are complicated by the fact that local government's role varies considerably, amounting to barely 4.7% of the Northern Ireland Block of public expenditure compared with around a quarter of overall general government expenditure in GB. Hence, quangos cannot be omitted from any meaningful analysis given their dominance within overall public sector activity here.
- 7.4 In Scotland and Wales, the respective local government systems were reorganized prior to devolution, in 1996. Despite considerable opposition to these reforms, there is little enthusiasm for fresh change. That said, insofar as change has been considered, the balance of probability has favoured a shift of quango responsibilities and those of local government joint boards/authorities upwards to the respective 'national' levels in Edinburgh and Cardiff. An interesting dimension of devolution has been its differential impact in the early stages.
- 7.5 In Scotland, research (Bennett et al, 2001) suggests that the vast majority of politicians and officials within local government supported devolution but that almost half felt the importance of local government had since diminished. Indeed, many felt that central (i.e., Scotland Office) control of local government services had grown. Although relations between local and central government had improved in comparison to pre-devolution, relations with civil servants were often characterised by mistrust while relations between the devolved administration and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) have been strained at times. Outside party political links, Westminster's importance to Scottish local government day-to-day activities had declined markedly. In terms of key local government services, devolution has done little to offset the centralizing effects of the Conservative local government reorganisation of 1996. With the water service, for example, that was initially vested with three quangos after reorganisation, it is now the responsibility of one Scottish-wide quango. However, despite pressure from officials within the Scottish Executive, fire and police services remain organised largely on the old regional boundaries in authorities overseen by joint boards of the councils comprising each area. Initial expectations that devolution would see these services 'nationalised' have remained unfulfilled. Interestingly, to improve coordination between health and social services, as well as to inject a greater measure of democratic oversight, provision has been made for councillors to sit on the governing committees of health trusts (positions often filled by the convenors (or chairs) of councils' social work committees) – something to consider in the context of Northern Ireland's integrated health and

social services. Moreover, health authorities in Scotland remain largely (though not fully coterminously) configured along the boundaries of the old regions.

- 7.6 In Wales, by contrast, research (Laffin et al, 2001) suggests that devolution has not had the same impact as it has in Scotland. The model of devolution introduced differs insofar as the National Assembly for Wales (NAW) and its Cabinet do not have the same executive powers of their Scottish counterparts (enjoying only secondary legislative powers and a relative deficit of policy development resources) and have relied more heavily on the policy and professional expertise of Welsh local authorities. The Assembly has been more favourably disposed towards local authorities with a corresponding lower inclination to interfere and restrict their activities. Moreover, the Government of Wales Act 1998 formally requires the NAW to form a statutory partnership with local government – known as the Partnership Council. The result has been that devolution has not occasioned a significant change in local government's share of the Welsh spending block. Overall, Laffin et al conclude that creation of the NAW has neither crowded Welsh policy space nor reduced local discretion. Whether this position would obtain should the NAW acquire more substantial powers remains to be seen.
- 7.7 In England, having been partially reformed in 1986 and 1993-6, the local government system currently encompasses a mix of two tier and unitary authorities. An unresolved battle looms between those desirous of local government capacity building and those who stress the potential of the nascent regional-level institutions. However, until more substantial changes are proposed, it is difficult to know precisely, the implications for the existing pattern of sub-regional governance in England (outside London where the new Greater London Authority enjoys relatively few powers compared with the arrangements in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland).
- 7.8 Thus, evidence from Great Britain demonstrates that there is no automatic trickle-down of devolved power into local government. On the contrary, devolution may crowd out the effective political space for local government. While it appears inconceivable that Northern Ireland's existing local authorities could be divested of their already attenuated powers, it is not impossible to envisage a scenario in which any reforms could effectively bypass local government. Nor is there any automatic case for vesting the functions of quangos with local authorities. While there is considerable assertion as to the levels of public dissatisfaction with quangos, robust evidence to substantiate these claims is thus far unforthcoming. Putting aside considerations of their performance, however, the sentiment within many political parties appears to favour a greater 'democratization' of the quangos. Again, however, as to what democratization means is unclear and highly vexacious – it could involve subsuming quango functions within Stormont departments, returning them to local authorities, or introducing/increasing the proportion of elected representatives on to such bodies. Essentially, there are competing and conflicting imperatives of democracy and efficiency to be addressed. Cries of centralisation and loss of local representation would surely

ensue if the first option were to be pursued witness the furore over proposals (since abandoned) to reduce the number of Area Boards, while the latter route would raise serious questions of local authorities' operational efficiency, organisational effectiveness and fiscal capacity without major surgery being undertaken on the existing structure of 26 councils.

- 7.9 If not being able to start with a clean sheet of paper, Northern Ireland does have the advantage over Scotland and Wales of being able to consider reforms *after* rather than *before* the overarching regional dimension has been resolved. In considering the way forward it is timely to consider the origins of the current arrangements. In 1969, the Stormont Government commissioned Sir Patrick Macrory to examine the future of local government in Northern Ireland. Macrory's Report (1970) called for a single tier of district councils to discharge prosaic functions like leisure services, civic and environmental amenities. Large expenditure areas, like education, housing, personal social services, planning and highways (unlike in GB, law & order, and fire (outside Belfast) were not local government functions), were to be transferred to a province wide level, or to be delivered either through central departments, or a system of boards and single purpose bodies, accountable to Stormont. Throughout, the existence of a regional government at Stormont as a *sine qua non* in a future administrative structure underpinned the Macrory recommendations. In the event, implementation of Macrory was overtaken by the deteriorating political situation. Direct Rule effectively stymied most of Macrory's proposals leaving Northern Ireland as the limiting case of central control and residualised local government in the UK.
- 7.10 In one sense, rather belatedly, the Belfast Agreement and subsequent creation of devolved institutions fulfil the Macrory vision. However, contemporary government and public administration have moved on from the world of Macrory. Assuming devolution fills the 'Macrory Gap' is not credible and change seems unavoidable. However, given the enormous changes since the Macrory Report was written, the case for local government does not go by default but must be demonstrated and defended rather than assumed and asserted. There may well be merit in retaining a major role for other public agencies – quangos. Certainly, it would be rash to throw the baby out with the bathwater – that is, reforming quangos to improve democracy does not automatically entail their abolition not least since there are aspects of quangos' modus operandi that have been widely applauded (for instance, the objectivity and effectiveness of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive). It should be remembered that, while public support exists for (local) democracy in the abstract, there is a willingness to support provision through specialist bodies, appointed boards and even private companies as long as standards are high. In short, if services are provided economically, efficiently and effectively, most ordinary people are not exercised by worries over *who* provides them. Moreover, as the Scottish and Welsh cases reveal, promises of a bonfire of quangos are seldom translated into reality anyway.

- 7.11 A case for local government and a greater role for local authorities can be made. As the only democratically elected bodies to have operated continuously throughout Direct Rule and indeed since before the Troubles, local authorities arguably remain the essential building blocks of any reformed system of sub-regional governance in Northern Ireland. Even though denuded of large spending functions, local authorities are still multi-purpose while retaining their crucial representative role, witness the relatively high turnouts for local elections. Inevitably, therefore, there is a direct relationship with the Stormont level - indeed, many MLAs are former or serving councillors. Local authorities share with the Assembly an elective mandate and it seems desirable that both institutions should strive to work in partnership rather than as rivals. While a degree of creative tension between the various levels of government is both inevitable, and even desirable, ensuring reasonably harmonious working relations would go far towards building effective 'joined up' solutions to pressing policy matters that in turn translates into building public confidence in the system of government. This might involve creation of a body similar to the Welsh Partnership Council that could resolve tensions and help advance common interests.
- 7.12 As a working principle, moreover, and in the spirit of the European Charter of Local Self-Government to which both the UK and Republic of Ireland are signatories, it is entirely consistent and appropriate to apply the concept of subsidiarity *within* Northern Ireland as much as it does to apply it *to* Northern Ireland within the UK and wider EU. Thus, the option of transferring functions to local government should always be considered in any review of the role of other delivery bodies or when developing new services, subject to considerations of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Even when formally vesting local authorities with new functions may be impractical, local authorities might act as agents or contractors for Stormont departments – at the least, the case for their enhanced role in oversight of public service seems unanswerable.
- 7.13 Perhaps inevitably, debate quickly reverts to a discussion of maps and the number of local councils. To a large extent, of course, finding structural solutions for local government is rather like chasing shadows. Moreover, it is an exercise in which it is almost received wisdom to suppose that Northern Ireland possesses too many local councils. However, it is salutary to recall that, while such assertions may well be accurate in a British Isles context, where there is a long tradition of 'big is beautiful', comparison with other European countries paints a very different picture. In both unitary and federal states throughout Europe, the fear that there are too many levels of government is muted if not absent from most discussion, with the smallest tier of local government covering much smaller populations and geographic areas than those within the British Isles (see Table 4).
- 7.14 Ordinarily, debates over the appropriate structural configuration for local government in any jurisdiction are conducted along various and often competing dimensions, and can be relied upon to arouse strong passions. Hence, one might

anticipate that topography, demography, administrative efficiency, fiscal viability, democratic accountability, community identity and socio-economic geography would all have some bearing on any reformers' deliberations. However the imperatives of historical and contemporary politics are, in Northern Ireland's constitutional imbroglio, particularly salient. Thus, devising an acceptable structure is a fraught process. Indeed, the time and effort employed on finding an optimal new structure might be better expended on a less ambitious but more realistic investigation into the scope for integrating some of the presently agentised services of central government into a small number of local authorities, thereby creating viable administrative and functional units. Thus, one potential solution to reconciling democracy with efficiency is to accept a localized form of MLG. Small directly elected local authorities could ensure maximum representativeness but they need not be vested with many functional responsibilities. In a pyramid effect, each council could then be represented on those sub-regional/intermediate level authorities tasked with discharging public services (a form of indirect election). An expanded network of joint boards, comprising members drawn from a group of local councils within the operational area of the body concerned could be developed. An alternative variant on this model would involve the creation of council clusters, each cluster possibly varying in composition, subject to the particular needs of the component councils. In effect, a localized form of Europe's variable geometry would be created able to maximise local choice and efficiency while preserving the relative simplicity of only one elected tier of local government. Several permutations on this theme are common across Europe.

- 7.15 Local authorities in Northern Ireland have been quietly proceeding with developing a more professional approach to their activities, witness their role in economic development and community relations. Hence, their potential to act as 'enabling bodies' would be crucial for assisting development in their respective local communities. It may be possible to award those authorities that demonstrate 'fitness for purpose', so to speak, with additional powers. Certainly, any refashioned arrangements need to reflect the Europeanisation and differentiation of much policy making in the UK, while offering a more inclusive form of government at local level that can reinvigorate civic culture and restore tenuous public confidence in the overall policy process.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 Northern Ireland's system of public administration continues to undergo profound change as part of the UK and of the EU in what has been termed MLG. MLG reflects the fact that Europe has experienced a deep paradigm shift in the nature of political representation and participation as nation-states have witnessed the twin impulses of regionalisation and Europeanisation – multiple levels of government have emerged. Moreover, the very concept of separate vertical 'tiers' of government is being complemented and challenged by a new model of

overlapping and interlocking ‘spheres’ reflecting the appearance of multiple agencies within each tier – horizontal fragmentation. However, MLG is not without problems. How tiers relate to one another in the new governmental architecture remains far from settled.

8.2 In Northern Ireland, all of the pressures and difficulties associated with MLG exist also, albeit fundamentally moulded by the added dimension of a longstanding ethno-national conflict that has witnessed over 30 years of inter-communal violence. That conflict has helped ensure that important questions concerning the extended system of sub-regional governance within the Province have gone unaddressed for decades. Now, irrespective of how the new institutions designed to overcome the conflict in Northern Ireland will fare or even endure, devolution at last provides a more coherent and (relatively) stable framework within which to conduct a long overdue examination of public administration. In that review, it is clear that any meaningful analysis cannot be confined to the role of local authorities since their existing portfolio of responsibilities are fairly marginal in the totality of devolved matters. Thus, the wider system of sub-regional must be examined. While simplification and streamlining of the current arrangements is essential, and a strong case for enhancing the role of local government exists, it is unlikely that wholesale transferring quango functions to the current local councils is either possible or even desirable. In truth, as with the UK and European levels of governance, sub-regional arrangements within Northern Ireland appear destined to become a localized version of MLG. Inevitably, they will be characterised by greater complexity than what might have been the norm at the time of the previous reform process in the early 1970s. As such, while local authorities can and should occupy the lead role in the provision of public services, in keeping with the principle of subsidiarity, they can be expected to share that role with a variety of other actors, be they public, private and voluntary/community in nature. Moreover, for those erstwhile local government activities that remain located within the public sector, there can be no automatic assumption that existing or even new local authorities will acquire direct functional responsibility for discharging them. Instead, more elaborate arrangements involving a mix of local authority joint boards, local authority implementation agencies, and public-private partnerships on which elected local politicians have greater input, may well offer the optimal solution in reconciling the often conflicting criteria that shape a modern democratic and efficient system of sub-regional governance.

## GLOSSARY

- **Devolution:** A territorial redistribution of political power from higher-level government (usually at the centre) to subordinate regional bodies, though with sovereignty remaining at the higher level, as distinct from federalism.
- **Federalism:** A territorial distribution of political power based on sharing sovereignty between the federal (national/central) level of government and sub-federal (state/provincial/regional) levels of government in a given polity.
- **Government:** The mechanism through which ordered rule is maintained; the machinery for making and enforcing collective decisions in society or, indeed, any institution (family, school, church).
- **Governance:** The precise definition is contested though it is generally understood to refer to the various ways in which social life is coordinated, of which *government* is merely one. Indeed, it is possible to speak of having ‘governance without government’. The principal modes of governance are markets, hierarchies and networks with the distinction between state and society being blurred.
- **Multi-level Governance (MLG):** A complex policy process involving infra- or sub-national, national and supranational levels and governmental and non-governmental actors – difficult to reconcile with notions of statehood. The UK unitary state was always characterised by distinctive administrative patterns in its component parts – patterns more variegated as a result of devolution and the EU.
- **Nation-state:** A sovereign political entity in which citizenship and nationality overlap – one nation within a single state.
- **Policy network:** Sometimes referred to as ‘policy community’, a policy network involves a coordinated set of relationships between political actors who possess a common agenda or interest. Typically, such relationships cut across formal institutional arrangements and/or divisions between governmental and non-governmental bodies, encompassing officials, opinion formers, lobbyists, interest groups, academics and others. Policy networks illustrate the importance of informal links within the policy-making process and, to that extent, might be said to limit or even compromise the role of the public.
- **Subsidiarity:** The principle that decisions should be taken at the lowest possible level commensurate with effective action within an overall political system. It is widely held to be the leading characteristic of *federalism*. Periodically invoked by several EU Member States, especially the UK, and given formal status in the (Maastricht) European Treaty on European Union, subsidiarity is a device for limiting the competence of the EU vis a vis Member States. Hence, it is seen as a **constitutional principle** (usually by anti-federalists) designed to protect national level sovereignty. However, as a **political principle**, the term denotes decentralisation and popular participation with a strong role for local and regional/provincial level institutions. The concept has parallels in the 10<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the United States Constitution and Article 30 of Germany’s Constitution. Its long-term relevance within the EU will depend greatly on how the European Court of Justice chooses to interpret and apply it over time. Meanwhile, some states, notably the UK, have often rejected the suggestion that subsidiarity has any bearing on the allocation of powers within Member States.

## APPENDIX

**Table 1: Features of Old Government and New Governance**

<i>Old Government</i>	<i>New Governance</i>
The state	The state and civil society
The public sector	Public, private and voluntary (or ‘third’) sectors
Institutions	Processes
Organisational Structures	Policies, outputs, outcomes
Direct Provision (‘rowing’)	Enabling (‘steering’)
Commanding, controlling, directing	Leading, facilitating, collaborating, bargaining
Hierarchy and authority	Networks and partnerships

Source: Leach and Percy-Smith (2001), p.5.

**Table 2: Multi Level Governance**

<i>Level of governance</i>	<i>Institutions</i>
<b>International</b>	United Nations, World Trade Organisation, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, multinational corporations, international interest groups
<b>European</b>	European Union (including European Institutions – European Commission, Council of Ministers, European Courts of Justice, European Parliament); European interest groups
<b>Nation-state</b>	United Kingdom / Republic of Ireland; national interest groups.
<b>Devolved</b>	Scottish Parliament and Executive, Welsh Assembly and Executive, Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive. Scottish, Welsh and Irish interest groups.
<b>Regional</b>	(England) Government Offices for the Regions, Regional Development Agencies, Regional Assemblies, Regional Chambers, regional quangos, regional interests.
<b>Local (county)</b>	County councils (in England only - two-tier); relevant private and voluntary organisations.
<b>Local (district)</b>	District councils (two-tier) and unitary councils, health authorities, primary care groups, other local bodies, relevant private and voluntary organisations.
<b>Local (community)</b>	Parish/town councils, community and neighbourhood councils
<b>Institutional</b>	NHS trusts, universities, colleges, schools, relevant groups

Source: Leach and Percy-Smith (2001), p.221.

**Table 3: The Westminster and Differentiated Polity Models**

<i>The Westminster Model</i>	<i>The Differentiated Polity Model</i>
Unitary State	Union State
Parliamentary sovereignty	Devolution of political power
Ministerial responsibility	Agencification/delegation of responsibility
Central-local relations	Multi-level governance
Homogeneity	Diversity
Uniformity	Fragmentation
Hierarchical authority	Partnership, networks, 'joined-up government'

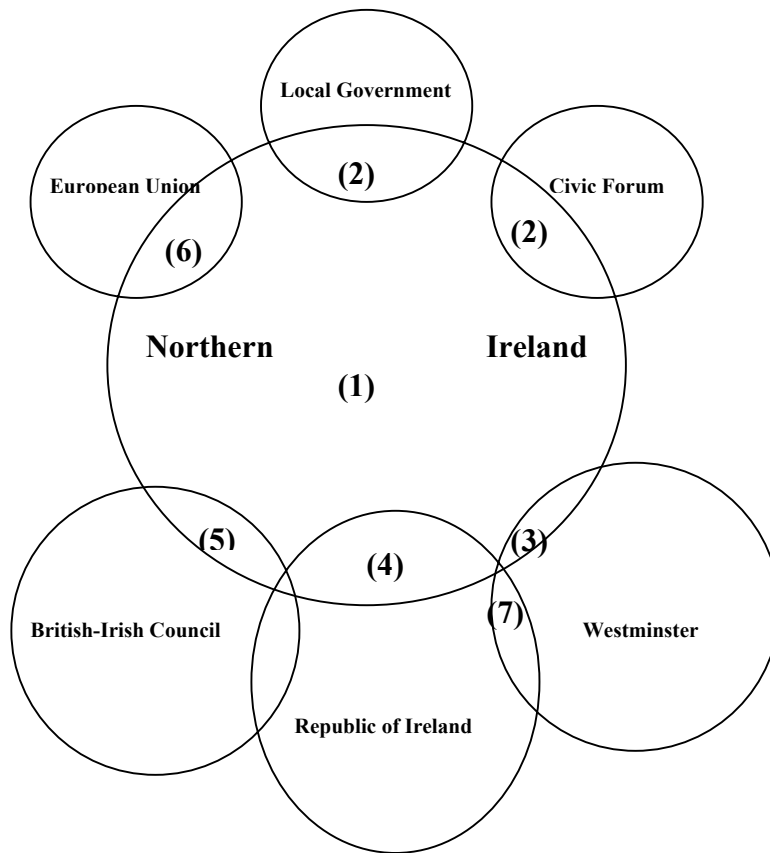
Source: Adapted from Leach and Percy-Smith (2001), p.7.

**Table 4: Selected Aspects of Comparative Systems of Local Government**

<i>Country</i>	<i>Population per council</i>
France	1580
Iceland	1330
Germany	4925
Italy	7130
Norway	9000
Spain	4930
Sweden	30040
Belgium	16960
Denmark	18760
Portugal	32300
Ireland	42000
UK	118400
- England	119850
- Scotland	156205
- Wales	127812
- <b>Northern Ireland</b>	60510

Source: Council of Europe (1996) Local and Regional Authorities in Europe, No.56.

**Figure 1: Intergovernmental Relations in Northern Ireland**



**KEY:**

- (1) Internal dynamics of the Northern Ireland Assembly/Executive
- (2) Relationships between NI Assembly/Executive, local government and the civic forum
- (3) Stormont-Westminster relationship
- (4) North/South Ministerial Council
- (5) British-Irish Council
- (6) Stormont-EU relationship
- (7) British-Irish Intergovernmental conference

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