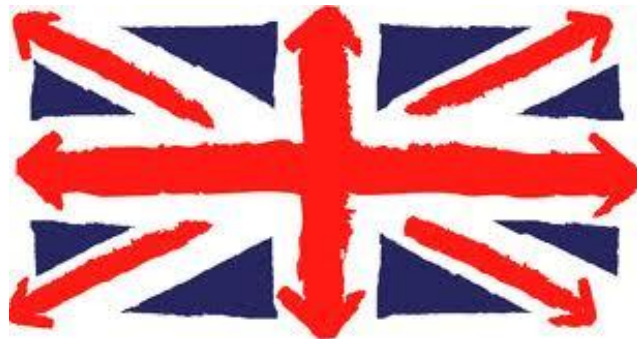


# “Localism”

Prof Mark Shucksmith

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# Overview

- Why localism?
- Localism in an era of austerity
- The limits of localism
  - some insights from previous academic research
- Conclusions



# Why Localism?

## Viewed from the left:

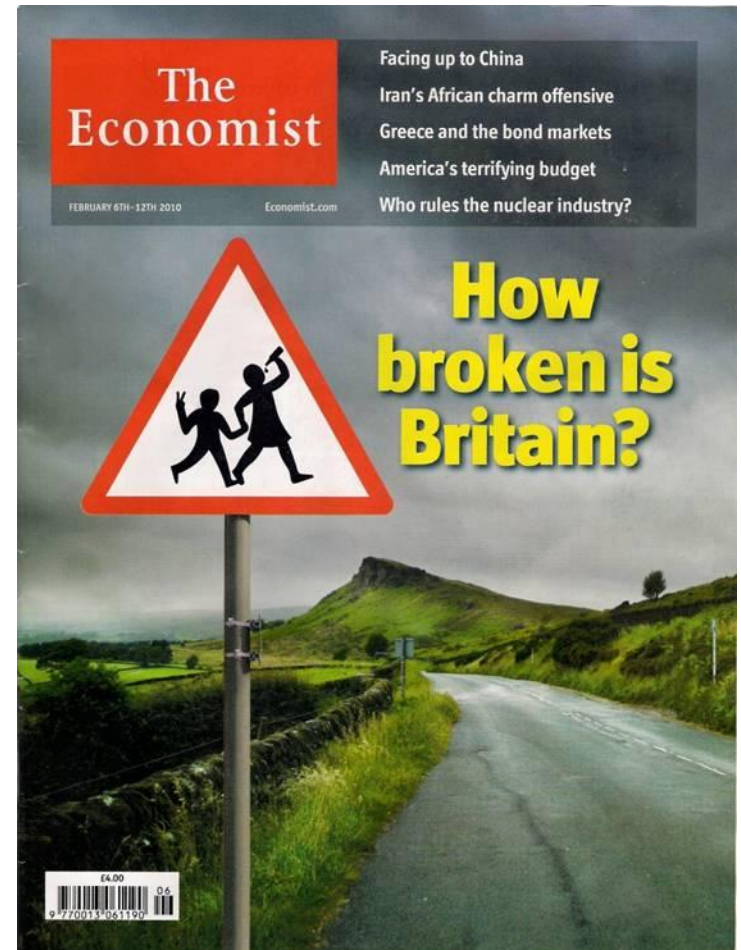
- Hollowing out of the nation-state requires “double-devolution”
  - Upwards to supra-national bodies
  - Downwards to local
- Democratic deficit
  - Localism necessary to re-engage with voters
- Place-shaping paradigm
  - Neo-endogenous development
  - Community, place and identity



# Why Localism?

Viewed from the right:

- Anti-statist, anti-interventionist
  - Remove state controls/ targets
  - Marketisation and competition
  - Atomised local actors
- Rolling back the state
  - Reduce size of central government and its agencies (and local state?)
- Place-shaping paradigm
  - Means of mobilising civil society, voluntary action and philanthropy to take over state functions



# Localism in an era of austerity

- Localism Act
  - Neighbourhood planning
  - Community right to build
  - Community right to bid
  - Community right to challenge



More details of these provisions can be found at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/decentralisation/localismbill/>

# Pickles on localism



“...You are best placed to build communities, to get involved, and to improve the neighbourhoods you live in. And that is why we’re pushing power your way, so more people can get involved, so more people can take charge...”

# More Pickles...

“We can’t spend without consequence. We can’t pile more debt on the national credit card without even bigger consequences. It is a fact we have to face up to. There is less money today”



“Localism will support growth. And growth will support localism. You can grow at your own pace, match your own ambitions, finance your own projects”

# National Planning Policy Framework

“.....planning must not simply be about scrutiny. Planning must be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which we live out lives.

This should be a collective enterprise. Yet, in recent years, planning has tended to exclude, rather than to include, people and communities...”

Greg Clark, Ministerial Foreword



# Analysis



What questions does past academic research suggest we should be asking about localism?

# Governing through communities – The 1995 Rural White Paper

- Shifting boundaries between state and society
- Governing ‘through community’
- Local people, local solutions, local problems
- Local decision making but government as enabler and stimulator.
- Criticisms: volunteers, limited investment

# Government and Community in 2012

- From capacity building to ‘barrier busting’
- Increasing expectations of the local authority, co-ordinating, supporting, integrating
- Scope for planning to be a “creative exercise” and a “collective enterprise”?



# Bridging the gap?



- Project focus on the integration between strategic planning and ‘very local’ planning
- Little or no guidance on how decisions at very local and strategic levels might dovetail together
- Project involved 5 case studies. Main barriers
  - Lack of resource at local authority level
  - Reliance on a few people at v local level
  - Limited appreciation of process at v local level
  - Operational complexity of strategic planning

## Prospects for bridging 'local' and 'very local'?

- Planning remains plan led, an activity done by local authorities to conform with national guidance and planning law
- Vacuum on how integration between local and neighbourhood plans will happen
- Is the NPPF a 'fudge', with its ambiguities left to be clarified by the courts?
  - eg. What exactly does the presumption in favour of sustainable development mean?

# Pushing Power Your Way?



- How genuine is commitment to localism when LAs' budgets are cut by 31% over 5 years?
  - Or is this passing responsibility for the cuts to LAs?
- Will the Localism Act be successful?
  - Requirement to demonstrate consensus
  - ACRE criticism that referenda are divisive and destroy cohesion
  - Basis in concern for inclusion but shows naivety?
- Are there limits to localism?

# Conclusions

Who will localism empower?

Power over or power to?

What resources are needed to exercise power  
(by individuals, communities, local authorities)?



# references

- Murdoch J (1997) The Shifting Territory of Government: some insights from the Rural White Paper, *Area*, 29 (2) 109- 118
- Owen S, Moseley M and Courtney P (2007) Bridging the Gap: An attempt to reconcile strategic planning and very local community based planning in rural England, *Local Government Studies*, 33 (1) 49 - 76