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The Problem of Sub-National Governance in England

John Fenwick

Introduction

“England is the gaping hole in the devolution settlement” (Hazell 2006, p 38)

This discussion is concerned with sub-national governance in England. It will be suggested that the most striking characteristic of English sub-national governance is its fragmentary nature, embracing regions (if they can still be said to exist), city-regions (subject to varying definition) and local government (sub-divided from place to place into a number of differing structures). This complex pattern of sub-national provision has grown ever-more varied, subject to *ad hoc* initiatives, with no overall rationale. It will be argued that - in contrast to other parts of the United Kingdom - there is currently no political incentive to address the nature of English sub-national governance. The paper examines component elements of English governance before drawing conclusions about prospects for change.

Governing England

“The House of Commons does not differentiate its mode of operation for English as compared with UK-wide matters. It lacks a capacity to focus directly on England just at the point when more of its work deals with English matters. In the absence of change in the way the House of Commons works, the consequence...may be to impede the voicing of any distinctively English concerns...that exist on wholly or mainly English matters.” (McKay Commission 2013, p 13)

Discussing the overall governance of England is problematic in several senses (Fenwick, McMillan and Elcock 2009). First, there is no dedicated national assembly exclusively charged with the governance of England: this role is subsumed within the constitutional responsibilities of the United Kingdom parliament. This did not seem so odd when Scotland and Wales were similarly subject to central governance from Westminster (the relationship with Northern Ireland was always different, varying from devolved power to direct rule) but devolved governance in Scotland and Wales now places the English anomaly in sharp relief. Secondly, there is little mainstream political debate about the governance of England. If such debate exists at all, it is a relatively quiet discussion on the periphery of polite politics, although there is emergent academic research on the consequences for England of ‘asymmetrical’ UK devolution (Copus 2009) and the role of local political institutions in addressing Englishness (Cox and Jeffery 2014). Thirdly, the collapse of efforts under New Labour to establish an elected tier of English regional governance means that such debates have effectively been shelved, as there is no political incentive for English parties to address them. Fourthly, successive waves of local government reorganisation in England have continually shifted attention toward the local and away from the national (English) picture. Furthermore, discussion of English governance continues to have an unresolved relationship with discussions of Britishness, not least because of the terminological ease with which the two are substituted, either through ignorance or deliberate political obfuscation. This too makes it difficult to address English governance as a discrete topic. In this context, Pocock’s masterful analysis (1975) of the meaning of ‘British’ still

repays attention, alongside Colley's more recent exploration of the ambiguities of British identity (2014).

Hazell (2006, p 37) memorably noted that the United Kingdom is a union "...that works in practice but not in theory". Although the first part of this assertion has come under serious pressure in recent years, the statement remains a succinct way to capture the problem of English governance. In the following discussion 'governance' will be taken to denote the organisational and institutional arrangements in place within England – arrangements for which the narrow term 'government' would be insufficient.

Whatever Happened to the English Regions?

"The emergence of multi-level governance challenges much of our traditional understanding of how the state operates, what determines its capacities, what its contingencies are, and ultimately of the organisation of democratic and accountable government" (Peters and Pierre 2001, p 131).

The Government Offices for English Regions were established in 1994. Under New Labour (1997-2010) they very much reflected the presence of central Government in the region – rather than a regional presence within Government. The Government Offices were abolished by the UK coalition government and disappeared in 2011. However there are several strands to disentangle within this deceptively simple picture. Under New Labour the pattern of English regional governance was complex, reflecting a number of competing political and policy interests (see Pearce and Ayres 2012).

First, the Government Offices were not the only important element. In the eight Regions outside London there were also (non-elected) Regional Assemblies, with members largely appointed by local councils. Although these occupied a low public profile and, politically, their disappearance was relatively uncontroversial, they formed part of a regional infrastructure that has now been removed, being abolished between 2008 and 2010.

Secondly, there was a continuing debate about whether new forms of Regional Assembly based on direct election could provide a basis for democratic regional governance. This was not at all a new debate. Governmental institutions for separate English regions were mooted before World War One, partly linked to possible implications of Irish home rule for the government of England. Subsequent enquiries into local government, including the Redcliffe Maud Report (Royal Commission on Local Government in England 1969) considered the regional dimension but it never became a political priority. Some Labour Members of Parliament had argued the case for English regional devolution (eg, Quin 1993). Subsequently, under New Labour, the debate acquired a higher profile but largely this was played out within the Labour Party, with the greatest enthusiasm being displayed by John Prescott (and party interests associated with him) rather than by Blair himself. When the first and only referendum on establishing an elected Regional Assembly was held in North East England in 2004, and heavily defeated, the debate about establishing structures for democratic regional governance effectively disappeared from the political agenda.

Thirdly, and of fundamental relevance to any debate about English governance, the coalition formed in 2010 not only abolished Government Offices for the Regions, it also abolished regions themselves in any meaningful sense. Although the Office for National Statistics still uses the nine former regions as a basis for generating statistical data, they play no part in governance, administration or decision-making.

Fourthly, in addition to the abolition of regional Government Offices, the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) were wound up by the coalition. This placed the responsibility for investment and regeneration very much on the shoulders of local councils, with significant implications for English regional development. In North East England particularly this raises the question of competitive disadvantage in comparison with Scotland's commitment to, and infrastructure for, attracting investment.

Fifthly, the remaining public sector regional associations lack any statutory basis. The Association of North-East Councils (ANEC) is a cross-party body and maintains an active presence in articulating the regional voice of its 12 local councils, but is the sole public sector grouping of its kind in the region. Its members are involved in governance in their local areas but the association is not itself part of the governance framework.

Under present conditions, then, the *region* may not look like a promising basis for rethinking English sub-national governance in any intelligible sense. The essential barrier is that all debates around English regions are now far removed from the political reality of the three main English parties. There is no political incentive to address the vacuum of English regional governance because it offers no political premium whatsoever. Yet there is no doubt that factors including poverty and productivity vary substantially from one English region to another and have done so for a very long time (IPPR/NEFC 2012). It is hard therefore to sustain a position wherein regions 'don't matter' as an element of English civil and political society. Clearly they do, but their definition and status remain problematic for central government.

There is one exception, of course, and that is London. London-as-region has its own directly-elected regional assembly and directly-elected mayor. Its governance structures and powers are clearly established in relation to central government and in relation to individual London boroughs (four of which also have directly elected mayors). Arguably the pattern of governance in London has delivered competitive advantage through streamlined decision-making and highly visible leadership, but the important point - frequently overlooked - is that the structures of London regional government provide a ready model for regional governance throughout England. Yet central government does not apply the rationale and structures of London regional governance to other English regions.

City Regions

"In the mid-2000s, 'city region' suddenly became a popular idea within the national ministry charged with local government, housing and planning responsibilities in England. It was not a new concept, as it had been argued for (and rejected) as a basis for reorganizing local government back in the 1960s" (Healy 2009, p 837).

There has been some attention, under both New Labour and the coalition, to the *city-region*, a broad conception that potentially forms part of English sub-national government. There are many variations of meaning attaching to city region but here it will be taken to mean something geographically less than the region, and more than the current units of local government. It may have some correspondence with the former metropolitan county areas, but the fit would be highly imperfect. Economically, it may denote travel-to-work areas or more sophisticated definitions of areas of economic activity. It certainly implies some level of geographic and economic coherence rather than simply denoting an administrative boundary.

Healey (2009) has made the important point that city regions, as well as describing functional economic zones or spatial planning areas, also invoke constructed concepts of time and place. Different actors can read different meanings into their own images of a city region. It is what we imagine it to be. Healy adds that the city region may denote relations and qualities that are not necessarily compatible, for instance between relations of history and identity, production or citizenship. Even if one were to take a simplified view of a city region as, say, a travel-to-work area with some overall economic identity then the problem immediately encountered, in addition to the overlap with other tiers of administration (Harrison 2012), is the lack of an existing governance model for such an area. The 'metro mayor', as discussed below, has been advanced as one way of filling this gap, yet the point remains that if the city region can be constructed over time in a number of different ways, for a number of different stakeholders, then it may not readily accommodate any stable arrangements for governance at all.

English Local Government: The Preoccupation with Structure

"Today, England has 353 principal authorities. Some of these are single unitary authorities, others operate in tiers of district and county councils. The number of different councils doing similar things remains costly and confusing. For many, the range of different systems is baffling too. Scotland and Wales, on the other hand, both have a system of single unitary authorities with clear accountability and responsibilities". (Heseltine, 2012, p 30).

English local government is complicated, with little coherence. It has developed incrementally, and exhibits a variety of different organisational structures.

- London has its own structure of boroughs together with an elected London-wide assembly and a London-wide elected mayor.
- The local government reorganisation of 1995-1998 created 'unitary' councils in some parts of England previously administered by two-tier structures. This partial reorganisation followed a contentious review exercise, involving a lengthy process of horse-trading and the scrapping of some initial recommendations. Forty-six new unitary councils were in place by April 1998, with some mildly newsworthy results (such as the re-creation of Rutland). Yet the government held back from applying the unitary principle universally, on the grounds that different parts of England have different needs and hence require differing local structures. It is striking that this argument was not applied to Scotland or Wales.
- The further reorganisation of 2008-2009 revisited the question of whether a two-tier structure of county and district councils would persist, at least in selected areas. A new review process, following an 'invitation to reorganise', created single-tier councils as the sole elective authority for some areas, based on the premise that leadership and accountability are harder to achieve with two tiers of local government. From 2009, this created some geographically large single-tier councils (such as Northumberland). Others (such as Cumbria) retained two-tiers. The basis for different decisions in different areas was not always immediately apparent (Elcock, Fenwick and McMillan 2010).
- In the main conurbations, including West Yorkshire, Tyne and Wear, and Merseyside, metropolitan borough councils remain responsible for the whole range of services in a single-tier system, the elected councils for these metropolitan county areas having been abolished in 1986.

- In some non-metropolitan former counties, including Cleveland and Humberside, the county authorities were abolished in a separate reorganisation in 1996, again leaving a single (non-metropolitan) tier of administration. There was a prevailing narrative, not least from central government, that these names did not signify real *places* with real public recognition - although Cleveland, if not Humberside, is certainly a place and name with firm historical roots.
- Throughout the whole system, parish or town councils may or may not exist to administer limited local services.

Of course, this system makes no sense at all, and no government would design such an incoherent set of arrangements from the start. Central policy has offered local government two messages, not always compatible. There has been the encouragement for councils to 'think big', for instance in the creation of large unitary councils, city regions, joint procurement, shared services and collaboration with public and private partners. Equally, there has been a message to 'think small', for instance in embracing 'localism', neighbourhood and local 'place' as the key reference points, and enhancing community government. These dual pressures featured under New Labour and coalition government alike.

Lord Heseltine (2012, p 54) recommended that all local authorities in England work toward unitary status, but, significantly, they should also work together with other councils as well as with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). This would be a simplification of governance. However the scale of any proposed unitary authority should not be overlooked. Replacing a two-tier system with a unitary council might otherwise increase centralisation further. Much would depend on its scale.

Partnership

During the New Labour years, partnership became a key part of English local governance. This was much more than encouraging local authorities to work with other agencies: partnership was built-in to the framework of local governance. Local Area Agreements (LAAs) existed from 2004 to 2010. LAAs, increasingly linked to the new regime of Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), were accompanied by stronger Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs). Partnership was the formalised basis for joint working and strategic commissioning. LSPs were an essential vehicle for achieving strategic objectives, and partnership working was closely linked to the prevailing performance regime. Very significant parts of New Labour policy at local level, including Sure Start, Action Zones for Employment, New Deal for Communities and Community Safety were predicated upon institutionalised partnership working.

Under the coalition, partnership remains but its emphasis has changed considerably. The abolition of centrally-defined government performance indicators removed the basis for much of the work of LSPs. Although partnership in the New Labour years arguably represented the triumph of bureaucratic hierarchy over true co-governance (Fenwick, Johnston Miller and McTavish 2012), under the coalition the argument has shifted ground further. The current LEPs place considerable importance on private sector involvement and leadership. Yet a recent IPPR report (Cox et al 2014) suggested that although the economic plans of LEPs are clearly directed toward immediate growth, they are not necessarily engaged with the 'resilience' needed to deal with any future economic downturn.

Political Management

Although structural reorganisation of English local government is not currently a political priority, political management - the question of how local authorities are managed and led - remains a live topic. The Local Government Act 2000 offered local authorities in England and Wales three options for reforming political management. These were a directly-elected mayor with a council manager (since removed from the statute book), a directly-elected mayor with a cabinet, or a council leader and cabinet. Smaller districts were permitted 'other arrangements'. The Government argued that new systems of executive leadership would improve co-ordination of services, provide a clear focus for managing relationships with partners, streamline decision-making and enhance accountability. In the case of the elected mayor, it was envisaged that local leaders would for the first time possess public legitimacy through direct electoral mandate.

The initial group of elected mayors took office in 2002, but only in eleven local councils (excluding the London mayor, a post governed by different legislation, and with different powers). The overwhelming majority of councils in England, and all councils in Wales, opted not to adopt the executive mayor form of leadership. The council leader (chosen by other councillors) and cabinet became the norm, replacing the old committee structures inherited from the nineteenth century.

Yet the mayoral debate persists. Several points can be made about the strange case of the English mayor and the part it now plays in sub-national governance.

First, political parties have continued to argue the merits of elected mayors and encourage adoption of this form of local leadership even though there is scant evidence of public enthusiasm. Central government continues to see the elected mayor as an answer to the problem of local leadership, a process facilitated by further legislation in 2007 which made adoption of the mayoral system possible by simple council resolution rather than local referendum. The coalition organised referendums in ten of England's largest cities in 2012 on whether to establish a mayoral system: in only one case, Bristol, was there an affirmative vote. Two councils which previously had a mayoral system have now abandoned it. In May 2014, Copeland Borough Council (a district authority in Cumbria) conducted a public-initiated referendum on whether to establish the office of elected mayor. Voters decided by a substantial majority to do so. Yet, even including Copeland, there are in 2014 only sixteen directly elected mayors in England (excluding the London Mayor).

Secondly, the mayor was envisaged as an answer not only to local leadership, but specifically to the problem of city leadership. Positive images were invoked of the heroic mayors of the world's great cities. Yet it is striking that of the very few places opting initially for the directly elected mayor, none were in England's big cities. Positive referendum votes were confined to relatively small municipalities where there had been some perceived problem with local events or local governance. Although the cities of Leicester and Liverpool opted for the mayoral system in 2010 and 2012, this was by council resolution not popular vote.

Thirdly, the mayor can be seen as bringing together political and managerial leadership in a way hitherto unknown in British political life. If the mayor truly occupies the summit of decision-making and leadership, the role of the Chief Executive and Chief Officers inevitably changes. This makes the mayor a unique figure, potentially exercising governance and leadership functions previously diffused across the committee-based decision-making structures of local government.

Debate continues about the future of elected mayors in England, pursued with a vigour that is surprising given the lack of any obvious public interest (Fenwick and Elcock 2014). The question of 'metro mayors' for areas larger than current local government units, linked to city-regions or other formulations of urban conurbation, has been suggested for governance of the "functioning

economic area” (Warwick Commission 2012, p 9). The Heseltine report on growth also recommended (2012, p 57) that mayors be elected for combined local authority areas. Both recommendations presuppose a relationship between local leadership and place and are consistent with a renewed focus on ‘place-based leadership’ (Hambleton and Howard 2013; Hambleton and Sweeting 2014).

Sub-National Governance and Economic Growth

“...the North and its constituent economic areas need much greater autonomy over the drivers and the proceeds of growth. City regions and their hinterlands need greater control over the decisions that can drive economic growth. They need to be able to control their own budgets and raise their own revenues in line with their aspirations.” (IPPR/NEFC 2012, p 7)

A number of incentives for growth have been established under the coalition. The ‘Enterprise Zones’ of earlier Conservative times were resurrected; a Regional Growth Fund compensates, to a limited degree, for the abolition of the RDAs; and ‘City Deals’ in selected English cities provide additional investment through greater collaboration with public and private providers. The principal instrument of local growth is intended to be the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). The LEP areas are meant to relate to functional economic areas. These areas may not necessarily align with local political units of governance. Institutionally, the LEP can be seen as a successor to the RDA, although the LEP is private-sector led, is not funded to anywhere near the same extent as the former RDA, and it can treat some previously major areas of activity (notably tourism) as entirely discretionary. Heseltine (2012, p 40) notes that “...LEPs simply do not...have the authority or resource to transform their locality in the way our economy needs”.

Consistent with the broad message of the Heseltine report (2012), an independent review commissioned by the North East Local Enterprise Partnership reported in April 2013 (North East LEP 2013). This enquiry, led by Lord Andrew Adonis, and with substantial private industry input, drew conclusions specifically related to the North East economy, including the development of economic infrastructure and expansion of education and training, and, significantly, devolved regional control over key budgets. This, alongside the Heseltine recommendations, is important. It suggests that political elites across the main parties, along with business leaders, are actively arguing the case for regional devolution and budgetary devolution in the interests of economic growth. This is a very different regional agenda from the failed attempt to establish an elected assembly for this region in 2004 – the terms of debate have changed - but it is an emergent regional agenda nonetheless.

Both the Heseltine and Adonis reports contain echoes of what has gone before, although both recast the regional debate in different terms. Heseltine advocated a beefed-up role for a better-resourced LEP plus new Local Growth Teams of civil servants, supporting the strategic role of groups of LEPs. Such teams are faintly reminiscent of the role performed by the former Government Offices in the regions. Adonis advocated the amalgamation of the seven local authorities in the North East LEP region into a combined authority, giving priority to transport, apprenticeships and business growth. This is an echo of the former metropolitan county authorities that existed from 1974 to 1986 (Sandford 2014, p 1). Subsequently, in April 2014, combined authorities for the North East and three other conurbations were indeed established. Further, Michael Dugher, Shadow Minister for the Cabinet Office, announced in 2014 that Labour would introduce regional ministers to “oversee” nine regional networks and ensure that economic growth is spread more evenly across England: “Labour is pledging to introduce Regional Ministers to put the voice of the English regions at the heart of Labour decision-making” (Labour List 2014). A report in August 2014 from five Northern councils

(self-described as 'city regions') advanced a densely-argued "proposition for an interconnected North" (Leeds City Council et al 2014).

It is worth noting that private sector associations, including the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), continue to operate on a defined regional basis even though the regional infrastructure of the public sector has been dismantled around them. Clearly some major parts of private industry consider the maintenance of a regional organisation to be valuable even where central government does not.

Conclusions

"What we have at the moment is an asymmetric form of devolution...There is a parliament in Scotland and assemblies in Wales and Northern Ireland...but with politicians from those three jurisdictions still having a vote on solely English affairs. A symmetrical form of devolution would balance these three institutions with a parliament for England or its regions, but ever since the referendum in the North East of England rejected the idea of a local assembly, the whole concept has been abandoned. The English just don't seem to have any appetite for regionalised devolution." (Monteith, 2013)

There is no devolved national administration for England or its regions. The Local Government Association has suggested merging existing England-only departments (for instance, transport, energy and environment) into a single Office for England. Yet governance is not just a matter of structures; it is - more importantly - a matter of the identity which gave rise to devolved administration in the first place. Even where the nature and affiliation of such an identity is bitterly contested, as in Northern Ireland, there is nonetheless unanimity that identity in itself is important. English sub-national identities may well be asserted but are not a significant influence on governance or policy.

In the North East of England reference to regional identity has tended to be perceived as relatively strong. It is no accident that this region was the site of the only referendum on establishing a regional assembly. A distinct regional identity has also been asserted in Cornwall. Both North East England and Cornwall are geographically remote from the seat of UK central government, a simple but powerful fact in shaping separate identity. Furthermore (and unlike anywhere else in England) Cornish identity may be expressed as 'national' rather than 'regional' if the premise is accepted that Cornwall is not truly part of England at all. European recognition of official 'minority status' for Cornwall in April 2014 may serve to support the case for a national Cornish identity. Crucially, Cornwall is also differentiated from North East England by access to a separate language rather than a distinct (English) dialect. But in neither case does such an identity yet reflect a popular social force strong enough to influence political and policy decisions about governance. Decentralisation reforms require widespread popular support in order to succeed (Gash, Randall and Sims 2014). Scottish devolution was underwritten by such support. English regional devolution is not.

Thus English governance remains both complex and deeply problematic. As discussed, there is no distinct institutional framework for the governance of England as a whole. This in itself differentiates England from the other component parts of the UK. At sub-national level within England, there is no formal regional dimension of governance. At local government level, different structures and political management arrangements obtain, varying from one place to another. Within this mix, England remains one of the most highly centralised countries in Europe. The resident of a small English unitary district (the very existence of which is constitutionally in the gift of central government) is governed by no further tier of elected administration until reaching that of the UK as

a whole. In international terms this is strikingly odd. With the withering away of former regional institutions, the current trend is toward further centralisation. English regional movements demanding devolution are not politically influential. In this context, can there be an agenda for the active advancement of English sub-national governance?

Combined Authorities

English local authorities, as discussed, already have the power (under legislation introduced in 2009) to group themselves into larger 'combined authorities', dealing with transport, economic development and other strategic priorities. The ten councils in Greater Manchester established a combined authority in 2011. The four further combined authorities established in 2014 may prove to be a significant development in sub-national governance, for they embody what amounts to a 'city region' focus without creating new bureaucratic institutions. They also avoid the need for (another) structural local government reorganisation. Two of the combined authorities, interestingly, incorporate the term 'city region' in their working titles. It is too early to assess their impact, but they reflect the aspirations of both Heseltine (2012) and Adonis (North East LEP 2013) in building upwards from existing local institutions.

Federalism

Within the limited public and political discussions about English governance there has been a striking tendency to avoid the F word. Even major enquiries such as the McKay Commission, set up to consider "...how the House of Commons might deal with legislation which affects only part of the United Kingdom, following the devolution of certain legislative powers to the Scottish Parliament, the Northern Ireland Assembly and the National Assembly for Wales" (2013, p 7) did not directly engage with English internal devolution. Further, the Commission was explicitly dismissive of a "federal" solution predicated on identifiable English regions (2013, p 24). The Liberal Democrat MP for Orkney and Shetland, Alistair Carmichael, referred in June 2014 to the continuing "anomaly" of Scottish MPs like himself being able to vote on England-only legislation, adding that "federalism is the logical conclusion of all this – but that is the decision for people in England to make" (BBC News 2014b). With greater powers progressively being devolved to other parts of the UK this anomaly grows. Carmichael suggests the "logic" is that "the English sort out their constitutional position" (BBC News 2014b). Such views, when expressed by a sitting Scottish Secretary, suggest that an explicit federal debate may be starting to emerge.

English Regions and Growth

If regional identity does not provide the strongest prospect for advancing sub-national governance in England, it may be that the emphasis on growth represents the main opportunity for reinventing the regional and the local. Demands for growth from across the political spectrum are beginning to embrace the realisation that there are local and regional ways to achieve it - or even that there are only local and regional ways to achieve it. There are indications that private industry takes this view and a realisation that the demise of regional development infrastructure has had negative consequences. The message that political and business elites in England are taking regions seriously is evident in both the Heseltine (2012) and Adonis (North East LEP 2013) reports and in subsequent developments. For instance, responding to the establishment of the North East combined authority in April 2014, the Chief Executive of the North East Chamber of Commerce said "with the right

structures in place this area can maximise its significant competitive advantages and continue to set the pace nationally for economic growth." (BBC News 2014a).

The Impact of Scottish Governance

Scottish experience, whatever its long-term trajectory post-referendum, has potential consequences for English sub-national governance. In the 'borderlands' of North-East England and Cumbria positive cross-border opportunities for economic development may be enhanced by greater Scottish self-determination (Shaw et al 2013), a view echoed by the Scottish First Minister in asserting that Scottish independence "would create opportunities for co-operation and partnership which would benefit the north of England more than anywhere else" (Salmond 2014). Alternatively, competition from Scotland, supported by its strong and effective infrastructure, may impact negatively on neighbouring English regions. For instance, Amazon's decision in 2011 to locate a major distribution centre in Dunfermline rather than England reflected the difference between the incentives offered by Scottish Enterprise and the contrasting position of a small borough council which could no longer avail itself of support from recently-abolished regeneration agency One North East. Furthermore, in future, England and Scotland may conceivably levy different rates of – for instance - Corporation Tax or Air Passenger Duty. The overall direction of competitive advantage is impossible to predict but it is likely to be an important part of any debate about future patterns of English governance.

Developing the Terms of Debate

The continuing political interest in new forms of local governance around elected mayors, especially for wider geographic areas than those of existing local authorities, may in time generate new approaches to sub-national governance in England. Current mayoral options have met with little public enthusiasm but this does not preclude emergent forms of governance that enjoy public endorsement, if driven locally rather than representing a prescribed series of choices from central government. More generally, following the Scottish referendum, as arguments about self-determination and devolution become more familiar terms of debate to English audiences - and especially to English political elites - a discourse about English sub-national governance may gradually move into the political mainstream. Within this debate, federalism may start to be discussed rationally using examples from other successful nation states, rather than being used emotionally (as it tends to be in relation to the European Union where, strangely, its meaning is often inverted to invoke an unwelcome centralism). Despite the experience of recent years, such elements may yet serve to place English sub-national governance on the political and policy agenda and, longer-term, provide the basis for a new sub-national settlement in England.

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