Local government reorganisation in the UK: Decentralisation or corporatism?

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Abstract
A number of internal and external pressures in UK local government have led to the examination of different options for internal organisation and management. A particular pressure has recently been the reorganisation of local government towards the creation of new unitary local councils. The review of non-metropolitan local government from 1992 to 1996, and the creation of unitary authorities in a number of areas from 1995 to 1998, forced local authorities to examine their own organisation. This article considers the impact of local government reorganisation on the structures and management of the organisations concerned. The discussion concentrates upon pressures towards centralisation and decentralisation. The extent to which structural reorganisation has led local government to “decentralise” is considered in a number of senses: the expansion of the parish and community council level, changes to internal management, and area-based initiatives. Drawing directly from current research, the authors examine competing trends towards decentralisation and centralisation and, specifically, identify a renewed focus upon corporate management as a whole. The importance of this new corporatism is then assessed.

Keywords
Decentralization, Local government, Local government reform, Public administration, Reorganization, Strategic management

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