

Devolution in the UK: Defining the Challenges Economy, Regeneration and Inequality

A Response to Calvin Jones

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Storey so far

Agree with analysis:

- Economic policy post-devolution (inc. London) remains neo-liberal, largely a-spatial, individually-oriented with little deviation from the national approach
- Key policy levers held at national level and alternatives stifled by regulation
- UK party politics remains firmly neoliberal with very little innovative economic thinking

What can we do about it?

Systemic change away from neoliberalism requires change at national level but how can devolution help that happen?

- Shift the political economy
- Drive for powers and policies that change economic direction
- Renew democracy by building people participation into economic choices

Shift the political economy

- Local politics is no less broken than national politics
- Civil society needs to: work together rather in siloes; have a unifying narrative and align around a shared strategy
- That's difficult but need to try
- One initiative is New Economy Organisers Network (NEON) operates nationally but developing city and regional groups
- NEON builds capacity and alignment

Changing economic direction

- Stop using GVA as the success measure
- Revenue raising and borrowing powers not just budgets
- Target what can be done on critical inequality issues such as housing
- Demand RBS be converted into a network of local banks owned in trust for the public benefit like other countries have that would be boost for local economies
- Champion what innovation there is eg Preston's progressive procurement

Renew democracy

- Democracy is something we do not just something we have
- Participation in deciding what people want from devolution
- Participation in how new powers and resources are used
- Stop the ad hoc competing deals version of devolution

Agree with Calvin: as it stands regional government is the bottom of a top-down neoliberal state – rather than the top of bottom-up democracy in the regions