

# Nurturing English regionalism: A new role for local newspapers in a federal UK?

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## Abstract

Any constitutional move towards a federal system in the United Kingdom would inevitably be unbalanced by England's obvious economic, cultural and numerical dominance. Some form of English regional devolution is therefore essential if we are to progress as a multinational state post Scottish and Welsh devolution. This article adopts a deliberately polemical approach to a consideration of the potential role of regional English newspapers in that context, suggesting that their established links with a coherent audience, rooted in place, might allow them to act as a vehicle for debate and nurture a sense of regional identity often absent from contemporary English politics. Regional newspapers are 'culturally specific' and have a key role to play in articulating the popular experience of post-devolution political change: this might also present this struggling sector with valuable commercial opportunities as they take advantage of the new political paradigm to further embed themselves within their communities.

## Keywords

devolution

regionalism

federalism

identity

newspapers

mainstream media

UK

Wales

As the United Kingdom embarks on a programme of constitutional change, it seems an appropriate time to reflect on the relative weakness of English regionalism, and to consider the role of regional newspapers in that context.

There is a degree of comfort with the notion of the United Kingdom as a multinational country analogous to Spain, but the position of England within that grossly lopsided multinational entity is another matter, and one that is crucial to the current debate as we move towards a version of federalism following last year's referendum and the SNP landslide in May 2015. For former Prime Minister Gordon Brown, the solution is clear:

In a Britain where the battered forces of progressive opinion urgently need to regroup and find common purpose, a constitutional guarantee to the citizens of all four nations could be the best way, and perhaps the last chance, to show that there is a clear and explicit vision of how the peoples of Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland can achieve more together through cooperation and sharing than we can ever do by breaking apart. (2015)

The problem lies in the English part of Brown's 'explicit vision', and specifically the persistence of one particular myth about regionalism within England. For

while it may be reasonably common for English observers to note that different histories and a more recent experience of independence and unity have preserved regional distinctiveness more successfully in parts of mainland Europe, opinion formers still make the mistake of assuming that regional differences in England are more significant than they really are and, by extension, more likely to smoothen the transition to English regional devolution. Take Martin Kettle, in the *Guardian*, for example: 'For a small country, England is a surprisingly big place. Divisions of landscape and culture abound. Surrey is not like Shropshire. Dorset is not like Durham. London is unlike everywhere else' (Kettle 2014).

For many observers, however, English regional identities are notable not for their strength but for their weakness. Fernandez-Armesto deems provincial identity in England inconsequential by Continental standards (1994: 42), while Bogdanor (1999: 271) argues that 'devolution in England has to confront the problem that the regions are in large degree simply ghosts'. Both authors concede that there is a strong north-south divide, and an element of 'fierce local chauvinism' in counties such as Yorkshire and Cornwall: but it is the relative homogeneity of the English that is *more* notable when compared to that of our immediate neighbours. Fernandez-Armesto says 'All in all, the English are, for their size, among the most consistent of European peoples' (1994: 42).

By contrast, in Germany, as in Italy, regionalism is not just important politically; it is a defining feature of everyday life. The federal structure of German politics is merely a reflection of that wider truth: regionalism is deeply embedded, and it

transcends politics to embrace much more fundamental issues of cultural identity, which gives residents a tangible personal investment in regional and local devolved politics. Although there are of course considerable differences between 'Dorset and Durham', there is little real depth or substance to English regionalism for a variety of historic reasons. And this is likely to be the defining factor as the United Kingdom as a whole decides what to do constitutionally following the Scottish independence referendum. To create anything even close to a federal UK means English regional devolution is a necessity. Lest we forget, England's population is eighteen times bigger than that of Wales.

But regionalism cannot be imposed, as the 2004 referendum in North East England (rejected by 78 per cent of the electorate) proved. As Bryant (2005: 209) observes, the difficulty for the government was (and is) that the regions for which it proposed to roll out elected assemblies do not necessarily mean much to the voters. Bryant argues (2005: 212) that there are 'many ways in which these (administrative) regions do not seem entirely right to the people that live there'. Cornwall, for example, is disqualified for consideration because of its small population, despite its obvious credentials in terms of cultural heritage and identity. And this is the crucial point: English regional devolution must be organic, grassroots and part of a lived experience. In a very real sense, it must be cultural first, political second, if it is to have any chance of acceptance by an English public traditionally reluctant to add extra layers of perceived 'bureaucracy' to the governance of their everyday lives.

Deeper European integration, and the related process of extending the EU's policy reach, has increased support for regionalist political parties across Europe because it enhances the viability of smaller, more homogeneous political units (Jolly 2015). It has also long been recognized that Europe as a whole has seen a sustained period of parallel and related processes of regionalism and globalization, in which the role of the central government shrinks and nations become fragmented politically, culturally and linguistically (under the transnational umbrella of the EU). Mainstream political parties inevitably see their support base shrinking in this political context (Newhouse 1997). But whereas this is certainly true of Scotland and Wales, with nationalist parties seeing an obvious opportunity in the fact that multi-level governance increases the viability of smaller states, it is perhaps unsurprising that England has shown little appetite for formalizing internal regionalism. Indeed, the wider media has treated any such plans (such as the 2004 devolution referendum in North East England) with outright hostility. The fact that European integration has created conditions under which regionalist groups may not need the established state to thrive internationally (Jolly 2015) is simply a 'hard sell' in England.

How, then, to nurture and encourage regional identity in a still-centralized country that has little contemporary history of it, and little appetite for its associated political baggage? If a polemical tone can be excused, this seems to be an ideal opportunity to consider and revisit the role of regional journalism in the broader cultural and political sense in the context of a notional future federal UK. If we accept that regionalism (and therefore meaningful popular federalism with a democratic mandate) needs real cultural context and a solid cultural base,

along Italian or German lines, the potentially pivotal role of regional and (to a lesser extent) local journalism begins to crystallize. Might newspapers have a role in encouraging, nurturing and sustaining a sense of regional identity in England? Indeed, might we go further and suggest a simultaneous possibility of a commercial lifeline to those newspapers: a vision of a sustainable future that taps into a post-federal settlement and uses it to its advantage?

The relevance of space and geography in relation to the British media has remained largely unexplored by academics, due in part to the prevailing interest in the discursive formation or ideological mediation of national and globalized (rather than regional) identity through the mass media (Franklin 2015). And that mass media, particularly in the United Kingdom, is hopelessly centralized, and has been so since the decline (in influence) of provincial papers that began in the middle years of the nineteenth century, another marked contrast with federal states such as Germany and the United States. But, despite this, audiences will always 'tell stories from the spaces and places of their everyday lives, and tell them in ways that further infuse these spaces with meaning' (Papacharissi 2015). Region and place have arguably come to be even more intrinsic to people's sense of self due to the dislocating effects of rapid cultural diffusion (Franklin 2015). Indeed, the United Kingdom's national press has often made considerable capital out of precisely this sense of disorientation. The regional press, however, has struggled to frame its response to this obvious opportunity in commercially viable ways.

Franklin argues that Hagerstrand (1986) offers a solution to the problems caused by an overly 'administrative' approach to devolution, because he calls for the re-assertion of territorial integration into a society predominantly organized along functional lines, and suggests that this might be partially done through the development and cultivation of regional media: tied, as they are, to older, popular versions of regional identity, not bound by government-led boundary changes. This is not easily achieved commercially in the United Kingdom, as Franklin concedes, given intensifying concentration of ownership and the well-documented decline in newspaper readership: but consciousness of place is crucial to this debate and Hagerstrand emphasizes the role of the media in increasing it by balancing 'old and new cultural elements', which in England might mean that heritage is emphasized alongside the new political paradigm of devolution and, perhaps, federalism. This media-led approach contrasts with (for example) the 1997 Labour White Paper, which dismissed 'traditional English regions' as unsuitable as devolved units. For Bryant (2005: 212) this revealed that government thinking on regional size and boundaries was driven by administrative convenience and not popular sentiment.

### **Narrating political change**

The regional newspaper press is, in theory, considerably more agile than the national press in terms of its ability to adapt to, and represent, a changing political paradigm. As an example of how this might work in terms of media representation and portrayal, mainstream newspapers along the Anglo-Welsh border have, since the Welsh devolution in 1997, had some experience of dealing

with a new political dynamic. They have taken the opportunity to engage with the post-devolution reality of life on the border, and their constructions of this new paradigm have, occasionally, encouraged border residents to consider their position and identity in unfamiliar ways. The established tradition of cross-border media (which long predates devolution) has at times begun to evolve into a more nuanced and sophisticated attempt to represent and articulate the peculiarities and concerns of the region as it negotiates and adapts to the post-devolution paradigm. Newspapers reflect, and simultaneously construct, a geographical and cultural reality. The Anglo-Welsh border is often urban in character, and in some areas suburbs spill across what was (pre-devolution) merely an 'administrative' boundary. Inevitably, these areas are characterized by a certain ambiguity of identity and, as a partial consequence, newspaper remits and readerships often transcend the border. There is no reason why this ambiguity of identity cannot be exploited by the local press: the concerns and preoccupations of residents affected by devolved politics will not be articulated by anybody else, not by the national press, not by the Cardiff-based Welsh broadcast media, and not by the media of North West England.

Despite these opportunities, and this theoretical ability to adapt to changing circumstances more easily than their national equivalents, an innate conservatism continues to characterize the popular press in the United Kingdom, whether local, regional or national, despite the desperate straits it finds itself in. Indeed, it could be argued that the cited examples along the Welsh border have been slow and overcautious in adapting to the changed circumstances, missing an opportunity in the process. For Conboy (2002: 183), the popular press relies



on narratives that invariably draw on established genres and scripts. As a result, when local newspapers along the Welsh–English border, like the *Chester Chronicle* and *Evening Leader* (with long-established target audiences on both sides of the Anglo–Welsh border) find themselves at the heart of a rapidly evolving political paradigm (that is, devolution), they remain subtle purveyors of standard narratives to a mass audience. However, they have a key role in articulating political change regardless of the commercially driven approach they take to constructing what Conboy calls the ‘popular experience’ of that change.

Despite this, the regional and local press has often been disregarded when studying cultural representation in the United Kingdom. This seems a curious oversight, as Berry (2008) suggests that cultural specificity can be seen as a ‘survival strategy’ for local newspapers produced to maintain a monopolistic market. He argues that the county and region of Gwent, in South East Wales, is

nothing more than a figment of imagination and no more than an idea, which is used and exploited by the *South Wales Argus* to maintain a monopolistic position in a fictionalized Gwent region. In order to achieve this the paper invokes history, tradition, nostalgia, culture and identity from a Gwent perspective and within a Welsh context.

For Berry, local newspapers build up an image of community partly through market research and partly based on historical judgements concerning culture, identity and tradition. For Gwent, we might substitute almost any English county: although many of these are considerably more than mere ‘figments of

the imagination' and are underpinned by an established sense of themselves as administrative and political units.

Media-driven identity construction can take time. Huggins (2000: 137) argues that in much of North East England both local and sub-regional identities had to be constructed almost from scratch and that the media was central to this. It took some time, he says, for communities to have a clear sense of their own identity, partly because they were new, formed by in-migration to work in new industry. In other words, scaling down the well-known work of Anderson (1983), suggesting regional and sub-regional identities can be 'imagined' and constructed by a news media that has a vested commercial interest in doing so.

The Parekh Report (2000) long predated the current federalism debate, and sought to reinvent Britain as a community of communities, relating to Shields' (1991: 4) argument that places on the margins expose the central role of what he calls 'spatialization' to cultures and nation states. This, says Shields, is not merely a matter of myth. Rather, it highlights the centrality of spatial conceptions and imagery in daily life. These images and stereotypes, an imaginary geography of places and spaces, have social impacts that are (as in the electoral statistics outlined above) empirically specifiable (e.g., some areas of Wales near the border with England have historically been characterized as 'British Wales' (Balsom 1985) and have, perhaps as a partial result, often been reluctant to engage with devolved politics, a fact that is clearly discernible via electoral statistics). This often underpins political rhetoric, and for Shields the collective weight of these 'discourses on space' can be linked with the symbolic creation of

a sense of community and with nationalism (Anderson 1983). The importance of the media's political role in post-devolution nation-building is clear in this context, and again emphasizes the tendency to prioritize dominant and sometimes idealized national narratives at the expense of regional identity, which is more likely to be counter-hegemonic and 'rebellious' in tone. But in the new political dynamic, this commercial 'logic' might be questioned. It might have worked for the smaller and more cohesive nations of Scotland and Wales, but it cannot work in England if we move towards a truly federal UK with English regionalism at its heart.

### **Critical regionalism**

The principle of 'critical regionalism' might usefully be adopted as a theoretical lens through which to view these issues. The sense of community that a more enlightened approach to building can nourish was initially explored in the architectural sense by Kenneth Frampton (1983). In essence, Frampton's argument is for buildings that acknowledge the geographical and cultural context in which they find themselves. However, the notion of critical regionalism has been adopted more widely by cultural theorists and might be expanded (in a specific media sense) into a more general celebration of cultural diversity on a micro scale, where it becomes about locality and what makes that locality distinctive. That might, for example, mean a celebration of ambiguity and a defining border identity in the way that Berwick upon Tweed celebrates its unique status and identity as a town that is neither fully English nor Scottish. This kind of local distinctiveness, which relates to particular geographical

circumstances, will not (and cannot) be meaningfully addressed by the national press: local and regional newspapers remain the only forum through which such nuanced levels of identity might be articulated.

By extension, this might be a way of encouraging civic engagement in marginalized regions, or those that perceive themselves as marginal. Regional media has the power to do this by articulating specifically local concerns. Emphasizing difference on a micro scale is what the local media do, but we rarely consider this function in a wider political context. By doing so, it becomes possible to see how the regional press might place a renewed emphasis on the regional, the diverse, the plural and the distinctive that is not introspective but offers the possibility of simultaneously reinventing and re-articulating international and local cultures and identities.

Indeed, Rifkin (2001) goes considerably further by suggesting that the notion of critical regionalism may even represent one route out of what he calls the hypercapitalist conundrum where life experience itself is now commoditized, arguing that social movements, campaigning for cultural diversity, underscore the local and the historical and cannot be appropriated for profit. Here is one such campaign: if we want to 'underscore the local and the historical', as Rifkin urges, what better (and easier) place to start than regional newspapers?

For Rifkin, the stakes are high: If we lose the sense of place, the sense of being, we lose something irreplaceable and vital to us all as a species. His prognosis is

that geography counts, and culture matters: 'If you lose the rich cultural diversity of thousands of years, it's as final and devastating as losing biodiversity'.

In recent years, a considerable amount of political and academic attention has been paid to the associated idea of place-making: transforming uninspiring spaces into something more dynamic and human. The notion of 'liveable' cities like Copenhagen and Amsterdam, with their cycle lanes and green spaces, is a familiar part of political debate across Europe. But the concept is inherently linked to a different way of conceiving 'regionalism'. Indeed, when global crises are so obvious, Powell (2007) argues that critical regionalism can be a way of reconnecting and re-asserting what the relationships among places should be. For Peters (2015) much current research into news and journalism, which centres on the breakdown of distance, seems to implicitly recognize the importance of 'where' when it comes to content, production and reception in the contemporary networked and participatory digital era. But when we attempt to apply notions of the public sphere to news consumption, Peters argues that the spatial significance is often lost or relegated, with the focus instead placed on the substance of content. How the everyday digital geographies of contemporary media intersect with the everyday 'lived' geographies of individuals is, he suggests, a central question, and it is one with obvious implications for the notion of regional distinctiveness.

The importance of preserving and cherishing diversity is an integral part of post-devolution debate, particularly in Wales and Scotland, but the notion of critical regionalism might be better seen, particularly in the English context, as a more

general celebration of cultural diversity on a micro scale, where it becomes about locality and what makes that locality distinctive. We might also link such a position with the rejection of a unitary view of culture as the product of an elite: one that asserts the value of popular culture (wherever that originates and whatever it represents) both in its own terms and as an implicit challenge to dominant values (Jackson 1989: 1). Celebrations of that 'popular culture' are common in the contemporary media, but revolve around dominant *national* narratives and present an uncomfortable challenge to the evolving sense of regionalism.

The alternative is surely more attractive. Rather than a crude reliance on patriotism, national narratives and 'othering', Carter et al. (1993: ix) argue that all trends towards the periphery and the region indicate a resistance to global forces, while also conceding that identity politics is simultaneously a product of those same forces. This 'resistance' to homogeneity might give rise to the development of new communities of interest and belief and the resurrection of old ones. These processes are not entirely unproblematic: but they need not be exclusive or aggressive in tone; indeed they frequently celebrate the opportunity to engage with the wider world from a different point of departure.

One reason for this is provided by Powell (2007), for whom the idea of 'region' is fundamentally different from other conceptualizations of places, like home, community, city, state and nation: in that region must refer not to a specific site but to a larger network of sites. Region is always a relational term, he argues, because a region can never be an isolated space, withdrawn from larger cultural

forces and processes: 'When we talk about a region, we are talking not about a stable, boundaried, autonomous place but about a cultural history, the cumulative, generative effect of the interplay among the various, competing definitions of that region' (2007: 5).

### **Media solutions?**

It is something of a neo-cliché to observe that regional newspapers are more deeply embedded in a genuine sense of community and local identity. Returning briefly to the international comparisons made earlier, even a cursory glance at (for example) German newspapers reveals fundamental differences in audience and rationale. Consider the differences between Germany [and the United States] and the United Kingdom in this context, and reflect on the prestige and regional rationale of newspapers like *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, *Suddeutsche Zeitung*, *the New York Times* and *the Boston Globe*. This reflects different historical contexts and, in particular, long-established federal systems in both countries: with real power vested in States and Lander. But, given the fact that we too are moving towards some version of federalism, a concerted effort to re-establish regional newspapers' relationship with their community and exploit the emerging *Zeitgeist* might lead to a reinvention of the format in England: something closer to their German counterparts' business model. And even if we do not quite get to the level of an English *Suddeutsche Zeitung*, it does not take a huge leap of the imagination to envisage a future version of the *Yorkshire Post*, closer in spirit to *The Scotsman* than to a conventional English regional paper.

The journalistic case is not hard to make. Smaller units obviously introduce greater democratic accountability. The consequences of political decisions can be better grasped at a smaller scale, as readers have first-hand knowledge of the issues at stake. In smaller units, social activists and those working at the grassroots level have a greater chance of knowing each other – they also have a greater chance of knowing most of their political representatives (perhaps personally). There are obvious opportunities here for the regional press. There are already numerous examples of the momentum shifting away from the conventional press: the initiative seized by agile newcomers. It has become commonplace to observe that the same digital technologies that have destroyed traditional newspaper business models have also enabled the emergence of a new sector where community news is created by and for communities of place and interest. But if these perform a similar democratic function to traditional papers it seems pertinent to not only consider the role the press might have in nurturing and encouraging English regionalism but also to consider ways in which the mainstream and established regional press might leverage its traditional position as purveyor of regional identity to commercially exploit the constitutional debate and its aftermath. The argument is familiar. Inclusive democracy needs smaller public spheres, and, although broadcast news will get the breaking story, newspapers can provide regional exclusives and in-depth background. The frequency with which only a handful of real citizen journalism examples are cited suggests its counter-hegemonic impact is rare. It cannot be unmediated; a hierarchy of credibility will always exist, which again plays into the hands of the regional press in the context of a changing, decentralized political dynamic.



As Peters (2015) argues, the places, spaces and other social aspects of news consumption are all changing, but we know very little about the impact this has on journalism's various audiences, or on how people process, access and discuss information. We do know, however, that the news media must be firmly anchored in place to retain integrity and value. Location and the local are clearly important to the shaping of news and its social functions (Franklin 1998) and there has long been debate about the potential role of hyperlocal news as an extension of journalism's long-standing focus on local and community use, often basing its prospects on digital innovation framed against the mainstream (Goggin et al. 2015). But it is the *region* that offers the more sustainable and exciting potential for journalistic reinvention. In the Swedish context, Hedling et al. (2010) talk of the multi-layered and complex representation of 'region' in both old and new media, suggesting that the ways in which the Swedish media has represented and conceived of the region during the past 200 years have changed repeatedly in scope, depth and style as well as meaning. In Canada, too, the national media found itself in a state of flux following the global downturn in 2008. Waddell (2011) argued that this presented a real opportunity for peripheries to break free from the centre and respond in their own ways, trying their own ideas and testing what works within their distinctive community. In post-devolution UK, circumstances have changed; the balance of power has shifted: now the media might change to reflect those changing circumstances.

Regions have arguably not been properly 'exploited', in commercial terms, by the news media since the nineteenth century. They frequently define themselves

against a bigger, more nebulous 'other', which may be the nation state, or focus on redressing the balance of power within a country, or (perhaps) addressing historical grievances. Indeed, Rawnsley (2000: 3) argues that the North of England's sense of place is 'condensed and distilled with intensity' via the pages of an influential local print press. This distilled sense of identity might be exploited by a news media keen to promote that sense of place that connects to what Urry (1995: 2) describes as 'consumption' – how a sense of place is not simply given but is culturally constructed. But while the media's links with national identity are well documented in this context (Anderson 1983; Billig 1995), the media's links with regional identity continue to receive less attention, even in the aftermath of 2014's Scottish independence referendum. This seems a curious oversight, and one that really ought to be addressed in more detail given the state of flux apparent within the industry. Broersma and Peters (2013), for example, suggest that old audience habits are becoming 'de-ritualized', but add that it is unclear what will replace them. An exploration of the ways in which the everyday digital geographies of contemporary media, communications and information flows intersect with the everyday 'lived' geographies of individuals (Peters 2015) seems likely to lead to a more informed assessment of how new forms of regional media might impact on the audience, and how it might feasibly be funded by private investors and public bodies with a vested interest in maintaining that audience 'impact' post devolution.

It requires investors with a willingness to accept reasonable rates of return that are likely to be smaller than in the past, argues Waddell (2011), who also suggests that it is time for a revival of the principle that there is a degree of civic

responsibility in owning a media outlet whether in a large city or in a small community. Labour under Blair and Brown promoted the idea of independently funded news consortia as a way to state-fund ITV regional news and potentially bring together the regional newspaper groups with broadcast news providers, although the Conservatives then rejected subsidies outright, preferring a network of city TV stations that would rely heavily on volunteer staff but whose business model is unproven (Thomson 2011). Top-slicing the BBC to fund or subsidize commercial regional news providers is another oft-quoted potential solution to the funding issue. The overarching question of media ownership remains a key issue, with a clear lack of plurality in the prevailing situation where five companies control 70 per cent of regional daily newspaper circulation (Media Reform Coalition 2014). An open debate on media ownership is long overdue: the Media Reform Coalition calls for serious proposals to increase pluralism, including ownership and 'behavioural remedies'. Fusing the scope of regional newspapers to any future English devolution would seem to fit within this remit, although it has never been articulated as such.

As Kumar (2003: 251) observes, nationalism has finally caught up with the English, largely because 'the things that held it at bay are no more'. Irreversible devolution has now taken place in the United Kingdom, but the English – although now engaged with the constitutional debate, arguably for the first time – have yet to be formally consulted. Indeed, the 'English question' remains to haunt the settlement, as Tom Nairn predicted it would in 2003. Kumar points to Labour's vision of a 'New Britain', which envisages a country of a multiplicity of identities, but argues that, in the context of a notional future federal Britain, 'it

would be tragic if the English came to see themselves within the terms of a narrow English nationalism (which would) deprive it of the opportunity of providing a model of an open, expansive and diverse society' (2003: 272). Regionalism is one meaningful way of ensuring this does not happen, with a revived and re-energized regional news media at the heart of it.

ENDS

### **Postscript**

The UK's June 2016 Brexit vote increases the likelihood that some form of federalism will follow. Attempts to keep Scotland (which voted overwhelmingly to remain within the EU) within the Union, along with the considerable issues caused by the vote in Northern Ireland (like the possible return of a 'hard border' between it and the Irish Republic), mean that a UK-wide federal system is likely to be the only option if it is to remain as a functioning political entity. The fact that English (and Welsh) voters tended to associate resistance to homogeneity or global forces with a vote to leave the EU may be taken as symbolic of a wider cultural issue, where regional identity is subsumed (or forgotten) in favour of a poorly defined sense of nationalism, which rarely revolves around the quiet reinforcement of cultural practice, as elsewhere in Europe, but more frequently defines itself in opposition to the other. The media's role in these processes is obvious and has been well documented in relation to Brexit, with the decades-long tradition of using Brussels as a convenient scapegoat a clear contextual factor. The cultural impact of the British tabloid newspaper debate remains as

strong as ever despite declining circulations: it still sets the tone and retains immense symbolic significance. However, amidst the anger and fall-out from Brexit, calls for a reformed media (given its role in the process of Brexit) will assume a greater prominence. There is still time for popular 'resistance' to homogeneity and lack of connection with political elites to be channelled in a different and more outward-facing direction. The control that devolved power and the Bundesrat (the representative body of the Länder, or regional states) hands to people in Germany, for example, is just one reason that they were baffled by Brexit. The importance of regionalism, and the defining centrality of the news media to it, may now take on a renewed significance in the United Kingdom.

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