

# A comparison of local management of regeneration in England and Greece

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## **Abstract**

**Purpose** – Explores comparisons between the English and Greek local government systems, in the hope of offering some fresh insights into the regeneration and management of local areas.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Discusses the issue of local political leadership at a time when changes in local political management arrangements are taking place in many European countries.

**Findings** – The English and Greek experiments with developing local self-government provide some reassurance and some causes for concern but, above all, they demonstrate that in, unitary states, Ministers and Civil Servants at the centre find withdrawing from interference in local affairs a very hard exercise in self-denial.

**Originality/value** – Illustrates the problems facing two centralised countries struggling with varying but limited success to cope with various public management issues raised by local devolution and decentralisation.

**Keywords** Local government, Economic development, England, Greece

**Paper type** General review

## **Introduction: some foundations for comparative local government studies**

The comparative study of political systems has now generated an extensive literature. One of the most important contributors thereto, Peters (1998, p. 10) postulates five approaches, in his well-respected text:

- (1) Single country studies of foreign countries, using a common analytical framework, thus enabling one to draw conclusions about the similarities and differences between that country and the author's own.
- (2) Analyses of similar processes and institutions in a limited number of countries.
- (3) The development of typologies or other classifications of regimes.
- (4) Statistical or descriptive analyses of data from a subset of countries.
- (5) Statistical analyses of all countries.

Another major contributor to the comparative government literature, Rose (1993), proposes that comparison can be achieved by lesson drawing. He proposes five approaches:

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- (1) Copying the institutions and practices of another country.
  - (2) Emulation of another country's institutions or practices, after adjustment to suit differing circumstances.
  - (3) Hybridisation involves combining institutions or practices from two countries.
  - (4) Synthesis – combining elements of practice from three or more places.
  - (5) Inspiration – developments in some countries provide the intellectual stimulus for developing new programmes.

The object of this paper is to explore comparisons, using Peters' analytical approach and typologies, together with Rose's emulation and hybridisation, between the English and Greek local government systems, in the hope offering some fresh insights in the regeneration and management of local areas. Comparison is easier if some general similarities between the two states in question can be identified. There are at least three significant similarities in the development of the English and Greek local government systems. First, both countries are unitary or union states with strong centralist traditions that are trying to cope with demands for regional and local devolution, including pressures generated by their EU membership. Both countries are relatively homogeneous (especially if we use England rather than the whole UK as the comparator) but there are tensions between centres and peripheries in both states. Both have a history of centralised government but not only are regions and localities increasingly demanding autonomy; also European Union (EU) policies are encouraging the extension of local autonomy, encouraging the development of regional and local government agencies with which the commission can negotiate the allocation of its structural funds.

This leads to a second problem that England and Greece have in common: both countries are on the periphery of the EU. Partly because of this, both states face major regional and local regeneration and development problems. Thirdly, they both suffer from major internal imbalances: London and the South-East of England are considerably more prosperous than the peripheral English regions, especially those in the North. The latter have suffered economic deprivation and environmental degradation from the collapse of the heavy industries that used to provide most of their employment. Nearly half the Greek population lives in its two main conurbations, Athens/Piraeus and Thessaloniki. The rest of the country is mountainous and therefore sparsely inhabited, with many villages still dependent on primitive agriculture and fishing, although many coastal communities considerably augment their income from tourism during the summer months. Both countries have also experienced a long-term population drift from their rural areas to the major cities, especially their capitals. All these imbalances need to be addressed by public managers at all levels of government.

However, they have very different histories, which may restrict comparisons between them. The UK has not been invaded since 1066 and has gradually evolved a stable if still imperfect democratic political system. Greece by contrast has had a turbulent history, having been invaded many times. It gained independence from the Ottoman Empire in the early 1830s. Multi-party democracy has only been firmly established there since the establishment of the Third Hellenic Republic in 1974. Nonetheless, Greece has a European cultural and political heritage; indeed, many of the founding principles of European democracy were derived from the writings of Greek

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thinkers such as Plato and Aristotle. A more detailed comparison of aspects of the two countries' public management should, therefore, offer scope for interesting comparisons and contrasts.

We are seeking here to explore community leadership and local management, by engaging in comparative analysis of aspects of English and Greek local government. In a previous paper (Chondroleou *et al.*, 2003), we explored the reasons why both countries have engaged in structural reorganisation of their local government systems and the effects this has had on their community governments. Here, we discuss the issue of local political leadership, at a time when changes in local political management arrangements are taking place in many European countries.

## **Reforming community leadership in Britain and Greece**

### *England*

In England, the government has imposed radical solutions on local authorities in order to make them develop strong "core executives" but unlike some other European states, it did not impose a single model of local leadership. Ministers saw a need to do this for several reasons: the extent to which local authorities, especially their leading members and officers, have the capacity fully to discharge their community leadership and managerial responsibilities was restricted by the weakness of their core executives and the lack of political or official leaders with whom the leaders of other organisations could communicate and co-ordinate their activities. Hence pressures to strengthen local government leadership since the 1960s have stemmed from two sets of problems (Elcock, 2001). The first relate to the internal management of the local authority itself. Local authorities needed to improve their co-ordination and policy coherence – their governing functions – in order to reduce waste and duplication, as well as preventing policy disasters and personal tragedies caused by poor communication and co-ordination in a system dominated by relatively narrow professionalisms and a fragmented committee system (Elcock, 1994). Also, successive reorganisations have created very large local authorities, both in terms of the areas they govern and the number of their employees, which requires local authorities to strengthen their core executives, which has resulted in the development of a series of reform proposals. These included the development of corporate management in the 1960s (Elcock, 1994), proposals for directly elected mayors from a conservative minister in 1991 (see Stoker and Wolman, 1992) and again from the Blair Labour government in 1998 (Elcock, 2001). Some form of executive control organ, selected from a menu provided by ministers, has now been imposed on most councils by the central government.

Secondly, local authorities increasingly need to deal effectively with other governments, public service organisations including "Quangos"[1], private businesses and business organisations, trades unions, voluntary agencies and others. Since the late 1960s English local authorities' roles have evolved from the Victorian tradition under which councils regarded themselves as being responsible only for discharging the functions allotted to them by Parliament, towards their accepting a wider responsibility for the economic, social and cultural welfare of their communities and citizens. In the first role, it did not matter unduly that they functioned as loose confederations of departmental and committee empires, the overall co-ordination of which was weak and occasional (Wiseman, 1963). However, the development of a governance or community leadership role required them to create a stronger "core

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executive”, which was first attempted by corporate management from the late 1960s onwards (Greenwood and Stewart, 1974). Also, the increasing fragmentation of local governance through compulsory competitive tendering and the creation of increasing numbers of special purpose authorities (“Quangos”, see Robinson and Shaw, 2002) in the 1980s has compelled local authorities to become centres of networks involving local business organisations, trades unions, voluntary agencies, educational institutions and many others in joint planning and decision-making, which has caused some observers to describe such systems as “governance without government” (Rhodes, 1996). The Local Government Act, 2000 enables and requires local authorities to accept this community leadership role. It has been accompanied by a growing series of requirements for local authorities and other sub-national government organisations to develop corporate plans and strategies whose remit extends beyond their own responsibilities to include those of other organisations. Thirdly, community leaders need to secure firm support bases in order to secure the implementation of their policies and their own survival – their allegiance roles (Elcock, 2001).

New political management arrangements were imposed on most English local authorities less than three years after the Blair government came to power, through the Local Government Act 2000. A new structure for Greater London was enacted to enable the first elections for the Greater London Assembly and London Mayor to be held in April 2000. Elsewhere, local authorities with over 85,000 inhabitants were required to choose a leadership structure from among three options (DETR, 1998, 1999):

- (1) A leader elected by the council from among its members, with a cabinet.
- (2) A directly elected mayor with a cabinet.
- (3) An elected mayor with a council manager.

In addition, a new overview and scrutiny function was invented for those councillors who are not appointed or elected to the cabinet or executive.

Hence, new political management arrangements structures have been imposed from the top down. However, only 11 councils plus Greater London have acquired elected mayors (Game, 2003) but they now seem to be carving out distinctive roles for themselves (Elcock and Fenwick, 2004). The election results were not what the government wanted or expected in two-thirds of the mayoral authorities, including London, hence ministers now seem to have lost interest in creating elected mayors.

Academics and ministers alike hoped that creating executive mayors would address the chronic weakness of the “core executive” in British local authorities (Stoker, 1996; Leach and Wilson, 2000). Elected mayors have become increasingly fashionable throughout Europe (Schaap and Ringeling, 2003) but they have been widely resisted in the UK as not conforming to British norms, culture and traditions, which lay heavy stress on collective rather than individual leadership (Beecham, 1996; Doyle, 1996; Elcock, 1998; Elcock and Fenwick, 2003). The vast majority of councils opted instead for leaders elected by councils, supported by cabinets or executives whose members are usually appointed by the leader.

The election of mayors or the appointment of leaders and cabinets with executive powers, have established a formal demarcation line between the mayor or leader and the cabinet responsible for deciding policies and managing the authority and the remaining councillors, whose main function is to be ward and citizen representatives. However, these non-executive members can now scrutinise the activities of the

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executive and the council's officers, as well as being empowered to scrutinise other public and private organisations. Overview and scrutiny committees are therefore increasingly undertaking reviews both of their own authority's leadership and policies and of outside organisations such as local health trusts. However, the success or otherwise of overview and scrutiny committees is influenced by the quality of their chairs, as well as the encouragement or otherwise that they get from mayors and executive members (Elcock *et al.*, 2003).

*Allegiance functions and the public.* Another major cause for concern for local government leaders in Britain is the low and declining levels of voter turnout in local elections and a general lack of citizen involvement in local affairs. Also, public participation exercises usually command a low or derisory level of participation. To this apathy elected mayors in particular are responding vigorously by developing new forms of public consultation and participation. The danger of local government becoming an "insider" activity, fascinating for councillors, officers and political activists but of little concern to anyone else, is widely recognised among councillors and mayors alike (Elcock *et al.*, 2003; Elcock and Fenwick, 2004). It has led local authority leaders to attempt to increase public interest and involvement in local politics and government by taking a wide range of initiatives, including establishing area committees or neighbourhood forums (Coaffee and Healey, 2003; Elcock and Fenwick, 2003; Elcock and Fenwick, 2004). Public apathy weakens the role local authorities play in the leadership of their communities and win public support for its policies and plans, because it weakens their legitimacy.

Directly elected executive mayors were proposed as a remedy for public apathy because they would provide a visible focus of local leadership but there is no evidence from abroad or at home that introducing mayors has or will increase public interest in local politics (Stoker and Wolman, 1992; Hambleton, 1994; Elcock, 2001; Game, 2003). However, interviews with elected mayors reveal that they are energetically seeking to address this problem through consultation exercises and area based initiatives, such as publishing local consultative papers, as well as responding to community needs, for example appointing community wardens to improve safety and concentrating street cleaning in particular areas to improve their appearance (mayor interviews). Area committees are widely reported to have increased public participation in local government (councillor and mayoral interviews), as have changes to the electoral system, especially postal voting. Some mayors regard them as a means of communicating with local communities without going through councillors (Elcock and Fenwick, 2004).

The general thrusts of developing community leadership in British local government, then, have been to strengthen the leadership of local authorities to increase their ability to tackle their governmental and governance problems. Political leaders also need to seek to ensure their continuance in office by maintaining their popular support and electoral machines, which may reduce their freedom of manoeuvre and distract them from performing their governing and governance roles.

### **Elected mayors and local political leadership in Greece**

In Greece, by contrast, there has been concern to reduce the power of locally elected or otherwise selected leaders, the *toparxes*, ever since Greece won independence in 1830, because they have tended to be at the centres of clientelistic and often corrupt local networks, now maintained by their links with the political parties (Kafetzis, 2003;

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Lyrintzis, 1984; Makridimitris and Liverakos, 2000). However, mayors have acquired additional powers and functions as the responsibilities of local councils have increased. Also, the central government has wished to increase its control over local communities and their governments in order to increase the pace of economic and social development. However, there is also a need to develop networks to bring about economic regeneration and better social provision at the local level.

The issue in Greece is therefore more concerned with governance than governmental terms, because it is concerned chiefly with the reduction in corrupt inter-agency relationships at the local level and securing increased state control over local communities, while at the same time encouraging local economic development and the provision of better local services. The governmental issues concerning internal management are not as significant as Britain, perhaps because most Greek *demoi* and *koinotites* are too small to present significant internal management problems of co-ordination and control. With a population of 12 million, Greece still has more than twice the number of local authorities that now exist in the UK with some 58 million inhabitants. Hence there are only 12,000 people on average in each primary local government area, compared with 127,000 in England. However, some of them are large enough to run into the same problems of co-ordination and control that exist in Britain. Another reason why managerial issues are less significant may be that "new public management" has not yet entered the Greek administrative agenda.

#### *Local political leadership*

Local political leadership has been a controversial issue characterised by a continuous competition for political power between leaders at the local and national levels since the formation of the modern Greek state. Local political leaders (*toparxes*) were very powerful and had an important role in running local affairs during the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires. During the War of Independence (1820s), their role became even more significant; their political power and influence increased rapidly. Their prominent role during the war in combination with the existence of strong local loyalties led to the creation of powerful political leaderships (Kitromilidis, 1984). The newly established independent Greek state (1831) was characterised by strong tensions between the central administration seeking to create a unitary, centralist state and local leaders aiming at maintaining their powerful political roles and a multi-centred system (Vlaxos, 1982). Despite the political power of local leaders, all decisions and laws, even from the interwar period, were orientated towards a centralised system aiming at national unity and social integration. This conflict between politically powerful local leaders and a centrally controlled administrative and political system has dominated local politics and government until nowadays.

The formation of large municipalities (*dimoi*) in 1833, although it initially restricted the power of prominent local leaders, gradually led to their empowerment since they operated in a large geographical area. In addition, the problems faced by the newly established state in performing its duties allowed for local government to undertake numerous administrative and economic responsibilities, hence further empowering local leaders. Gradually, the national government secured control of *dimoi*, continued to articulate the clientelist and partisan system at the local level and gradually diminished the responsibilities of *dimoi*. However, local leaders acquired significant political power, although not any real decision-making powers, and were very

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influential not only at the local but also, through members of parliament, at the national level (Hlepas, 1999, pp. 269-291). It is evident that since its inception, the modern Greek state has been characterised by a continuous struggle between local and national political leaders for power and by a constant attempt from the state to control the local leaders while reproducing the clientelist system at the local level.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, local leaders had succeeded in acquiring significant political power, which had allowed them to control their local communities as well as the national centre (Mavrogordatos, 1998). In 1912, the government introduced a major local government reform in an attempt to diminish the power of the local leaders, known as the “rule of the mayors” and reduce their domineering influence over MPs. The local government reform abolished the *dimoi* in order to invigorate parliamentarism and to diminish the influence of the government’s political opponents who were dominant in the *dimoi*. This reform had political motives and it introduced a large number of small communes (*koinotites*) and municipalities (*dimoi*)[2]. The fragmentation to a plethora of small units created numerous economic and administrative problems, which weakened local government and hence the power of the local leaders (Hlepas, 1994; Makridimitris *et al.*, 2000).

Local government continued to decline suffering extreme fragmentation under a centralist and paternalistic state throughout the twentieth century. Indeed, ongoing emigration, falling birth rates, localist disputes and tight but unsuccessful central control contributed to an astonishing weakening of local government (Christofilopoulou, 1991; Hlepas, 2002)[3]. Although, the present constitution (1975/1986/2001, art. 102) has safeguarded a significant role for local government and its directly elected representatives (mayors for municipalities and presidents for communes and their councils) for managing local affairs, in practice local government has been unable to exercise successful administration of local affairs, increase the pace of economic and social development and escape the close control from the state (Hlepas, 1999). Despite these problems in local government, local political leaders, especially in *dimoi*, continued to remain politically powerful and to reproduce the partisan, clientelistic system reflecting the central government.

An important characteristic of the central-local government relationship that has significant implications for local political leaders concerns the close relationship between political parties and local government (Lyrintzis, 2000). The doctrine of non-political character of local elections, that was advocated after the civil war (1945-1949) never materialised and local elections were becoming increasingly politicised from the 1950s onwards. Nowadays the political parties officially announce the candidates they support for both municipal and prefectural governments (Hlepas, 2002). Party involvement in local politics has been an intrinsic part of local government and it reflects the clientelistic and paternalistic character of the central government. Since 1974, the development of mass political parties has increasingly subordinated local communities to mechanisms of influence and power controlled by the centre (Lyrintzis, 1984, 2000). Local political leadership, although it enjoys significant political power, is controlled through partisan relationships by the centre and it reproduces its partisan character, clientelistic and paternalistic practices and corruption at the local level.

The 1990s local government reforms introduced rapid changes in local government by establishing a second tier of local government at the prefectural level (1994) and by

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restructuring the first tier through a rigorous reduction from 5,775 communes and municipalities to 1,033 (1997). The consequences of these reforms for local political leadership are significant and they are expected to influence local-central relations, as well as affect the political power of local leaders and alter the balance of power between local leaders, MPs, and state representatives at regional level in favour of the first (mayors in municipalities and *nomarxes* in prefectures). However, close partisan relations between local administration and political parties continue to safeguard control by the centre. Indeed, the reforms have brought about a contradictory outcome. On the one hand, they seek to encourage economic development, better the provision of services and reduce clientelism and corruption in local politics (Hlepas, 2000). On the other hand, they aim to increase central state control over local communities through partisan relations and fiscal control, which is one of the main causes of clientelistic, patronage relations and corruption (Gkekakos, 2000; Lyrantzis, 2000; Mavrogordatos, 1998).

The relatively small size of most Greek *dimoi*[4] in combination with the absence of new public management (NPM) techniques in the Greek local government administrative system, have led to a minimum need for co-ordination and “joined-up” government. Unlike the British case, issues regarding resources management, NPM strategies and co-ordination/overlapping have only recently started entering into the Greek administrative agenda and local government (Michalopoulos, 2003). This has allowed more autonomy for the elected local leaders, since the absence of managers and managerial practices have, in practice, give to both mayors and *nomarxes* the sole power to formulate policies at the local and prefectural levels. However, this is changing, for two main reasons. The first is that NPM practices and techniques have started entering the Greek local government system, especially in the big cities and this will gradually increase the need for co-ordination and strategic allocation of resources (Makridimitris *et al.*, 2000). The second is that the introduction of different levels of local government and decentralised services has established a complex system in which there is an overlapping of competences, hence, creating problems of co-ordination and control which necessitate a more clear division of competence (Chryssanthakis, 2000) and more sophisticated managerial and administrative techniques (Michalopoulos, 2001).

The issue of governance has increasingly become an essential element of the Greek administrative system, especially after the 1990s local government reforms. These reforms have introduced a multi-level and multi-tiered system of local government. There is a two-tier system (communes and municipalities) at the primary level. The municipalities are sub-divided in accordance with the territorial boundaries of the abolished LGAs, as municipal departments. The second level of local government is categorised to simple and consolidated secondary level local government authorities (SLLGAs). The consolidated SLLGAs are separated into prefectural departments, which have the same territorial boundaries as the abolished prefectures and operate in an independent manner. The SLLGAs are further sub-divided into counties (*eparxeia*), especially in the island areas. The administrative and policy-making system becomes even more complicated if we add the two levels of decentralised state departments (prefectures and regions) as well as the central state. Moreover, the operation of the different forms of communal or municipal companies further complicates the system. As a result, a complex network of organisations and actors has been created, whose competences and responsibilities are overlapping and often confused while different



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levels of government have led to a great diffusion of political power (Spanou *et al.*, 1997).

This “new” system of governance has significant implications for local political leaders since it has created politically powerful local leaders at the municipal level (mayor) and the prefectural level (*nomarxis*) whose political power is similar to that of the local MPs (whose constituency is coterminous with the prefecture). The current administrative structure has created a politically overload system where the mayors and *nomarxes* enjoy great political power which is not, however, followed by a similar degree of control over economic and political planning (Gkekas, 2000; Kafetzis, 2003; Tatsos, 2003).

A significant contrast with the British case is that local political leaders in Greece do have firm support bases and a great degree of political power to formulate and implement their policies. Local leaders at both levels of local government are directly elected and enjoy significant political support and power (Hlepas, 2002). Indeed, their political power can be more influential in local communities than those of local MPs. However, local political leaders lack economic resources and fiscal independency, which leads to great dependency from the state and the maintenance of central control. In addition, dependency on political parties ensures the reproduction of the partisan, clientelistic system and secures central control over local government. In sum, the Greek case is characterised by a long tradition of politically powerful local leaders who, however, have no real powers over economic and political planning of the local communities because of their partisan dependency and tight central state control.

#### *Community governance and socio-economic regeneration*

In both countries, new institutions to tackle economic and social deprivation have been generated initially by the central government, so that again the initiative and funding have come at least partly from the top down. However, the subsequent development of the new agencies is much more a matter for local initiatives, to which the central governments have had to respond. These new organisations include community representatives and are to some degree independent from local authorities. The issues raised by previous studies of single and multi-functional local agencies can be applied here (Davis and Hall, 1996).

The rationale for creating special agencies includes:

- special regeneration agencies can concentrate on a limited range of aims related to economic redevelopment/regeneration;
- special regeneration agencies can more easily engage with a variety of partners than can traditional local authorities.
- special agencies can engage expertise that is not available within local government;
- special agencies can engage in entrepreneurial behaviour and projects which a local authority could not undertake without facing charges of waste, impropriety or illegality and which bureaucrats are ill-equipped to deal with;
- special agencies are more familiar with local conditions, problems and needs than the central government can hope to be; and
- special agencies are better equipped to allocate national and EU funds than either local authorities or the central government.

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However, if relations with local authorities are not co-operative, conflicts may arise which inhibit development. Also, who the community representatives are to be and how they are appointed if they not local authority members, raises issues of democratic legitimacy. Also, experience has demonstrated that it is not always easy to identify a “community” which relates to a single purpose agency.

Community governance and community leadership emphasise a shift from managing and administering services, budgets and staff within local authorities or other public organisations towards taking the lead in the new governance systems beyond their own organisations’ boundaries and working within networks and partnerships. The local authority no longer has sole responsibility to deliver services for its population and governing its constituents. It now has to take on the role as community champion or community leader to assist local people and diverse groups in deterring overall needs and developing relevant capacities. Local authorities have always been the responsible and accountable bodies acting on behalf of local communities, with the threat of political overthrow if plans did not have popular community approval or were outside of their mandated obligations. From a UK perspective, local authorities not only have to lead their communities, as defined in the white paper *Strong Local Leadership-Quality Public Services* (DETR, 1998, 2001) but also have responsibility under the Local Government Act 2000 for the overall social, economic and environmental wellbeing of their areas.

Such community leadership requires local authorities to:

- support grass root development of communities;
- mobilise effective partnerships with other public, private and voluntary organisations;
- understand the needs and interests of local communities in regional, European and national arenas; and
- give strategic direction on service development (Hartley, 1998).

For Southern (2003), public managers have a primary role in enabling communities to understand the causes of deprivation, and help them to develop capacities. In cyclical rather than linear processes, regeneration managers are urged to develop the skills of analysis, implementation and measuring and evaluating performance, as well as creating a continuous circle of identification of new opportunities and problems solving. In the era of outcome measures and target setting it is essential to have managers who can understand the regime and ensure that communities are centrally involved in shaping the evaluation and monitoring mechanisms. By involving stakeholders in the entire process from project identification through to developing measures of success, continuous learning and iteration are needed. Added to the skills of analysis, implementation and measurement Southern also recognises the very wide experience, expertise and portfolio of skills and competences needed to manage regeneration. These are general organisational skills of financial planning to support business cases, together with more specific skills in human resource management, strategic thinking, performance management, marketing, risk management, use of technology, as well as relationship management. These may not always be found among career local government officers – an issue central to similar developments in Greece.

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## Conclusions

These case studies illustrate the problems facing two centralised countries struggling with varying but limited success to cope with various public management issues raised by local devolution and decentralisation. In particular, they illustrate how central governments respond when local governments or agencies start behaving in ways that are unanticipated and perhaps inimical to the centre's intentions and policies.

Central government may not like the results when local people express their will and must decide whether to accept their verdict or recentralise control over local governments and agencies. The Blair government did not want Ken Livingstone to win the first London Mayoral election and the Labour Party suffered a series of embarrassing electoral defeats when mayors were elected in other communities. Hence, it responded by losing interest in the whole mayoral project. The Greek government seems unable to dislodge the clientelism and corruption that is endemic among mayors who enjoy local support. The upshot is that since local government autonomy is valued and has to be respected under the terms of the European convention on local self-government, central governments must learn self-denial and not interfere when the results are not to their liking. The English and Greek experiments with developing local self-government provide some reassurance and some causes for concern but above all, they demonstrate that in unitary states, ministers and civil servants at the centre find withdrawing from interference in local affairs a very hard exercise in self-denial. This is all the more important as community leaders are urged to regenerate their locales, improve the management of their local governments and set policies in motion to achieve key objectives.

## Notes

1. Quasi-non-government organisations are agencies established to administer a specific policy area, which are governed by boards of directors appointed by ministers. They became increasingly numerous under Mrs Thatcher's Administrations (1979-1990) and have remained numerous since then.
2. The reform introduced 2,727 communes and municipalities for a population of just 3.24 million. The number was gradually increased as new parts were gradually annexed to the Greek state and the population raised. By 1997 there were 5,825 communes and municipalities for a population of 10.5 millions.
3. More than 80 per cent of rural municipalities had less than 1,000 inhabitants, 60 per cent had less than 500, and they represented less than 20 per cent of the population (Hlepas, 2002, p. 1).
4. The size of most Greek *dimoi* is small by comparison to that in Britain. Greece, with a population of about 12 millions, has almost twice the number of local authorities than Britain, with a population of 58 millions, has.

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