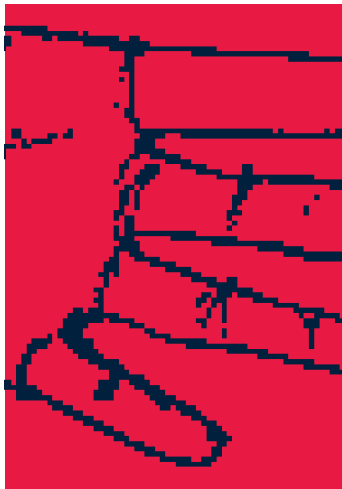




PARTIES, ELECTIONS AND REPRESENTATION: DOES DEVOLUTION ADD VALUE?



Run jointly by the ESRC Devolution Programme and the British Council in collaboration with
the European Centre for the Regions (EIPA-ECR)



PARTIES, ELECTIONS AND REPRESENTATION: DEVOLUTION

Devolution certainly adds a new dimension to the representation of citizens' views.

In May 2003 citizens in Scotland and Wales cast votes for the second time for their devolved institutions. The decisions voters made were clearly important. The Parliament in Scotland and the Assembly in Wales each have powers to make and shape laws across wide fields of domestic policy, including education, health, economic development and the environment.

Whether we know enough about why voters made decisions to support particular political parties in the May elections is less clear. Many commentators find it difficult to shake off the centralised mindset drummed into them by a centuries-long tradition of government focused on the Westminster Parliament in London.

Too many interpreted the May election results by comparing them with what happened in Wales and Scotland in the last Westminster election in 2001. To observers from countries like Spain or Germany that kind of comparison would seem very odd. The results of the next Catalan election will be judged

against the results of the last Catalan election, not the last Spanish election. Though regional elections can be influenced by the big issues in national politics, they are always at heart about the region itself: what policies the regional parliament should deliver, who is the best candidate for Prime Minister, who captured the regional imagination best in their election campaign, and so on.

This seminar is designed to open a more nuanced understanding of what devolved elections in the UK are for by looking at the interplay of regional and nationwide electoral processes in other EU member states with strong tiers of regional government. What can the UK learn about the operation of representative politics after devolution from other countries? Does devolution add value for citizens? Does it really provide additional ways of representing their concerns than they had in the old, centralised UK? How does the European dimension overarch these issues of regional and national representation?

Many factors shape the answers to those questions:

- a) how strong territorial identities are
- b) how far preferences for particular parties or particular kinds of policy differ from region to region
- c) how well political parties adapt their programmes to the needs of different regions
- d) how elected representatives at both regional and national levels understand their roles
- e) how the media in the regions communicate political issues to voters

All these issues will be explored in this seminar. The emerging patterns of representative politics in a devolved UK will be matched up against their equivalents in Spain, Austria, Germany and Italy. Where does the UK fit in with experience elsewhere? How – and why – are parties, elections and representation in post-devolution UK different to what we know of these other countries?

The seminar is the second in a joint series on 'Identity and Representation' run by the ESRC Devolution Programme and the British Council and, on this occasion, in collaboration with the European Centre for the Regions (ECR). It brings together experts and commentators from the UK with counterparts from Spain, Austria, Germany and Italy: academics, politicians, journalists and other opinion-formers. The aim is to promote exchange and cross-fertilisation of ideas and to build a more nuanced understanding of the added value that devolution and other forms of decentralised government bring to representative politics. It will draw on survey data on public opinion, look at how both nationwide and region-specific political parties compete for the regional vote, explore the 'division of labour' between elected representatives at different levels of government, and map out how effective print and broadcast media are in covering – and shaping – regional politics and society.

ON ADD VALUE?



Programme

WEDNESDAY 18 JUNE 2003

European Commission/Parliament Representation Building, Barcelona
(Paseo de Gracia/Passeig de Gracia, 90)

The seminar begins on the evening of 18 June at the European Commission/Parliament Representation Building in Barcelona where **participants will be welcomed** by **Professor Charlie Jeffery**, Director of the ESRC Research Programme on Devolution and Constitutional Change, **Wendy Stokes**, Science and Society Team Manager, British Council, Spain and **Alexander Heichlinger**, Lecturer and Project Leader, European Centre for the Regions, Barcelona. There will then be a **round table discussion** led by **Professor David McCrone** of the University of Edinburgh on how territorial identities compete and combine in multinational states like Spain and the UK.

THURSDAY 19 JUNE 2003

CaixaForum, Av. Marqués de Comillas, 6-8, Barcelona

The day begins with **opening speeches** at a public event at Caixaforum by **Rhodri Morgan**, First Minister of the National Assembly for Wales and **Jordi Pujol**, President of the Generalitat of Catalonia.

SESSION I VOTERS AND ELECTIONS

Following the opening speeches the public event will continue with Session One on Voters and Elections. The session will explore how far voters make different decisions for different reasons in regional and nationwide elections in the UK and Spain and how far regional and national election processes work to similar or entirely different rhythms.

The seminar reconvenes after lunch in non-public format at Caixaforum for Sessions Two and Three. These sessions look at the party politics of regional representation.

SESSION II PREFERENCES FOR PARTICULAR PARTIES, OR KINDS OF POLICY, FROM REGIONS TO REGIONS

Session Two explores how far and how well nationwide

parties – like Labour and the Conservatives in the UK, the PSOE and PP in Spain – build in region-specific issues to their programmes for regional, national and European elections.

SESSION III PARTIES WHICH CAMPAIGN IN A SINGLE REGION

Session Three shifts the focus onto parties which campaign in a single region. Looking at parties like Plaid Cymru in Wales, the CiU in Catalonia and the CSU in Bavaria it will explore how regionalist parties balance their work at different levels of government. Put simply, what use are national and European arenas to regionalist parties?

After a day of intense debate, participants will have the opportunity to relax on a bus tour of Barcelona, followed by a dinner in the Port area of the city.

FRIDAY 20 JUNE 2003

CaixaForum, Av. Marqués de Comillas, 6-8, Barcelona

SESSION IV ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

Session Four shifts the focus onto elected representatives. Do elected representatives from the same region, but sitting in their different regional and national parliaments, strike a 'division of labour' in representing voter concerns? Do voters themselves understand that division of labour? Do they care?

SESSION II REGIONAL ISSUES AND THE MEDIA

Session Five explores how regional issues are covered in the media. How well-developed are region-specific media? How well do nationwide media outlets, both print and broadcast, capture and reflected regional distinctiveness? What about European media? Is there adequate coverage throughout of the specific issues which engage regional electorates?

The seminar will conclude with a round-up of the key themes by the Conference Rapporteur, Magnus Linklater of the Times.



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ESRC DEVOLUTION PROGRAMME INFORMATION

The Devolution and Constitutional Change Research Programme was set up by the ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) in 2000. It was formed to explore the series of devolution reforms which have established new political institutions in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, London and the other English regions since 1997. Research projects have been selected to pull together a critical mass of researchers from across the social sciences to dissect the implications of devolution for the UK state, society and economy. Its work is focused around three themes, Nationalism and National Identity, Governance and Constitutional Matters and Economic and Social Policy. The Programme aims is to get to a fuller understanding of the devolution dynamic and its implications for the UK, and to feed the research into policy debates.

www.devolution.ac.uk

ESRC Devolution Programme information

University of Birmingham - Birmingham B 14 2TT



THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION (EIPA),

founded in 1981, is an independent, non-profit-making institute of public policy and administration with a European mission of public service, providing a variety of services to national administrations and institutions of the EU in support of their tasks and responsibilities related to European integration. The general aim of the Institute is to make a practical contribution to the European unification process by way of training, applied research, consultancy and publications.

In 1996, the Government of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia and EIPA reached agreement on the creation of an EIPA Antenna, the European Centre for the Regions (ECR) in Barcelona. The creation of this Antenna will ensure the devolved development of EIPA activities for the regional and local authorities of the Member States of the EU and those of other European states which have applied for accession to the European Union, as well as for other regional areas.

www.eipa.nl

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