



## Themed issue: Decentralization and the Big Society - A Critical Assessment

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Recently UK Prime Minister David Cameron launched what he called a ‘revolution’ in policy-making. The ‘Big Society’, he argued, comprised public sector reform, community empowerment, and philanthropic action. It would seek to make sure that there was indeed ‘such a thing as society’, but that it would not be coterminous with ‘the state’. It would herald a new era of ‘social responsibility’ and give power back to local neighbourhoods and citizens. According to the UK minister for decentralization, the Rt Hon Greg Clark MP, this overall approach should be underpinned by the ‘three methods’ namely the radical decentralization of knowledge/ information, budgets and decision-making and a model of innovation that built from particular successes rather than national strategies. Close reading of the coalition government’s publications might also include a fourth method comprising the importance of behavioural economics for policy making, and the role of ‘nudging’ to establish new social norms.

This themed issue of PMM sets out to describe the Big Society in particular and assess approaches to decentralization and the related search for increasing civic responsibility in international context in general. Rooted in emerging UK experience in local and national government and the voluntary and social enterprise sectors, it consequently welcomes British proposals for papers. However, it especially seeks to attract contributors reflecting on experience outside the UK where radical approaches have already been trialled, tested or are emerging.

Key topics may - but not exhaustively - include:

- Decentralization of central government departments.
- The principles, opportunities, techniques, and threats of targets, central goals and performance indicators in national state and civic governance.
- The role of local government and neighbourhoods.
- Information transparency, budgets and democratization.
- Mutualization and privatization of state services
- The rise and potential of social business, bottom of the economic pyramid, markets and civic entrepreneurship.
- Civic and social innovation ‘hubs’, ‘labs’ and policy reform.
- Behavioural economics, ‘nudging’, and the idea of ‘social growth’.
- Political management in decentralizing contexts.
- HR, strategy and recruitment for a ‘civic service’ in central government.

For instructions for authors please [click here](#).

Abstracts and proposals for papers should be returned to Francis Davis ([Francis.davis@youngfoundation.org.uk](mailto:Francis.davis@youngfoundation.org.uk)). Final papers will need to be completed by **30th July 2011**.