

# *London Government: Problems, Perspectives and Power*

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Devising a system of government for London has had to balance two conflicting objectives. First, providing the capital with a system of government that recognises, and can direct, the unique political, economic, social and spatial power that the city has. Secondly, limiting and constraining the political power of London and its governing arrangements, to ensure neither could undermine the power of the national government, based as it is, in London. The paper sets out a history of the development of London government, the current arrangements for governing London that were created by the 1999 Greater London Authority Act and examines the role of the London Assembly and Mayor, including the most recent set of 2012 London elections. It also considers whether the current London arrangements represent a new and more imaginative way for citizens to engage with the political processes, or whether any public participation in a representative democracy will face political problems.

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## 1. Introduction

The task of devising a system of government for London has had to balance two conflicting objectives. First, providing the capital with a system of government that recognises, and can direct, the unique political, economic, social and spatial power that the city has in England and Britain as a whole. Secondly, limiting and constraining the political power of London and its governing arrangements, to ensure neither could undermine the power of the national government, based as it is, in London. Added to this dynamic has been the need to recognise that London is extremely difficult to contain within geographical boundaries drawn for political and administrative convenience, as the city's economic and political power will spill over any artificially drawn borders (Travers, 2004). Moreover, there remains the vexed question of balancing the needs of governing London as a strategic and indeed, regional whole and governing the smaller, more defined communities within in it. The power and responsibilities of London-wide government need to be shared with smaller units of political authority grouped in such a way as to represent some common communities and interests – in this case the London Boroughs (Barlow, 1991).

The current governing arrangements for London were introduced by the 1999 Greater London Authority Act, which established a directly elected mayor for London and a Greater London Assembly of 25 elected members, which together constitute the Greater London Authority. These new representative institution – mayor and assembly – re-introduced city-wide government to London after the abolition of the for-runner Greater London Council in 1986 by the then Conservative Government under Margaret Thatcher. The fourteen-year absence of a democratically elected city-wide government was not the first period in London's history when it had been without city-wide democratically elected government. The absence of London-wide government from 1986 to 2000 also saw the borough council's increase in political strength and legitimacy as they were the only democratically elected bodies engaged in governance within London – a position they did not wish to see undermined by the reintroduction of city-wide government.

The current structure of London wide-government owes very little to the past structures and political processes by which London had been previ-

ously governed; it is a set of governing arrangements unique in English local government. Despite this unique set of arrangements, London government remains dominated by party politics and party considerations – albeit in a different shape and with a different dynamic to the rest of the country – and as a consequence citizen participation must take its place below party consideration and interests. London has its own problems and a powerful political, economic and social dynamic, which is unique to itself. It remains to be seen whether the various governing arrangements for London, put in place at different times, are equally unique when compared to the rest of English local government. One thing must be made clear – that where the chapter refers to London, and London governing arrangements, it is referring to what in reality is ‘Greater London’ that is a geographical and political area that extends beyond the city of London and beyond the core inner London areas to the wider suburban areas.

The next section of this paper sets out a history of the development of London government. The third section sets out the current arrangements for governing London that were created by the 1999 Greater London Authority Act and examines the role of the London Assembly and Mayor of London, including the most recent set of London elections held in 2012. The section explores the complex network of arrangements that constitutes London government. The final, concluding section considers whether the current London arrangements represent a new and more imaginative way for citizens to engage with the political processes, or whether any public participation in a representative democracy will face political problems.

## 2. The Government of London: Representative Democracy in City-wide Government

There is an old English song with the following words:

*Maybe it's because I'm a Londoner, that I love London so.  
Maybe it's because I'm a Londoner that I think of her wherever I go.  
I get a funny feeling inside of me just walking up and down.  
Maybe it's because I'm a Londoner that I love London Town.*

Note the use of the word town as opposed to city – something, of course, to do with the need for a song to scan and to rhyme, but how many citi-

zens of cities across the globe would take a song to their hearts that downgraded their beloved home – the nation's capital – to a mere provincial outpost. Yet, these words are not really about any sense of a community that is London and certainly not about how that city is governed. Rather, the words are the reflection of an individualistic and highly romantic attachment to one's home and importantly, it is about what the individual may think London is, or what it means to him or her (see, Willmott, Young, 1960). London has always had the problem of defining what it was, what it meant, where and what its communities were and, more importantly for the political *elite* – how it should be governed. It has also been unable to contain its growth and geographical spread as it extends further and further as a regional city.

The search for a governing institution for a large metropolitan area such as London is less a search for a way of representing the interests of discernable communities, and more a way of packaging notions of a perceived community within a set geographical boundaries and an overarching governing arrangement (Warren, 1966). By 1855, the population of London was three times that of New York and Berlin but, there was no formal democratic governing structure for London, beyond that for the square mile of the City of London and its corporation (Pimlott, Rao, 2002). Political representation for London, outside of Members of Parliament, was offered by a number of vestries or parish assemblies, covering geographical communities within London. Some were open vestries where all male ratepayers were entitled to attend; others were select (or closed) vestries where small numbers of the 'principle inhabitants' of the area were nominated to the vestry (often by Acts of Parliament) and who filled vacancies by nominating whomsoever they pleased (see Owen, 1982). However, these arrangements for government and a form of political representation and engagement – albeit a limited – were not city-wide, but rather covered the communities within London. There was no city-wide democratically elected government.

The 1835 Municipal Corporations Act introduced the prospect of democratically elected, representative local government developing across England. Twenty years later, the Metropolitan Board of Works was formed in 1855, which however, was not a democratically elected layer of metropolitan government for London; it was an indirectly appointed body by the City of London Corporation and the London vestries. Yet, it did have a London-wide remit to engage in construction and improvement works within the capital. But, at the same time it had to work alongside more locally based political institutions – the London vestries. What the for-

mation of such a London-wide body meant was the recognition that the problems of London required a co-ordinated, city-wide approach to their solution; an approach which could deal directly with the infrastructural problems that were stunting the city's economic growth. The fear of democratically elected London-wide government was however, also apparent in the formation of this indirectly elected body.

Giving London an elected government would provide it with the political muscle to supplement its economic muscle; it would simply make London far too powerful and indeed provide it with a governing platform from which it could contest the policies and decisions of the national government. Thus, there was over 30 years between the recognition of the need for a strategic London-wide governing body and the acceptance by the political *elite* that such a body should be one that was elected by the voters of London. When democratic government finally came to London in 1889, it was with the arrival of the London County Council (LCC), created at the same time that county government across England was placed on a democratic footing by the 1888 Local Government Act.

The LCC was a body which for 10 years governed London-wide unhindered by any lower tiers of democratically elected London bodies (Davis, 1988). Indeed, the LCC fiercely opposed the formation, by the Conservative government in 1899, of 28 elected borough councils across London to provide democratic local government to the areas that formed the metropolis (Pimlott, Rao, 2002). From its outset, the LCC was an intensely party political body although the national political parties often disguised themselves on the LCC, adopting the name *Progressives* in the case of the Liberal Party; and *Moderates* in the case of the Conservatives, becoming known, for LCC purposes, as the London Municipal Society (Young, 1975). Indeed, LCC elections were as much about national political issues and about national party politics and government as they were about the government of London (Young, Garside, 1982, Saint, 1989). The Liberals, in the guise of the Progressive Party, won six successive LCC elections from 1889, but were finally replaced by the Conservatives in 1907. It was not until some 27 years later that the Labour Party finally achieved a majority on the LCC and continued to control it until its abolition almost 30 years later (see, Jackson, 1965).

The continual growth of London and the complexity of the political, social, economic, and community dynamics that play themselves out within what constitutes its boundaries at any stage, mean that London and its effect is always reaching outwards beyond the boundaries of its governing

institution. The Conservative governments of the 1950s had explored local government reform and London, because of its tendency towards continual expansion, could no longer be excluded from this process (Young, Rao, 1997). In 1957, the Herbert commission began work on devising a new system of Government for London and by 1960 had produced a new set of arrangements for governing London, which would see an expansion of the political boundaries of the city and the abolition of 100 existing councils – including the LCC. The Herbert commission proposed the formation of a Council for Greater London and 52 London boroughs. A lengthy and politically charged debate ensued about the structure of London government based on these proposals. Nevertheless, it was a debate conducted largely amongst the political *elite* and by those councils affected by the proposals; it was not a debate with which, by-and-large, those citizens that were to be governed by the new arrangements, had much input (Rhodes, 1970).

On 1 April 1965, the new Greater London Council (GLC), and what had become 32 new London Boroughs, took up their responsibilities as a result of the 1963 London Government Act. The GLC was the London-wide strategic body with a planning function and responsibility for what were seen as London-wide services such as the fire brigade and ambulance services; it had almost no personal service functions, save a housing responsibility shared with the borough councils (Rhodes, 1972). The Greater London Council which took over from the LCC in 1965 was based on an extended geographical boundary compared to that of its predecessor. A boundary, which, whilst taking in the more conservative orientated London suburbs, also recognised the difficulties of confining London satisfactorily within any sort of spatial arrangements. The GLC struggled with its role, particularly set against the London Boroughs which jealously guarded their position and power. Indeed, whilst the GLC was the London-wide elected strategic authority, albeit a limited one, it was the Boroughs that had the most powers (Travers, 2004: 28–35).

Not only did the GLC reflect the party political battles that raged nationally and locally throughout the rest of England, it also structured itself very much as a traditional English council – with a committee system overseeing its range of functions. Yet, as Pimlott and Rao have noted (2002: 29) the failure of the GLC to become anything other than a traditional local authority was only partially its own fault; the Herbert Commission and the Government of the time, also failed to think of the GLC as a new form of sub-national government; one that could be far more rooted in

notions of public engagement and consultation than had hitherto been the case for London-wide arrangements.

As with the LCC, from its outset the GLC was an intensely party political body; its geographical boundaries were so drawn as to give the Conservative Party more of a fighting chance of winning control – something they had been unable to do with the LCC since the Labour Party took power from them in 1934. The voters in the GLC area, which covered a greatly enlarged territory compared to the LCC and encompassed many outer London suburban areas, showed themselves much more desirous of change in political control of the GLC than the voters of the old LCC area. Of the six elections held for the GLC, three were won by the Labour Party and three by the Conservative Party; the last election in 1981 saw Ken Livingstone become Labour leader and consequently, as a result of the narrow Labour victory, the leader of the GLC.

Livingstone's ascendancy to the leadership of the GLC and the new left, radical rainbow coalition politics his administration pursued, put the GLC on a direct collision course with the then Conservative Government of Margaret Thatcher. Indeed, his leftist policies earned him the nickname of 'Red Ken'; his administration was confrontational, politically driven and set out to use the governing body of the capital city as a political platform from which to attack the Conservative government. County Hall, which was the home of the GLC just across the river Thames from the Houses of Parliament, displayed across its frontage, on a huge banner, the up-to-date unemployment figures, as a way of highlighting the economic failure of the government and to antagonise its political opponents across the river. It was a political stance that was bound, indeed intended, to draw fire from the Government and when that fire came, it was partly aimed at the needs of the government of London and partly at removing a political opponent from a position of authority and power. As a member of the Conservative government, Norman, now Lord Tebbit, commented (Pimlott, Rao 2002: 43):

*The Labour Party is the party of division. In its present form it represents a threat to the democratic values and institutions on which our parliamentary system is based. The Greater London council is typical of this new, modern, divisive version of socialism. It must be defeated. So, we shall abolish the GLC.* (Tebbit, N. Speech to a meeting of London Conservatives 14 March. London)

The Conservative Government published a consultation paper entitled: *Streamlining the Cities* which set out the case in more restrained terms,

for the abolition of the GLC and the six metropolitan counties across England. Together, these metropolitan counties were seen by the Government as expensive, wasteful, and lacking in purpose. The Labour controlled metropolitan counties (large heavily urban based units of local government formed in 1974 as a result of the 1972 Local Government Act) often came into conflict with the lower-tier borough councils, as the metropolitan counties sought a role and influence for themselves.

The GLC, under Livingstone's leadership did not go quietly; it fought a high-profile, political campaign to save itself from abolition. It failed in that aim, but succeeded in creating the appearance at least, that London was speaking with one voice against abolition (which, politically it was not, although many Conservatives did come out against abolition). Moreover, there was a coalescence of the view that London was somehow under threat and the community needed to protect itself. Livingstone and the GLC did manage to galvanise a campaign against abolition that bound, at least on the surface, Londoners together as a community. Ironically, this was something that throughout its life the GLC as a governing body had singularly failed to do, as had its predecessor, the LCC.

Despite a spirited campaign, in 1986, the Greater London Council was abolished on its 21<sup>st</sup> birthday; its forerunner, London County Council, was 76 years old when it was put to rest by central government.

As in any unitary state with a supreme parliament and no written constitution or constitutional court – the Government was bound to get its way. The GLC and six metropolitan counties outside London were abolished in 1986. The abolition resulted in the transference of the GLC responsibilities to the London Borough councils and to an array of other bodies created for the purpose of taking over specific functions and roles from the GLC. However, London was left without a strategic layer of governance – something it had not lacked, in one form or another, since 1855 with the Metropolitan Board of Works. London also lacked a city-wide democratically elected government and was left with a complex mass of agencies – elected boroughs, unelected quangos and private organisations – competing, conflicting and co-operating, in order to provide the capital with some semblance of governance, albeit one that lacked a co-ordinated London-wide perspective. While London had so far demonstrated little that was unique about the way in which either the London-wide governing bodies, or sub-London representative bodies, had encouraged or facilitated citizen participation compared to the rest of the country, from 1986 Londoners could not even participate in choosing who would govern their city.

### 3. London Government: A New System but a Familiar Face

It is perhaps no surprise that doing something about London was higher on the Blair Government's modernisation agenda than the rest of local government across England. Nevertheless, there are parallels in the reform of London government and the rest of the country by the Blair government, namely: the separation of executive functions into a distinct political entity to be held to account by those councillors outside the executive. In London, unlike the rest of the country, mayoral accountability was to be assured by a separate organisation altogether: the London Assembly; the mayor and assembly together forming the Greater London Authority. The authority was then to work in partnership with a range of external agencies to provide the capital with good governance; a visible political leadership; a political decision-making arrangement that was transparent, inclusive and responsive; and clear lines of political accountability.

The Government showcased its proposal for London Government in the Green Paper: *New Leadership for London* and the White Paper: *A Mayor and Assembly for London* (detr, 1998c and d).<sup>1</sup> Whilst the themes of the wider modernisation agenda are reflected in these documents, and in the 1999 Greater London Authority Act, which emerged from them, London was deemed by the government to be a special case that required a different type of elected mayor to that which would become available to the rest of the country. Moreover, the reform of London governance was not an 'exercise in bringing back the Greater London Council or tinkering with existing local government structures'. Rather it was about the creation of a 'new model of government, appropriate to a great capital city in the new millennium' (detr, 1998 (c) para 1.09).

Thus, the new governance of London would look radically different to the rest of English local government, and, have a fundamentally different configuration of political relationships to those existing anywhere else. The GLA was not to be a traditional service providing local authority as the GLC, which it replaced, had been. Rather, it was to sit within a network of overlapping responsibilities and influence shared with a number of other statutory and non-statutory bodies, with GLA members ma-

<sup>1</sup> Detr, *New leadership for London: The Government's Proposals for a Greater London Authority*, 1998, (c), detr, *A Mayor and Assembly for London*, 1998 (d).

king up part of the membership of, and sometimes taking the chairs of, a range of organisations concerned with the governance of London. The GLA's relationships with the voluntary sector, central government, or the London Borough councils, could vary according to the task and partner in hand (Travers, 2004).

What the approach to London government taken by the Blair administration did was to recognise key issues about the fundamental nature of London: its sheer size made traditional concepts of local government inappropriate; its economic power and importance to the rest of the country demanded a suitable governing system; and, that in reality London was region. Indeed, the population of Scotland is around 5 million; the population of Wales around 3 million; and the population of London is around 8 million. Thus, London should be governed by arrangements that reflect its unique characteristics within the overall governing framework of England. Indeed, it needed a system that reflected – although was not the same as the powers devolved to the British regions of Scotland and Wales – a process from which England was excluded. Unlike Scotland and Wales, England has no representative chamber or government of its own – London however, does have such a powerful governing institution.

Nevertheless, before the London mayoralty and assembly proposed by the Blair government could become a reality – a referendum was required. Londoners gave consent to the new mayoralty on 7 May 1998 when a majority 'Yes' vote was received in the referendum on a turnout of only 34 per cent. Yet, with 1,230,715 'yes' votes recorded (72%) and 478,413 'No' (28%) and with every London Borough providing a majority 'yes' vote, the government had received its first public endorsement for executive directly elected mayoral government in England.

The first election for the mayor of London took place in May 2000, under the supplementary vote system, where voters mark with a cross their first and second preference candidates. Ken Livingstone, the last Labour leader of the GLC, was elected as mayor having stood as an Independent candidate. Livingstone had failed to be selected as the official Labour candidate and subsequently on announcing his intention to stand as an Independent; he was expelled from the Labour Party.

Livingstone received a total (after counting second preferences) of 776,427; his nearest rival, the Conservative candidate Steven Norris, polled a total of 564,137 votes; the official Labour Party candidate came third in the first round of vote counting and was consequently eliminated from the run-off second count. Red Ken was back in charge of London and his

first words in his victory speech on election night were: 'As I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted 14 years ago', referring of course, to the abolition of the GLC (Guardian 5<sup>th</sup> May 2000).

After a 14-year gap, Livingstone (the former leader of the last GLC) was now back in charge of London albeit as an Independent. Livingstone was elected for a second term of office as London Mayor in May 2004 and this time was the official Labour candidate. He received a total of 828,380 votes, against Norris' 667,178 votes.

Alongside the elected Mayor of London, is the new London Assembly which has 25 members, elected by the additional member system. There are 14 members representing geographical constituency areas and an additional 11 members, drawn from the results of a London-wide list system of voting; these 11 members are elected to seats allocated to ensure that the overall distribution of seats reflects the proportion of votes each party, and independent list, receives. A new type of representative assembly in England clearly required a new type of voting system; rather than providing a government, albeit a local one, the system was required to produce a representative chamber, and this it did. The first elections to the London Assembly held in 2000 produced the following seat distribution: Conservative nine; Labour nine, Liberal Democrats four; and, the Green Party three.

The second set of Assembly elections held in 2004 produced an even more intriguing and politically representative set of seat distribution: Conservative Party nine; Labour seven; Liberal Democrats five; Greens two; and, the UK Independence Party, two. The second mayoral elections held in 2004 saw Livingstone (then the official labour candidate) again defeat the Conservative Norris, after the second round of counting. In the third election in 2008, Livingstone again stood (for potentially his third term of office) but this time was faced by the Conservative challenger, Boris Johnson, who stood down as a Member of Parliament. Johnson defeated Livingstone by 1,168,738 votes to 1,028,966 on the second count.

In the May 2012 elections for Mayor of London, Johnson and Livingstone faced each other once again as well as five other candidates and this time, just before the London Olympics. The result was as follows: Boris Johnson, Conservative, 971,931 first preference votes; Ken Livingstone, Labour, 889,918 first preference votes. The final tally of votes after second preferences were counted was: Boris Johnson, Conservative, 1,054,811 votes; Ken Livingstone, Labour, 992,273 votes. Boris Johnson is now serving his second term as mayor of London.

The Greater London Authority – mayor and assembly – is a central part of a still complex and disintegrated approach to the government of the capital. It has a directly elected mayoral system that whilst strong in relation to the London Assembly, is weak in relation to the outside world and of course, weak in relation to central government. The London Mayor is an elected figurehead for London who, outside of the GLA, wields influence not power; a subtlety not lost on those in central government who designed the model.

A key power of the London Mayor is that of *appointment* to a range of other offices and bodies, a power which reflects the intention that the GLA would not be a service provider in the traditional local authority sense. Rather, the activities for which it is responsible and oversees would be provided by a range of bodies headed by *boards* which would be wholly or partly appointed by the Mayor (detr, 1997). Travers has summarised the appointment powers of the Mayor of London and shown that the membership of, and the chairs of Transport for London and the London Development Agency are mayoral patronage, as too are the appointments of some members of the Metropolitan Police Authority, which then goes on to appoint its own chair. The Mayor also appoints members of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority and its chair, with further nominations made by the London Boroughs (Travers, 2004: 126-130, table 5.1, p. 128).

The prime role of the London Assembly is to scrutinise the Mayor, but some members found this too restrictive and instead see themselves as working on policy development and as a democratic forum for debating London-wide issues (Travers, 2004: 113). Indeed, the Assembly has the potential to be a major conduit for public engagement and participation in the governance of the city and it would be fair to say that it has worked hard in this direction. The Assembly has run a number of investigations and scrutiny commissions into issues affecting London and through this deliberative and investigative process has taken evidence from a wide range of participants – including the ordinary London citizen. Indeed, the Assembly formed a special committee to review and report with recommendations on lessons to be learned from the response by city-wide agencies to the Islamic terrorist attack in London on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2005. The committee focused on the following:

- How information, advice and support was communicated to Londoners;
- How business continuity arrangements worked in practice;

- The role of broadcasting services in communication; and,
- The use of information and communication technology to aid the response process.

Senior representatives of several organisations (Transport for London, Metropolitan Police Service, British Transport Police, City of London Police, London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority, London Ambulance Service) were invited to attend to give evidence. More recently the Assembly have conducted inquiries into the running of the London Olympic and Paralympic games, empty shops and town centre regeneration across London, food poverty, transparency at city-hall, policing and crime, to name but a few.

As a politically representative body, the Assembly conducts a wide range of consultative activities designed to ascertain the views of Londoners; citizens are able, on a regular basis, to attend assembly meetings and to ask questions of not only Assembly members but also the Mayor. The Mayor of London also conducts his own consultative activities designed to solicit Londoners' views and the views of business, voluntary and community groups and a range of interest and other groups. Together the Mayor and Assembly provide Londoners with a direct channel into the governance of the city, but, as with all politicians, they are not bound to respond positively, or at all, to the messages they receive and will filter out views and opinions they find politically unacceptable. Here, the Greater London Authority is just like any other politically representative institution.

The Greater London Authority (Mayor and Assembly) oversees the activities of a range of bodies, including the London Boroughs and together the Mayor and Assembly speak to and for London with an authoritative and electorally legitimised voice. As a result of being freed from much of the direct service provision responsibilities that clutter the politics of other English councils, the GLA is able to concentrate on its politically representative role and act in such a way as to be a force for political engagement amongst London citizens. Equally as important is the Assembly's role in holding the Mayor of London to account and in questioning, challenging and seeking explanation and justification from the Mayor for his policies, decisions and actions. Yet, what we find when we look at the GLA is certainly a plethora of consultative activities and events designed to stimulate and involve Londoners in the governance of their city and an enthusiasm amongst the Mayor and Assembly members for such a process. However, we also find little, if anything, that is truly unique when set against the public consultation and engagement undertaken by other English councils; we just find more of it.

The Labour government, which created the Greater London Authority, saw a 'modern' English council as one which '*involves and responds to local people and local interests*' and has a '*clear and effective political leadership to catch and retain local people's interests*'. Indeed, in a modern council '*public participation in debate and decision-making is valued with strategies in place to inform and engage local opinion*' (detr, 1998).<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the GLA is expected by the Government to '*consult widely and work closely with London organisations...in a new inclusive style of politics*'. Further, that '*there will be open hearings where evidence will be taken, question times in which the GLA can respond to views put to them and where strategies and policies can be debated*' (detr, 1998c, para 1.18).<sup>3</sup>

The GLA, as a new, modern form of governance for London, has taken its challenges seriously. Particularly, the Mayor of London is an authoritative political figure holding a powerful political office with considerable informal and formal political influence within London and across a wide range of public and private bodies. Yet, as with all its predecessor bodies, the attempts at finding a solution to the problems of governing London and providing it with democratically accountable political institutions and the longevity of those institutions, rests not with London or its citizens, but with central government. If a future government decides to reform London government yet again, it will do so and replace it with a brand new system, a version of a past system, or with nothing at all. We do not know if any future mayor of London, will one day say 'as I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted...'.<sup>3</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

London has always posed particular problems for how the British unitary state would deal with the government of the most powerful city in the country, if not for some time, one of the most powerful cities, globally. The economic, political and cultural power and sheer size of the city meant it could pose problems even for central government and particularly if it

<sup>2</sup> *Modern Local Government: In Touch with the People*, detr, 1998, paras 1.1 and 1.2

<sup>3</sup> *A Mayor and Assembly for London* Web link: Guardian 5th May 2000, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2000/may/05/londonmayor.london6>. Web link: Evening Standard 12th April 2012, <http://www.standard.co.uk/news/mayor/give-london-assembly-more-power-or-get-rid-of-it-says-tory-andrewboff-7681376.html>

had its own elected government. The Victorians dealt with this by first of all avoiding any directly elected governing body for London. The 1855 Metropolis Local Management Act created the Metropolitan Board of Works for London, indirectly elected from parish and boards in London. Its job was to deal with the infrastructural development of London and not to act so much as a governing body. It was not until the 1888 Local Government Act that the city was given its own elected council: The London County Council, which came into being as a London-wide entity in 1889. The initials L.C.C. can still be found today on buildings and other structures across the centre of London.

When the LCC no longer suited central government's view of how it wanted London to be governed, or indeed of what constituted London as a geographical, social, economic and political entity and when government came to the conclusion that the LCC could no longer do the job that was needed – it was abolished and replaced with the much larger Greater London Council. A similar fate befell the much shorter lived GLC and it too was abolished when its activities no longer matched what central government believed was required by and for the governing of London and the provision of public services to the capital. It too was abolished – but this time central government did not introduce a democratically elected replacement, but passed down the functions of the GLC to the London Boroughs.

The period 1986–2000 saw London revert to its pre-democratic days and was the only capital city in Western Europe without its own elected government. Again, it was central government that re-cast how London would be governed by the formation of the Greater London Authority – the elected Mayor and separately elected Assembly – which was created as a unique system of sub-national democracy and representation within England.

The GLA does not have the same direct service provision responsibilities as all other English local government units. As a consequence, it can focus on its role as a politically representative institution to a far greater degree than other English councils, distracted from politics, democracy and representation as they and their councillors often are, by the need to manage, often in some considerable detail, the running of public services. The GLA is freed from much of that responsibility, but the Mayor and Assembly members do operate through a number of *boards* which run the services London requires. As such, they can become just as bound to the detail of these services (unless very careful) as opposed to the policy and strategy London requires, as councillors on other English authorities can with the services for which their councils are responsible.

The London Mayor and Assembly, having been first elected in 2000, have had 12 years to clarify their new political roles and to develop strategies for the improvement of London and shape ways for the citizens of London to participate in the governance of their city. Although the GLA shares responsibility for London government with the 32 London Boroughs, the latter are shaped and structured as traditional English councils. They also govern discrete areas of London and do not, nor should they, take a London-wide perspective in what they do – that is why this chapter has focussed on London wide government because it provides far greater opportunities for experimentation with new forms of governing arrangements that must take on not only the shape and context of local government but also must reflect the regional nature of London and its national and international importance.

At the moment, the way in which London is governed appears to be settled. Yet, only a year ago a Conservative member of the Assembly called for it to be given more powers or to be abolished altogether (Evening Standard 12<sup>th</sup> April 2012). In other words, if this part of the governing arrangements for London (not the Mayor's Office) could not be strengthened and reformed and given real powers over the Mayor and London, then it had no future. Such a stark call, of course, could disguise a desire to undermine the Mayor's Office by creating a more powerful, collective decision-making body: the Assembly.

Whatever the future holds for London-wide government, whatever shape, powers, functions and role that body has and whatever geographical scale it covers, one thing is certain: as with every other sub-national body in England, it will be central government that decides the matter.

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## LONDON GOVERNMENT: PROBLEMS, PERSPECTIVES AND POWER

### *Summary*

*Devising a system of government for London has had to balance two conflicting objectives. First, providing the capital with a system of government that recognises, and can direct, the unique political, economic, social and spatial power that the city has. Secondly, limiting and constraining the political power of London and its governing arrangements, to ensure neither could undermine the power of the national government, based as it is, in London. The paper sets out a history of the development of London government, the current arrangements for governing London that were created by the 1999 Greater London Authority Act and examines the role of the London Assembly and Mayor, including the most recent set of 2012 London elections. It also considers whether the current London arrangements represent a new and more imaginative way for citizens to engage with the political processes, or whether any public participation in a representative democracy will face political problems.*

*Key words: local government, London, Greater London Authority, metropolitan area*

## GRAD LONDON: PROBLEMI, PERSPEKTIVE I OVLAŠTI

### Sažetak

*Kreiranje sustava vlasti u Londonu trebalo je pomiriti dva suprotstavljena cilja. Prvo, trebalo je osigurati sustav lokalne vlasti koji priznaje i sposoban je usmjeriti jedinstvenu političku, ekonomsku, društvenu i prostornu snagu koju glavni grad ima. Drugo, trebalo je ograničiti i zauzdati političku snagu Londona i njegovih struktura vlasti, kako bi se osiguralo da ne podrivaju snagu i ovlašt središnje vlade smještene u Londonu. Analizira se razvoj lokalne samouprave u Londonu, uređenje londonske gradske samouprave po Zakonu o tijelima vlasti u Velikom Londonu 1999. (Greater London Authority Act). Istražuje se uloga skupštine i gradonačelnika Londona, uključujući i posljednje izbore održane 2012. U radu se razmatra je li sadašnji način upravljanja Londonom dovoljno nov i inovativan da može uključiti njegove građane u političke procese ili će sudjelovanje javnosti u predstavničkoj demokraciji naići na značajne političke probleme.*

*Ključne riječi: lokalna samouprava - London, Samouprava Velikog Londona, metropolitansko područje*