

Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between the Conservative Party and the institution of local government in England between 1990 and 1997. The thesis is based on the premise that the moment when John Major became Prime Minister marked a qualitative turning point in the relationship and that the changes implemented in funding, organization, functions and powers had taken on a constitutional significance. The aim is to verify whether these reforms were part of a more deliberate Conservative strategy. In terms of methodology, this paper is an interpretative case study that aims to understand the topic in its complexity. The research concludes that the transformation of local government that had been implemented by Major's governments cannot be understood as a coherent set of measures, even though the environment in which the local government works had changed radically in the 1990s. The paper analyses the key determinants that influenced the reform process and reaches a finding that New Right, traditional, pragmatic and corporatist approaches are apparent in the then-Conservative policies. Unlike other thematic publications, this paper does not analyse the impact of these changes *per se*, but examines their dynamics from the perspective of the Conservative Party.