

Ireland: does the centre still hold?

Traditionally classified as a unitary state, over the past twenty years, Ireland's governance system has undergone many changes, prompted by internal and external catalysts. This article examines the nature and consequences of some of those changes, particularly their impact on Ireland's intergovernmental structures and interaction. It assesses the degree to which that classification is still valid. Examples are drawn from a range of innovative initiatives which have impacted on governance structures and processes. To illustrate the changes a range of projects has been selected. They include country-wide river basin planning initiative; a transition project aimed at achieving a low-carbon, sustainable society in the Dingle region by 2030 and a range of SMART initiatives, particularly Limerick's SMART city initiative. Despite the emergence of various modified governance practices, central government remains predominant, and sub-national autonomy remains limited. Nonetheless, the prevailing environment of innovation and adaptive governance is contributing positively to institutional development and policy outcomes.

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