The Fragmentation of the Nation State? Regional Development, Distinctiveness, and the Growth of Nationalism in Cornish Politics.

Abstract

Stateless nations across the EU have become increasingly vocal and confident in asserting a desire for autonomy, devolved governance, and independence. Meanwhile, identity politics has become a key factor of contemporary European regional development, with utility as a social, economic and governance tool. Culture has become a resource for regional branding to attract inward investment and differentiate in terms of competitiveness. The paper considers whether the utility of identity to regional development might provide an explanation for the growing confidence of EU stateless nations. We use the case study of Cornwall to explore the correlation, arguing that economic regionalism has provided a space for the articulation of national identities.

Introduction

Across the European Union, regions are asserting desire to ether secede from the nation states of which they are a part, or making strong calls for more decision making autonomy. Sometimes, as in the case of Scotland, this is based on a long history as a 'nation' in their own right, before becoming subsumed into the nation state of which they now form a part. Alternatively as in the case of Sardinia, calls for autonomy are grounded in claims about a shared present. We might characterise this as a movement of what Guibernau (1999) calls 'nations without States'. Leaving Scotland and its independence referendum aside, this includes Catalunya (Miley 2013) and the Basque Country (Gomez-Forbes and Cabeza Perez 2013) questioning their relationship with Spain; Brittany with France (Gemie 2005), and Friesland with Belgium (Boonen and Hooghe 2014). Within the first few months of 2014, 4000 people demonstrated in Brussels to call for self-determination (European Free Alliance EFA 2014), and only a few days earlier Hungarian political parties in Transylvania drew up proposals for autonomy for Szeklerland (Nationalia 2014). Pro-independence parties in

Sardinia doubled their Parliamentary vote share to 18% in elections held in February (Nationalia 2014b), and in an unofficial referendum in March, 2.1 million residents of Venice, (out of an electorate of 3.7 million) voted to restore an independent Venetian republic (Daily Telegraph 2014). This raises questions regarding the relationship between European states and their constituent regions, including possible explanations for what appears to be a pan-European national fragmentation.

Whilst scholars have examined individual instances of internal nationalisms and regionalist movements, explored the primacy of a European identity over a national one (Glencross 2011; Teperoglou and Tsatsanis 2011), and considered the hopes that stateless nations have had of EU support (Hepburn and Elias 2011), the ongoing strength of claims by nations without states is under theorised as a phenomenon in itself. Traditional explanations might draw on Gellner (2006) to claim that that this phenomenon is linked to the inability of the contemporary European state to adequately represent its regions, which lose attachment to State identity, falling back on invented or actual traditions (see Hobsbawm 1992) to reassert a sense of nationhood. This is certainly the kind of framework within which devolution movements within the UK in the late 20th century were presented, with scholars such as Nairn (1981), Hobsbawm (1992) and Hechter (1975) claiming that nationalisms in peripheries were forms of emancipatory movements. Hechter even goes as far as to call such nations 'internal colonies', subject to exploitation by the centre. Leaving aside Connor's (1994) point that some such nationalisms (ie, Catalunya) are in regions that are richer than the states within which they are situated, the contemporary European Union context has technically given the regions much greater attention than might have happened previously (Hepburn and Elias 2011). Indeed, regional governance is embedded within EU structures as a 'Europe of the Regions' to counter what otherwise may be perceived to be distant and centralised European centres of power (Keating 2000); providing a more democratised and federal relationship

between regions and Brussels (Keating 2008; Tomaney and Pike, 2006). This may go some way towards mitigating the alienation often characterised as integral to national fragmentation. However, regions and regionalism requires some further definition.

The 'region' is a complex and contested entity, which Jones and Macleod (2004) describe as being derived from both top-down and bottom-up movements. 'Regional Spaces' refers to the top-down forces of regionalism, whereby economic and political governance structures create rationally bounded territorial units. The old Regional tier of governance in the UK is an example of this. 'Spaces of Regionalism' (Jones and Macleod, 2004) refer to popular grassroots regional movements, based around territorial units independent of governance structures. Willett and Giovannini (2014) discuss the difficulties that governance can have in mobilising local inhabitants behind 'regional spaces', as opposed to the popular movements of 'spaces of regionalism'. In practical terms, this means that regions are not neat, objective categories, but are multi-faceted constructions developed from a range of cultural, political, and economic processes. Official or imagined regions might adhere to the borders of national identities (such as Scotland, or Wales), or alternatively as in the case of Cornwall, nations might be subsumed in within a larger regional body (Willett and Giovannini, 2014).

There are further factors behind the growing strength of calls for independence or greater autonomy, and a link this comes from the connections that Bond, McCrone and Brown (2003) make with regards to the importance of Scottish national identity to economic development. Indeed, John Agnew in his 2001 article *Regions in Revolt*, asserts the importance of political economy in regional differentiation, arguing that this became overlooked as devolutionist and separatist movements are usually characterised in terms of ethnicity. This is an interesting claim given that more usually it is argued that the contemporary globalised neoliberal economy flattens out the differences within states (and

Gellner's work which ties together nation, state, industrialisation and modernity is part of this), and 'homogenises' differences *between* nations (see also Ariely, 2012). The globalised consumption of identities means that national differences become fuzzy, rather than sharp. At the same time, identities become increasingly individuated, detached from territorial affinities, and based around patterns of consumption (Bauman 2011; Giddens 1991). In Bauman's concept of liquid modernity, culture no longer satisfies needs, but is charged with the generation of new needs, to seduce the consumer. However the threats to the nation state as a concept seems to be coming not from global capital, as imagined at the turn of the 21st century (see Stuart 2001), but from secessionist and devolutionist movements from *within* the state.

Indeed, one of the complex processes through which regions have come to play a more significant role is within the global marketplace, through the homogenisation/globalisation nexus discussed above. Here, the mobility of goods and capital within neoliberal economies requires the removal of trade barriers held by nation states (Dicken, 2007). In a challenge to traditional Westphalian models of statehood, this encourages supra-national entities such as the Single Market of the European Union, although it also applies to the global marketplace. In this context, regions have become increasingly autonomous and powerful as economic units, as national borders have decreased in their importance (Keating, 2008; Keating, 2000). This means that there is an interesting double-movement at work. Whilst the contemporary global economy might be decreasing the influence and identity of the *nation state*, it might also be providing the space for increasing *regional* individuation.

This brings us back again to Agnew's point regarding political economy, which warrants further examination regarding what is occurring in Europe. As alluded to by Bond, McCrone and Brown (2003), regional governance is not just about democratising political engagement, but also plays a role in the governance of economic development. A key site of this is

'competitive regions' (Herrschel 2010) through which regions seek to differentiate themselves in the global marketplace (See also Keating 2008). Keating (2000) calls this the 'new regionalism', mirroring a global economic shift from a Fordist to a Post-Fordist economic arrangement, signalling the demise of large scale production to an increasingly specialised but smaller scale model with much more flexibility. Echoing Agnew, Regionalism here is primarily a story of economic development, far removed from ideas of ethnic emancipation (see also Willett 2013). This certainly might provide an explanation for the growing assertiveness of regions, and their increasing centrality in European structures. Moreover it raises the possibility of an interplay between the current strength of regionalist movements in Europe, and contemporary regional economic development. In the next part of this paper we explore how regional identity is interwoven into development strategies and theory, before moving to a case study of Cornwall as an empirical example to consider a possible link between regionalism, economic development and growing regional assertiveness.

In a reversal of the standardisation project of the liberal state (see Gellner 2006), regional identity has widely become seen as a good in and of itself as a functional tool for improving the economy. For example, Pike, Rodriguez-Pose and Tomaney (2006) provide us with seven approaches to regional development, from which identity emerges as a cross-cutting theme. In truth, these approaches blend into and borrow from each other, so it can be tricky to separate the difference between the 'innovative milieux' of innovation, knowledge and learning, from the 'clustering' of extended neo-classical models, or the 'social capital' of institutionalism and social economy from 'quality of life' in sustainable development. For neo-classicists, it provides a marketable asset which can be used to sell regional products, cluster 'knowledge' around traditions of expertise (Hilpert, 2006), configure regional innovation systems (Asheim 2012), and attract inward investment for business. This

enhances regional competitiveness in the national, supranational, and international economic environments (Kitson et al. 2004; Cooke 2002).

This raises the question about whether identity is a good in and of itself, or whether it is good for its utility.   At the beginning of this debate, identity, culture, and heritage are a good in and of themselves. However, the long term survival of identities, traditions, and cultural practices was under threat because they had become considered as hopelessly old fashioned, over-romanticised with no part in the technological landscape of the 21st century (Bruckmeier and Tovey 2008). The solution to this problem was to emphasise the economic utility of cultural distinctiveness which could be preserved through its commodification for a tourist/heritage market, and through the sale of 'regional' goods (Bessiere 1998). Regional cultural distinctiveness could be sustained through an emphasis on its economic utility. Consequently, identity in this discourse shifted from being a good in and of itself, to something whose preservation and conservation was contingent on its economic function.

The function of identity to regional economies has become particularly well developed in the literature and policy which derives from Richard Florida's (2002) 'creative industries'. Florida claimed that dynamic and innovative individuals are attracted to places within which they can exercise their creativity socially and experience a great quality of life. This creates the kind of lifestyle where an individual can maximise their liberal freedoms, and which is later translated into economic creativity and innovation. Florida claimed that this process fostered the conceptual freedom and innovative milieu which allowed Silicon Valley to flourish. In practical regional policy terms, this is interpreted as encouraging creative and cultural industries in order to attract dynamic entrepreneurs who can contribute to local economies (Herslund 2012; Halfacree 2012). This requires regional brand identities to draw on specific cultural and historic strengths in order to market the area (Giles et al. 2013; Lee et

al. 2005), plugging in to cultural heritage, innovative milieu and clustering (Aula and Haarmakorpi 2008), and neo-endogenous growth.

So far, identity is imagined as a passive object, created and fostered either for consumption or to initiate a billiard ball type mechanical chain of events. Robert Putnam's (2000) Social Capital changes this, offering a concept through which identity becomes operationalised and active. Strong local identities both foster and draw on well-developed networks of interactions between individuals, businesses and other organisations (Lee et al. 2005). From a broader economic perspective, the networks developed and interactions that this enables facilitate information sharing and the development of mutually supportive relationships crucial for a well-functioning business environment (Waters and Lawton Smith 2008; Atterton 2007). This enables the mobilisation of indigenous potential (Pike et al. 2006) and enhances human capital, allowing individuals to maximise their personal and economic potential (Shortall 2004). Participation in traditional cultural and historic events are one way of developing social capital (Baker and Brown 2008), emphasising the economic function and utility of identity, and illustrating Bond, McCrone and Brown's (2003) argument about the importance of Scottish identity to economic development.

Clearly, identity has utility as a social, economic, and even governance tool, encouraging regions to celebrate their identities and the things that make them different and distinctive from other spaces, in order to compete better in the European and global economy (Herrschel, 2010; Keating, 2008; Willett, 2013). In practice there can be a risk of identikit regional policies, but it offers the space for regions to assert their identities, and technically consider more locally based forms of governance. This calls for a practical examination of the interplay between newly assertive regions and the identity politics of contemporary economic development. For this we turn to the case study of Cornwall to look at some of the potential

effects of using identity as a development tool, asking if there may be a link between identity-based regional development and the growth in nationalist movements.

Method

For the case study we wanted to trace the significance of identity in popular discourse over a period of time, and for this we needed a region that was a nationalist latecomer. It would be difficult to separate out the more regular exemplars of Scotland and Wales in the UK; or Catalunya or the Basque region with Spain; from the changing role of the regions articulated in the new regionalism. For example, Bond et al (2003) make it clear that Scotland, nationalism, and economy are deeply intertwined. However the broader visibility Scottish nationalism easily predates the new regionalism (see also Hobsbawm 1992; Nairn 1981). Cornwall, in the far South West of the UK has been less successful at making its calls for devolution heard beyond its borders, was previously considered too small to be a governance region in its own right (Willett and Giovannini, 2014; Jones and Macleod, 2004) and so has arrived later in the popular imagination. This makes it a clearer case study to explore the changing nature of regionalism.

The primary research on which the following draws comes from a documentary analysis. The reason for this is that we wanted to understand the development of Cornish identity in popular discourse over a period of time. In this instance, interview data, with its interpretation of the past from the perspective of the present, would make an interesting *next* step, but its subjectivity is inappropriate here. To explore the changing nature of the role of identity within economic development in Cornwall we begin with a précis of key economic development documents from the 1970's to the present day. However whilst this highlights the growth in rhetoric around Cornish identity, it does not demonstrate the degree to which Cornish identity has become embedded into *popular* consciousness. For this, the second part of our empirical analysis turns to the use of identity-based symbolisms within political

discourse in recent Cornish history. Again, here we use a combination of publications and policy/campaign reporting in order to understand how discourse was argued, presented and constructed at the time.

Cornish identity, nationalism and regional economic development

This section is made of two parts. Firstly, we consider the treatment of identity with regards to Cornish development over various late 20th century moments to the present day. The second part grows out of the need to explore Cornish identity within civil society, and for this we look at the influence of Cornish nationalism in local politics.

It is relatively straightforward to map the shift from a Fordist to a Post-Fordist economy (see Rodriguez *et* al 2006, Keating, 2008) onto the rhetoric at the heart of Cornish economic development. In the 1960's, 70's and 80's much of the emphasis was on attracting large manufacturing enterprises to counteract unemployment and depopulation caused by declining traditional industries (Spooner 1972; CIDA 1976; CCC 1977). This was not just about importing jobs to soak up growing unemployment, but was founded on the belief that a critical mass of population is required in order to sustain a functioning economy. Rural Cornwall with its small towns, sparsely populated hinterlands and numerous small businesses with little value added needed to be shaped to fit prevailing sectoral economic orthodoxy (see also Keating 2000). Needless to say, identity and cultural issues were far removed from the rational economy, and perhaps could even be considered antithetical to the rational efficiency of market principles (Cooke 2002). Such an approach was still in evidence in 1987 at a conference organised by the Duchy of Cornwall, entitled '*Cornwall, The Way Ahead'*. Discussions were very much along the lines of earlier economic development, with an emphasis on the inward migration of manufacturing - sometimes embellished with international case studies to explore how to improve jobs, infrastructure and skills base.

Interestingly though, it is also here that we start to see some mention of the idea that 'Cornwall is a nice place to be' which would permeate later development documents, and which chimes very well with early 21st century development orthodoxy, particularly clustered around creative industries type approaches (see Florida 2002; Halfacree 2012). In a marked change from what would happen a little over ten years later, identity is conspicuous by its absence and whilst the conference was indeed about territorial development, seemingly ephemeral constructions of place had no role in development discourse.

In the early 1990's we start to see a conceptual shift in the 1992 report '*The Economic Perspective of Cornwall: A Project to Assess the Challenges Facing the Region for Private Sector Initiatives',* commissioned by South West Enterprise, a nascent private sector interest group (Hawkins Wright 1992). The aim of the report was to assess the challenges facing the economy of Cornwall and establish priority areas for successful development. Here we start to see serious discussion about how Cornwall 'often lacks an effective international competitive market perspective' (p.2). It was argued that too much attention was placed on ensuring that businesses met economic development targets, but that not enough was given to trying to make businesses internationally competitive, building on sectors where Cornwall already had market strengths. This report is interesting, vocalising a shift from a 'development aid' type of culture, where Cornwall had to grow from the outside in, become more like other urban areas and was reliant on assistance to do so, to one where development is seen as needing to grow from the inside out, much more akin to the social capital type of development, articulated by Lee et al. (2005). This involved nurturing existing strengths and building local capacity in order to compete internationally as a territorially bounded space (see Herschel 2010; Keating 2008).

Nevertheless, although this is starting to signal something new in regional economic governance, it was not until the end of the decade that this change was really in evidence,

following the campaign for EU structural funding. Cornwall does not neatly overlay EU regional governance structures, and is a NUTS 2 region, rather than NUTS 1 area like Scotland or Wales. The 1990's campaign to acquire NUTS2 has already been dealt with elsewhere (Willett 2013), but it is useful to consider it here briefly as it is illustrative of the interplay between regional governance, economic development, and identity politics in Cornwall. The campaign drew on narratives of Cornish national identity to say that Cornwall should be separated from neighbouring Devon as a NUTS 2 region in its own right, enabling broad based institutional and popular support for this otherwise obscure bureaucratic alteration (Willett 2013). Known at the time as 'Objective 1 Funding', structural funds were (and still are) given to the most economically under-performing parts of the EU (Ramajo et al. 2008) and Cornwall, now a NUTS 2 region, qualified comfortably (Deacon et al. 2003). The Single Programming Document (SPD) outlining what Cornwall would do with the monies placed heavy emphasis on the Cetlticity of Cornish identity, drawing inferences to the ethnic difference of the Celtic Cornish from the Saxon English (Government Office South West 1999). This is not surprising in and of itself, given that Cornish cultural differences were a central plank to the Objective 1 campaign. But what this signalled, and echoing the shift towards identity politics in the academic regional development literature (ie Lee *et al* 2005; Keating 2008; Herslund 2012), was the institutionalisation of the importance of 'Cornish cultural differences' within local policy. This is also where changing attitudes towards regional identity and development become most visible.

Cornish cultural distinctiveness has snowballed since this time. Economic development literature has retained an emphasis on asserting Cornish 'distinctiveness', although the meaning of this distinctiveness has shifted from time to time. The 2003 Strategy and Action (Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Economic Forum - CEF 2003) kept a meaningful link between economic strategy and symbolisms related to Cornish national heritage such as references to

the Celt and support for the language. By 2007 Cornish 'distinctiveness' started to become removed from its prior ethnic foundations, and chiming with development norms (Florida 2002; Halfacree 2012), was articulated around the distinctiveness of the kind of lifestyle that individuals could consume in Cornwall, such as watersports and an attractive landscape (CEF 2007). In the instance where ethnic symbolism was mentioned, the reference read terribly and appeared to have been inserted at the last minute, stating at the end of a paragraph about sports that there is a growing awareness of Celtic traditions 'which have led to a greater pride and use of it (sic) to support economic activity' (CEF 2007: 71). This has altered again in the most recent strategic incarnation, which in a fascinating shift, is now a conjoined 'Economic and Cultural Strategy' (Cornwall Council 2014). The document asserts amongst other things that it is 'increasing business competitiveness through regional distinctiveness' and 'growing the social reach and economic impact of the Cornish Language Partnership' (p.13). In line with current trends (Hilpert 2006; Herschel 2010), this indicates the embedded nature of Cornish cultural distinctiveness within economic development literature in Cornwall.

It would be wrong, however, to claim too causal a relationship with EU strategic regional development structures. The shifting meanings underlying 'distinctiveness' certainly echo the regional development literature (Giles et al. 2013; Keating 2008), and illustrates that economic competitive differentiation could have been achieved through various 'lifestyle' type factors including landscape, pace and quality of life (Halfacree 2012). These are certainly alternative narratives that have retained a strong presence throughout Cornish economic development discourse for several decades and as we have seen above, there was a movement towards interpreting 'distinctiveness' in this way. But recent economic policy not only re-integrates Cornish ethnicity, but fuses economic and cultural policy as mutually constitutive and symbiotic. This is interesting, and echoing Agnew (2001), seems to show that in Cornwall at least, to characterise ethnic regionalism as *ethnic* regionalism is to miss

the most interesting parts of the story. Instead, it is also a story of shifting local, regional and global political economy.

Moreover, and perhaps demonstrating Bauman's (2011) Liquid Modernity, this is an interplay which is visible in the ways that Cornish cultural symbolisms have become embedded within the local business environment. Since 2005 an adaptation of the black and white Cornish flag underpins the imagery of the Cornish brand. The Blaze Marque is a competitive logo which is allowed to be adopted by only the strongest Cornish businesses who can promote regional innovation (Cornwall Brand 2014). Successful applicants allowed to adopt the logo become brand ambassadors on a UK and international stage, fusing the nationalism of the flag with the growing confidence of the business environment. In a similar vein, Visit Cornwall the tourist information service, has banned descriptions of Cornwall as a county that is part of England in its promotional material, instead preferring use of 'region' or 'Duchy' as a geographical descriptor (Daily Telegraph 2012). According to Malcolm Bell, head of Visit Cornwall and quoted in the Telegraph article, the organisation wanted to 'maximise our potential by making the most of how special Cornwall is'. Other local businesses have taken to using symbolisms such as flag and/or tartan and language in the marketing of their products in sectors as diverse as beer (Skinners Brewery 2014), or Organic produce (Carleys Organic 2014). Unsurprisingly, this is mirrored with a growing awareness and pride in a sense of distinct Cornish cultural identity within broader civil society, increasing the use of symbolisms associated with ethnicity and nationalism within popular culture (Husk and Williams 2012).

Here we see an empirical echo of the regional individuation of new regionalism, embedded in policy and observed by academia. Cornish ethnicity and national culture has been encouraged, flourished, and developed through a number of mutually supportive feedback loops. However, whilst EU regional and economic policy might have provided the

space for an articulation of Cornish ethnic identity, it could only have taken hold in the way that it has if it were embedded within deeper structures of meaning within popular culture (see also Willett 2013). The rational use of cultural heritage might have ensured extra funding, but it could not make Cornish ethnicity resonate with the broader population, to the extent that its symbolisms are adopted within business and popular culture with the frequency that they are. In other words, regional competitiveness has not *made* Cornwall assert its national heritage, but it does seem to have contributed to the space within which it has been able to take hold in ways that were not possible in different times. But what this does not yet make clear, is the extent to which an increasingly assertive cultural regional identity, translates into *political* mobilisations, and for this we turn to an exploration of political nationalism within contemporary Cornwall.

Cornish nationalism, Mebyon Kernow and agenda setting

To follow Smith (1991), the politicisation of identity is the space where culture becomes mobilised. We might conceptualise this as being a cultural mediation between the present and the past, translated into the future through politics. In Cornwall, political identity is encapsulated in its nationalist party, Mebyon Kernow. However to date, Mebyon Kernow have not yet secured a deposit in a general election, and whilst they have outpolled Labour in local elections, within Cornwall Council they are currently the 6th largest group with 4 councillors out of 123 (Cornwall Council 2015). On the face of it, despite the growing importance of regional identity within and outside the UK (Keating, 2008), party political Cornish nationalism appears as a persistent minority rather than as a significant force. On initial inspection therefore, it would appear that this contemporary regional identity is *all* about political economy (see Agnew 2001) in a globalised or supranational environment (Dicken, 2007), where the region is an increasingly important actor. However we will assert

that to make claims about the strength of Cornish political identity on the basis of Mebyon Kernow's (MK) limited electoral performance overlooks the significant impact of Cornish identity in the local political landscape and its capacity to set the agenda.   Instead, Cornish identity has become a political idea that *all* parties feel that they have to engage with, not just overtly nationalist ones.

Mebyon Kernow: the Party for Cornwall began in 1951 as a pressure group, drawing on working relationships with Plaid Cymru and the International Celtic Congress, but not contesting elections until the mid 1960's (Deacon et al. 2003). Several Cornish members of parliament have also been members of MK, including John Pardoe, David Mudd (Payton, 1993), and the Liberal Democrat MP for St Ives and Penzance between 1997-2015, Andrew George; indicating that there is more support for MK than analysis election results suggests. Indeed, Payton (1993) notes a strong anti-metropolitan bias across 20th Century Cornish politics, combining socio-economic critiques with calls for some form of devolved decision making, to which the London-based parties have responded to some degree. To explore identity in Cornish politics we take a thematic approach identifying three core identity themes.

Boundary politics. Devonwall and keep Cornwall whole

The integrity of the Cornish/Devon border has been a contentious issue for a long time (Payton, 1993). This incorporates furore from the centralisation of policing services between Devon and Cornwall starting in 1964 and continues across the modernising, centralising and 'rationalising' of many services in what came to be neologised as 'Devonwall' (Deacon et al., 2003). Accepted as necessary by most political groupings but fiercely resisted by MK and associated identity-based campaigners, resistance to Devonwall is articulated in an MK press release as that "*Any erosion of our traditional boarders whether they be along the Tamar in*

the South or the Marsland to the North, would be bitterly resented by all true Cornishmen"
(Mebyon Kernow 1970). Clearly the identities exploited in contemporary Cornish economic
development has much deeper roots than the New Regionalism's emphasis on regional
competitiveness (Hilpert 2006; Herschel 2010). Instead it has been a central tenet of MK's
campaigning; including for a Cornish EU parliamentary constituency, Cornish layers of
economic governance, and to prevent further centralisation of services. At times this has
attracted more cross-party support (Payton 1993), but the most striking example of this is also
the most recent.

The proposal to create cross Cornish-Devon parliamentary constituencies as a part of the
coalition government's Boundary Review (Western Morning News 2012) caught people
unawares, and echoed the earlier 'Devonwall'. Only a few years earlier in opposition, the
Conservatives announced a shadow Cornwall Minister (Cameron 2007) – although this role
was not continued as part of the coalition government. Previous Devonwall opposition had
been confined to what might loosely be called the 'pro-Cornish' movement (Payton 1991).
This current example caused widespread cross-party opposition, particularly from the Liberal
Democrat Mayor of Saltash (a border town between Cornwall and Devon) as well as from all
six Cornish MP's – half each Conservative and Liberal Democrat (BBC 2010). A lively and
well attended rally for the cause was joined by representatives of all parties involved in
Cornish electoral politics, including Liberal Democrats and Conservatives speaking against
their own (coalition) government. Plans to delay the implementation until 2018 were carried
by Liberal Democrat intervention in the House of Lords (Business Cornwall 2013) and the
Liberal Democrats have been a leading force in this debate.

But do actions like these constitute a growing sense and mobilisation of local identity that
might be linked to the utility of identity for development and governance purposes (Giles et
al. 2013; Lee et al. 2005)? We claim that traditionally, boundary politics has been an MK

preserve that is occasionally utilised by the London-based parties. What is striking about 'Keep Cornwall Whole', was that regardless of how MP's eventually voted, it would have been political suicide not to visibly support the campaign, and it certainly seems to reflect a deepening confidence in a broadly supported sense of Cornish identity. Whilst Cornish Culture has become embedded into governance and economic development discourses, it has also become legitimised as a part of the political debate.

A Cornish Assembly

Although regional governance is embedded into EU structures (Keating 2008) and regions have a much stronger voice on an EU scale than previously (Hepburn and Elias 2011), this is not translated to the national level of government, where persons in Cornwall have long felt disempowered (Payton 1993). Once again the movement for Cornish self-determination predates the formation of Mebyon Kernow, although the organisation has been an important driver over the years (Jenkin 1991; Deacon *et al*. 2003). Nearly 30 years after the Kilbrandon Commission (1973) recommended against devolution for Cornwall (although suggesting that Cornwall's unique territorial status be recognised), the 2001 Declaration for a Cornish Assembly provided an impressive mobilisation of local identity. The declaration stated that "Cornwall is a nation with its own identity, culture, traditions and history" gathering just over 50,000 signatures, approximately 10% of the Cornish electorate (Deacon *et al* 2003). Although beginning as an MK initiative, it grew in tandem with the Cornish Constitutional Convention (initiated by MK, an Independent councillor, and a non-politically aligned activist). Demonstrating how Cornish identity resonates with, and mobilises local people, it became a cross-party campaign, including 4 of Cornwall's 5 MPs and over 130 councillors of all parties. External to Cornwall, signatories included MPs, MEPS, Plaid Cymru Welsh

Assembly members, SNP MSPs and several members of the Dáil Éireann (Deacon et al. 2003).

Beyond appointing a shadow Cornwall Minister in the run up to the 2010 general election, the national Conservative party was less inclined towards devolution for Cornwall with no manifesto or policy commitments, although there were a few press statements. David Cameron claimed that "We're going to devolve a lot of power to Cornwall" (West Briton 2010), and Greg Clark, the Cities and Constitution minister has stated that there was an "appetite" to devolve powers to Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (Demianyk 2014b).

Although ignored by the then Labour government, a number of important later milestones occurred. David Whalley Liberal Democrat leader of the then Cornwall County Council justified the creation of a Unitary Authority as paving the way for a Cornish assembly (Cornish Constitutional Convention 2010). In 2009, Dan Rogerson, Liberal Democrat MP for North Cornwall proposed a Government of Cornwall Bill in Parliament setting out how a devolved legislature would function in Cornwall (Rogerson 2009). More recently, the Liberal Democrats at their 2014 Spring conference became the first political party outside of MK to adopt a Cornish Assembly as a part of their policy (Demianyk 2014a), a pledge that they reaffirmed in Spring 2015 (The Cornishman 2015). There appears to be a growing acceptance by other political parties that they need to engage strongly with Cornish national identity. However the Assembly and boundary politics might be considered to have a rational political rationale behind their adoption by the mainstream parties. This is a less easy claim with Cornish language policy, also at the heart of Cornish political identity.

Cornish language policy

Since Henry Jenner's attempt to revive the Cornish language through his 1904 Handbook of the Cornish Language, language has been a significant part of Cornish Politics, and was

taken up enthusiastically by MK who stated in 1951 that number two of their aims was to "foster the Cornish language and literature" (Jenkin 1991). The promotion and use of the language has remained an important part of the MK manifesto ever since. Importantly, this has deeper roots than functional identity/economy links such as retaining competitive advantage (Herschel 2010), or providing an avenue for the commodification of culture (Bessiere 1998). Whilst the no other party has incorporated the Cornish language into their campaigns, it was a Liberal Democrat Cornwall Council which first set a Cornish Language policy in 2009 (Cornwall Council 2009a), and which promoted the use of bilingual road and street signs (This is Plymouth 2009). Many other non-MK controlled town councils have also produced their own policies, illustrating that is it not solely a party political matter. Most recently, the current Liberal Democrat and Independent controlled Cornwall Council gave the Cornish Language Partnership £500,000 a year for language development which unusually drew praise from Labour party members on the Council (Davis 2013), and the coalition government announced an additional £120,000 in funding (BBC 2014).

Additionally, and following years of vigorous campaigning by both MK and non-politically aligned individuals; Cornish language, national identity and ethnicity has become officially recognised as a 'national minority' under the European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. The announcement was made by Liberal Democrat MP's Danny Alexander and Stephen Williams in April 2014 (Gov.uk 2014); aims to ensure equal treatment of minorities; and institutionalises support for minority cultural practices such as languages. Evidently Cornwall Cornish identity means much more than political economy (see Agnew 2001), but its reach across Cornish politics has amplified in recent decades.

Agenda Setting?

Clearly there is a correlation in Cornwall between a newly confident identity, regional development practices which value the utility of identity, and the willingness of mainstream parties to adopt territory previously considered the preserve of Cornish nationalism. There are two things to draw out of the above analyses to support the claim that support for Cornish identity politics has become widespread and ubiquitous.

Firstly, it is striking that Cornish identity politics is not confined to the nationalist political party, Mebyon Kernow. Instead, in the tussle for votes between the dominant parties in the region the Liberal Democrats and the Conservative Party; both have borrowed rhetoric and policy drawn from identity politics. In so doing they have encroached on traditional nationalist MK territory, skewing support away from MK, and making it impossible to judge the strength of Cornish nationalism on the basis of MK's electoral support.

The second point is related to the marginal nature of the Cornish constituencies. General elections are won and lost on swing seats, and of Cornwall's 6 seats, 4 have recently been in the highest 10 percent most marginal (Hough and Cracknell 2013). In the 2010 general election, the Camborne and Redruth constituency was won by the Conservatives from the Liberal Democrats by just 66 votes, a figure exceeded by the number of spoiled ballot papers. This means that Cornwall is in a similar position to the Cubans in the swing state of Florida, who make up a key ethnic identification that can shift the vote on winning or losing the state (Eckstein 2009). Cornwall and Cornwall-centric issues form part of the narrative in four of the key marginal UK seats, which helps explain the use of identity politics. Although MK have maintained and shaped some of the key debates around this narrative in Cornish politics, it forms an exploitable quantity to bolster the electoral capital of those wishing to form a UK government. This must also mean that identity politics resonates strongly with civil society in Cornwall, or it would not have acquired this type of significance. It appears that this shift has happened relatively recently or presumably the Liberal Democrats and the

Conservatives would have taken up these key and deeply symbolic MK policies far earlier, supporting the thesis that the mobilisation of Cornish identity is growing in popularity over time.

Conclusion

It is impossible to say at this stage that there is a *causal* relationship between the growth of regionalism, identity politics in contemporary economic development, and the improved agenda setting capacity of Mebyon Kernow in Cornwall. However there does appear to be a strong correlation which warrants further investigation. Far from the globalised neo-liberal economy signalling an *end* to territorial differentiation (Bauman 2011) and the homogenisation of identities in the UK and in Europe (Ariely 2012), it has provided the spaces and platforms for territorial identities to make a resurgence. The movement which has diminished national trade barriers and encouraged a globalised or supranational economy (Dicken, 2007), has allowed regions to become increasingly autonomous economic units (Keating, 2008). We have seen through both theoretical and empirical examples that the rise of regionalism maps onto an emphasis of individuation for competitive advantage (Herschel 2010; Aula and Harmaakorpi 2008). For rational economic reasons such as attracting investment, operating within the global market, and the development of social and human capital; regionalism has brought with it a fusion of culture, politics and economic development (see Hilpert 2006; Halfacree 2012; Lee *et al*. 2005; Atterton 2007). This has become very evident in Cornwall, where Cornish national identity has become a growth area within popular discourse, fostered by a feedback loop between local economic development narratives and the resonance of Cornish identity. In turn, this extends the breadth and depth of Cornish identity as experienced by local people, and fed back into the economy. This is neatly encapsulated by Cornwall Council's most recent economic development strategy

(2014), which is based on the assumption of the interplay between the economy and culture. That territorial identity politics has risen to the top of the agenda in this way infuses the discursive space of popular culture with assertions of regional difference and a celebration of regional strengths. This facilitates the space for the growing mobilisation of autonomist, devolutionist and separatist politics gaining traction across Europe (Miley 2013; Boonen and Hooghe 2014; Daily Telegraph 2014).

Regionalist identity politics is thereby strengthened through a tripartite conceptual system meaning that devolution and separatism runs much deeper than merely a cultural phenomenon - which happens to have brought forth a political movement. Instead it may have become embedded within an economic framework which underpins a popular worldview. What this calls for now, is a comprehensive comparative study between EU regions, economic policy and practice, and autonomist and separatist movements. This also signals the requirement for serious strategic debate across the EU about the relationship between the contemporary economy, nations and regions, autonomy and separatism. It also means that both the academy and policy needs to consider more of the interplay between politics, culture, and economics.

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