1 **Peripheralisation: A Politics of Place, Affect, Perception and Representation**

2

3 **ABSTRACT**

4 *Recently scholars have started to consider the persistence of peripheries in relation to how they are*
5 *represented by others outside of the region. Drawing on Foucauldian knowledge/power processes*
6 *and forms of 'internal colonialism', powerful core regions construct and reconstruct knowledge about*
7 *peripheries as a weaker 'other'. However this denies agency to passive, peripheral 'victims',*
8 *compromising their capacity to contest their peripherality. We challenge this using Deleuze and*
9 *Guattari's assemblages and the concepts of affect and perception to develop a conceptualisation of*
10 *power which allows agency to weaker entities. This enables us to develop better tools for improving*
11 *peripheral development. We use an innovative Public Engagement research method and a case*
12 *study of Cornwall in the South West of the UK to consider an alternative model with regards to how*
13 *ideas become accepted and adopted. We claim that analyses of the relationships between core and*
14 *peripheral regions need to understand the complex cultural assemblages behind regional identities,*
15 *because this helps us to explore the sites of possibility which offer space for development.*

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19 **Introduction**

20 The question of why peripheries become or remain peripheral is an enduring one, characterised by

21 two main responses – more orthodox structural approaches drawing on economic and governance

22 themes; and more heterodox approaches that draw on critical theories and philosophies

23 emphasising how spaces are discursively produced. In the former, peripheries underperform

24 economically because of structural reasons such as rurality, poor accessibility, and low levels of

25 innovation, human and social capital. This results in low levels of knowledge and skills in the local

26 economy, and therefore low productivity (Dargan and Shucksmith 2008; Rodriguez-Pose and

27 Crescenzi 2008; Atterton 2007; Lee et al. 2005; Shortall 2004; Murdoch et al. 2003). Policy remedies

28 include addressing infrastructural imbalances; developing communities; improving clusters of

29   innovative milieu of knowledge and learning; and encouraging inward investment, endogenous

30   growth, and competitiveness (Aula and Harmaakorpi 2008; Pike et al. 2006; Hilpert 2006; Asheim

31   2012; Kitson et al. 2004; Herschel 2010; Herslund 2012).

32

33   But infrastructure can only go some of the way towards explaining why some regions do not respond

34   to injections of infrastructure, and why others develop of their own accord. The dynamics of the

35   neoliberal economic system means that resources are drawn to political and economic centres,

36   leaving peripheries behind and increasingly disadvantaged in the global economy (Lang et al., 2015;

37   Bernt and Liebmann 2013; Komlosy 1998).   Understanding how regions are discursively produced

38   helps to meet this gap by incorporating power relationships, neoliberal place-making, and the

39   impacts that what might be construed as negative perceptions of identities can have on regional

40   development. These types of questions grew out of cultural and economic geography following

41   Lefebvre (1991), the New Cultural Geography of Cosgrove (1998), and the New Spatial Orders of

42   David Harvey (2001). This explores how the lived experiences and socio-economic practices of a

43   given population construct the imaginary spaces within which they are situated (see also Soja 1996;

44   Massey 2005; Thrift, 2008; Cresswell 1996; Hetherington 2008; Sibley 1995). The claim here is that

45   social, physical and economic infrastructure only provides a part of the story about what a place is

46   and what it might become in the future. Instead of being the passive victims of circumstance and

47   forces far beyond the region, through their lived experiences ordinary people, businesses, and

48   political actors are active agents in shaping the spaces within which they live, within the political and

49   economic system of which they are a part (Burdack et al. 2015).

50

51   In truth, the two approaches intersect in many points. The identities emphasised by the production

52   of place literature provide a mechanism through which knowledge and skills infrastructure can

53   become embedded into economies and local innovation systems (Asheim, 2012), fostering

54   endogenous growth.   Identities provide a marketable asset to sell regional products, attract

55   investment (Hilpert, 2006), and enhance regional competitiveness in national, supranational, and

56   international economic environments (Kitson et al. 2004; Cooke 2002). This reduces identity to an

57   advertising campaign to shape how 'others' should perceive a region.

58

59   However, frequently peripheries can find themselves described in ways that reinforce dependency

60   through characterisation as 'stagnant', 'backward', or as agents of their own economic misfortune

61   (Bosworth and Willett 2011; Vepsäläinen and Pitkänen 2010; Galani-Moutafi 2013; Bryce 2012,

62   Eriksson 2008; Jansson 2003; Murdoch and Lowe 2003).   Bürk, Kühn and Somner (2012) use 'stigma'

63   to describe this, denoting how some regions can become marked as 'spoiled'. Invoking the labelling

64   of Howard Becker (1997), the stigmatisation of peripheries attacks the individual and collective

65   identities of local residents, who become marked with the stereotypes of the underperforming.

66   Over the course of time these stigmatised stereotypes can become internalised by the local

67   population, who adopt them into local identities, later becoming part of how spaces become

68   produced. In a challenge to structural approaches to regional development, physical and intangible

69   infrastructure is not enough to explain the persistence of peripheries. With echoes of Fannon's Post-

70   colonialism (2008), peripheries become or remain this way because of negative images which affect

71   how core individuals, businesses and organisations interact with the stigmatised periphery, and how

72   peripheries perceive (and therefore reproduce) themselves.

73

74   These regional stigmatisations play a specific function in terms of broader national identities. For

75   example, Jansson (2003) documents how the American deep south is constructed with a set of

76   negative characteristics which produce it as a kind of 'internal other' to American national identity,

77   acting as a repository for the racism, violence, and poverty which in practice can be found

78   throughout the United States. Unlike the production of place literature, Othering and Stigmatisation

79   offer us the insight that peripheral identity is not only produced by people within the region, it is

80   also constructed by people outside of it, based on their perception of place. The argument here is

81   that peripheries remain peripheries because *outsiders* imagine and produce them in ways that are

82   unhelpful to economic dynamism (see also Eriksson 2008).

83

84   Useful though these models are, current analyses of the discursive construction of peripheries follow

85   a concept of power which assumes that dominant, powerful, economically strong core regions

86   produce the identities of the weaker periphery. This removes agency from peripheries assuming

87   that they are at the mercy of the dominant cores, lacking the ability to resist negative stereotypes. It

88   takes an overly simplistic perspective on power, overlooking the lived cultural processes in the

89   production of place literature (see Lefebvre 1991; Soja 1996; Massey 2005; Thrift, 2008; Cresswell

90   1996; Hetherington 2008; Sibley 1995).   This raises two questions.   Firstly, can we find a

91   conceptualisation of power which allows agency back in to peripheral identity construction, and

92   secondly, if we can, how might we operationalise this in peripheral development? In the next part of

93   the paper we take the first question, looking for a more nuanced and dispersed perspective of

94   power which can incorporate perception *and* resistance. We will do this through Deleuze and

95   Guattari's (2004) concept of assemblages. For the second question, we use the case study of

96   Cornwall to explore if peripheries really do challenge core representations of place, and if so, what

97   our conceptualisation of power can add to improve peripheral development.

98

99   **Knowledge and Power in the Production of Peripheries**

100

101   In this section, we argue that assemblages provide a conceptual architecture which can acknowledge

102   the possibilities of agency in peripheries. But first, we need to understand more about the operation

103   of knowledge (about peripheries), and power, in current literature.   At present, this follows an

104   analysis of power where knowledge about the world is constructed by the powerful for consumption

105   by the majority. Through processes of hegemony and social learning (Gramsci, 1973), and not unlike

106   Said's Orientalism (2003), people living in peripheral regions can come to adopt knowledges and

4

107 'truths' which are harmful to the locality (Jansson 2003; Eriksson 2008; Bürk, Kühn and Somner

108 2012). In a study of Norrland in rural Sweden, Eriksson (2008) claims that urban areas create the

109 categories which present the periphery as an 'internal other', asserting and reinforcing the 'modern'

110 characteristics of Sweden by representing Norrland as rural, backward, and traditional. The effect of

111 this process is that the strong core further weakens the already vulnerable periphery, maintaining

112 and reinforcing relational power differentials and dominating how peripheries are discursively

113 produced.

114

115 This follows a very mechanistic and zero-sum view of power, which is imagined as hoarded and

116 owned by particular groups, creating the dichotomies of the power-full, and the power-less. This

117 risks overlooking the literature about how regions produce themselves (Soja 1996; Massey 2005;

118 Thrift, 2008; Cresswell 1996; Hetherington 2008; Sibley 1995), and misapplies Foucauldian

119 perspectives that peripheralisation studies draw from. Foucault (2008) claims that power is

120 reproduced through discourse, which can be defined as a combination of the language and

121 meanings used to talk about an object, the institutions that support these languages and meanings,

122 and the cultural practices and educational processes that facilitate their reproduction. Discursive

123 power is not 'owned' at any point, by any group but can be accessed and harnessed at all points of

124 the system. He uses the example of repression (the ultimate form of powerlessness) to illustrate

125 that the act of trying to ban or oppress an object or a discourse makes it more visible by ensuring

126 that it is talked about, studied and analysed. This reproduces versions of the truth and creates the

127 spaces where these truths can be resisted. Consequently, the act of exerting power over peripheral

128 knowledge production provides the space to challenge it. Marx's power-less are not powerless at

129 all, but have a range of capacities which can be used to challenge 'the system'. This also means that

130 peripheries do not *have* to accept unhelpful, unflattering or untrue representations on their behalf.

131 Instead, the discursive space for resistance is provided in the act of constructing somewhere as a

132 periphery and assigning negative stereotypes.

133

On the one hand, we might feel that Foucault provides us with the analytical tools required to inject

the discursive agency that peripheralisation lacks. However, it is less successful at understanding the

phenomenological reasons behind why a region might adopt unflattering stereotypes, and which we

need to know if we are also to understand how to challenge them.   Without this we are left only

with power as an analytical framework, limiting our understanding of the *mechanisms* behind

peripheral discursive agency. For this, we suggest applying Deleuze and Guattari's (2004) concept of

assemblages. In many ways, assemblages neatly overlay Foucauldian discursive formations.   They

both describe dense networks of deeply interconnected objects, symbols, meanings, institutions,

nuances, and narratives which contribute to our knowledges about our worlds; and share a debt to

Nietzsche's affirmation (2006). They both see power as coming from a multiplicity of sources, and

believe knowledges to be mobile, fluid and unstable; capable of creating new linkages (for Deleuze

and Guattari, lines of articulation) with objects or meanings; or developing ruptures between what

had previously appeared to be fixed. Consequently, both conceptualisations would agree that

regional identities are fluid and temporary, shifting with changing discursive contexts.   But Deleuze

and Guattari draw on an intellectual lineage which is embedded in the post-Epicurean affective

theory of Spinoza, and the phenomenologies of Henri Bergson (2004) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty

(2012). This provides them with a metaphorical language that is better adapted for exploring the

intricacies of perception and its links with agency at a human, psychological level. In other words, it

can offer us the tools for understanding why regions accept, perpetuate, or resist the identities that

they do. It also means that whilst for Foucault, discursive formations coagulate around *power*,

whilst within the assemblage lines of articulation coalesce around *affect*.

155

Affect is the direct link to the temporal capacity of the assemblage, and its helpfulness to the study

of peripheralisation. It describes literally how objects, ideas and discourses impact and affect us

(Ahmed 2004), creating imperceptible or significant changes. It can relate to physical objects and

159 structures within our environment, but also to the ideas that we encounter, and which shape our

160 lived worlds. This is temporal because we are also affected by our individual and cultural memories

161 of things, which shapes our perceptions of, and responses to, phenomena that we encounter.

162 Moreover, no thing is too small to have an affect, the impact of which is not proportional to size.

163 Affect can ripple or amplify itself within the assemblage of which it is part (Bennett 2010), or create

164 feedback loops of self-perpetuating affective reactions (Connolly 2008). This occurs when an object,

165 emotion (see Ahmed 2004) or an idea 'resonates' with other matter in the assemblage,

166 reverberating in unexpected ways (Connolly 2008). Equally, some affects fail to resonate within the

167 assembled matter and ideas, failing to make a significant impact or affect. Finally, as knowledges

168 shift and mutate, creating new constellations, unimagined spaces of possibility can be opened up, or

169 previously possible opportunities closed down. For Peripheral regions, we might imagine this as that

170 some identities and ideas affect people to a much greater extent than others, or at different times

171 than others. Stigmatising characterisations of place do not *have* to affect a region to a significant

172 degree. Equally, the impact that resisting narratives of place can have, can be out of all proportion

173 to its marginal position if it resonates within the complex layers and constellations of signs,

174 symbolisms or thoughts and feelings.

175

176 This mechanism works on two levels. Firstly, it means that dominant discourses do not appear in a

177 vacuum, but must resonate with broader assemblages of culturally produced space. To illustrate, to

178 call a peripheral region 'dynamic and innovative' risks rejection and derision when culturally the idea

179 of a rural idyll is strongly present in how the countryside is discursively produced (Horton, 2008).

180 Secondly, in order to accept a particular discourse one needs to be embedded within the emotional

181 affective markers from which a discourse stems (Ahmed, 2004). Emotions provide a bridge between

182 two disparate objects, sliding between them, facilitating the generation of new discourses. To

183 accept the notion of a rural idyll I need to be embedded into an affective assemblage which wraps

184 the rural in warm and fuzzy notions of community, security, and green space. But, in order to

185   maintain this, drawing on othering I might juxtapose my rural idyll with the modern, urban

186   dynamism that I find stimulating but tiring – constructing the rural in the terms that Eriksson (2008)

187   describes with regards to Norrland, as backward and traditional. These kinds of characterisations

188   then become easier to accept as they resonate with an idyllic type of emotional responses such as

189   safety, security, and comfort. This raises the point that if external actors need to be able to fit

190   representations of place into their socio-cultural schema and what we might call 'perceptual

191   framework', so too for internal actors.   Peripheral inhabitants do not have to accept the

192   (unflattering) representations that others try to bestow upon them, because for a discourse to

193   become believed and embedded it first needs to resonate with a prior cultural schema.

194

195   So far, we can see that affective assemblages can provide a conceptual architecture to embed

196   agency back into peripheral identity construction. But can we apply this to regions per se? Firstly,

197   we need to know that the assemblage is not a monolithic unity, but is made up of other

198   assemblages, and plugs in to further ones. Moreover, although we have been talking about them as

199   ideational, we can also think of them as physical. To illustrate, a region may be imagined as a

200   networked constellation of towns, villages and cities. In turn, these are a multiplicity of layers and

201   textured interactions between institutions, practices, and cultural beliefs within the space (Soja

202   1996; Massey 2005; Thrift, 2008; Cresswell 1996; Hetherington 2008; Sibley 1995). These elements

203   are themselves assemblages. For example, the assembled practices and ideas developed around a

204   dominant industry or type of activity, which whilst having minimal interaction with some

205   assemblages (let's say a particular amenity), is deeply interconnected within others. In turn, the

206   region is plugged in to bigger assemblages iesuch as the, of nation, supra-nation, and global trade

207   and culture (see Delanda 2011).

208

209   This provides us with a conceptualisation of power which gives agency to the smallest of actors.

210   Through resonance and affect we can also see how, and why agents may accept stigmatising

211 narratives, and we have a model which is directly translatable onto how regions might be imagined

212 in the co-production of knowledge constellations. What we now need is to understand whether

213 peripheries really do challenge stigmatising core representations of place, and what our

214 conceptualisation of power can add to improve peripheral development.

215

216 **Cornwall**

217

218 Cohering with Eriksson and Jansson, within much academic literature the assemblage of Cornwall is

219 physically and emotionally overdetermined by affective resonators and lines of articulation which

220 reinforce its poverty, dependence, internal otherness, and helplessness (Willett, 2016). It is a rural

221 region with its own language, flag, embedded sense of cultural difference from England and has

222 recently been recognised by the EU as a national minority. Economically it is one of the poorest

223 parts of the UK and Europe, and has received the highest levels of European Structural funding

224 (given to regions with less than 75% EU GDP) for the past 17 years (ERDF Convergence, 2014).

225 Cornwall's economic data consistently places it towards the bottom of UK statistics for earned

226 incomes, Gross Value Added (NOMIS, 2013), and for infrastructural spending (FSB, 2014), reinforcing

227 its peripherality as a part of the UK economy, and which impacts on how local people imagine and

228 produce themselves.

229

230 The starting point for how Cornwall is perceived lies in its reputation as a popular tourist area (Hale,

231 2001), which has helped to ameliorate the decline of the traditional industries of mining, fishing and

232 agriculture. As a direct result of its success as a visitor destination many people from outside of

233 Cornwall have a strong perception of the region (Willett, 2010). This borrows emotional resonators

234 from tourism assemblages, articulating knowledges which create it as 'exotic' (Dickinson, 2008),

235 esoteric (Laviolette, 2003), and 'a land that time forgot' (DuMaurier, 1972). Quite literally, what

236 visitors imagine that they see is 'cloaked' (see Bergson, 2004) by a perceptual lens which seeks to

237   reinforce what the individual wants to see, based on the assemblages of resonance and knowledges

238   that they draw from. Where local difficulties are acknowledged, they are replayed back through a

239   lens which starts from dependency, and interprets the visitor as supporting a struggling region,

240   thereby reinforcing dependency and otherness (see Eriksson 2008; Fanon 2008).

241

242   Economic strategists have long known that these perceptions are problematic for local

243   development, constructing versions of the region as an economic basket case, impeding 'doing

244   business' with other parts of the UK (Willett, 2010). In an attempt to address this, decision makers

245   have pursued the inward investment of knowledge, skills and businesses; often relying on affective

246   resonators derived from Cornwall's rurality and tourism related industries, encouraging inward

247   migration through the high 'quality of life' and excellent lifestyle, which may be experienced in the

248   region (Deacon 2004; Willett 2016).

249

250   To help understand these contradictions, we can look deeper into Ahmed's (2004) analysis of affect.

251   Ahmed calls emotional affects 'sticky', because feelings that are generated through objects and

252   discourses 'stick' to those things. Like the sugar deposit from a sweet paper, affect can become

253   transferred between disparate objects. In the case of Cornwall the idealised feelings engendered

254   through the visitor relationships that many have, attaches to the undynamic slowness of the rural

255   idyll, which transfers across onto the social and economic capacity that Cornwall is perceived to

256   have, operating as mask that obscures discursive objects which fail to conform. This mask has meant

257   that regional development decision makers have struggled to see what assets Cornwall has beyond

258   the natural environment and the excellent lifestyle that visitors and residents are imagined to enjoy

259   (Deacon, 2004).

260

261   However, we start to sound as if power is unidirectional, and as if it is impossible for ordinary people

262   (as opposed to elites or political representatives) to challenge the assemblages and resonances

263   which reinforce their peripherality. The next step is to consider how Cornwall is perceived by

264   persons within the region, and the relationship that local people have with peripheralising

265   representational narratives.

266

267   **Method**

268

269   The data in this paper comes from an ESRC Festival of Social Science, public engagement event

270   entitled 'The Citizens Takeover of Cornwall Council', held in November 2014. The event was

271   designed to explore how ordinary people *within* Cornwall perceive the region. This represented an

272   attempt to explore lived experiences of social agents in assemblages of Cornwall, within the

273   constraints of our resources available. 30 participants responded to advertisements in the local

274   radio and print media, distributed through email lists, events listings and social media. Two thirds

275   were women, and many, but by no means all, had grown up in Cornwall, and all lived in the region

276   currently. Participants tended to be in the 40+ age category, but fell into a complex range of class

277   demographics and at least half were of retirement age. The event took place in County Hall over the

278   course of a whole Saturday, to ensure that it was accessible to a wide variety of social groups.

279   Children's activities were provided to encourage families to attend. Some participants were already

280   active in local politics – either campaigning about single issues within their communities, or broader

281   environmental campaigns. By nature of the self-selection of voluntary participation, all groups

282   tended to be deeply concerned about aspects of Cornwall's development, but for reasons of class or

283   time, did not form part of 'decision-making classes'. The three elected representatives which

284   attended were also positioned as 'challenging' voices to local strategic decision makers, rather than

285   part of mainstream elites.

286

287   The rationale behind conducting the research as a public engagement, workshop style event was

288   two-fold. Firstly, one of the primary benefits of qualitative research lies in its ability to provide rich

289   data and fascinating and unexpected understandings that closely reflect how individuals perceive

290   the world (Flick, 2004). We do not envisage participants as 'speaking for Cornwall', and make no

291   claims to representativeness for either Cornwall or peripheries. Indeed, identity is multi-faceted,

292   and the 'oppositional' nature of participants only reflects one aspect of local narratives of place.

293   Instead, we are examining the discourses that participants articulated, in order to explore how it can

294   improve our understanding of power. Instead, the rich data gathered provides an insight into how

295   residents respond to what might be described as a 'stigmatised' local economic identity, and

296   provides an alternative conceptual framework through which to explore this stigmatisation. Our

297   challenge lay in finding the conditions within which participants felt comfortable enough to be able

298   to share their thoughts at sufficient depth for us to understand something of the complex plural

299   knowledge constellations within participants' lifeworlds (see Heras and Tabera, 2014).

300

301   We needed to find a way of generating an extended conversation in order to do this. We wanted to

302   reach out to a broader audience than those often attracted by formats such as focus groups. Our

303   solution was to use a Public Engagement research method to capture potential participant's

304   imagination sufficiently to engage in such an intense discussion. Whilst the literature on public

305   engagement as research is underdeveloped, we anticipated that we would be able to achieve a lively

306   discussion which would help to understand these knowledge constellations (See Orlu-Gul *et al.*

307   2014). We drew on research methods linked to drama and performance (Heras and Tabera, 2014) to

308   consider creative ways to engage participants beyond standardised forms of questioning, and to

309   involve them in a reflective thought process. Secondly, we felt that a performative research method

310   helps to democratise the research process, legitimising the research findings by ensuring that

311   participants are a part of negotiated co-produced knowledges, rather than filtering their words

312   through academic hierarchies of knowledge (Hinchliffe et al. 2014). The risk shared with focus

313   groups was that some voices would come to dominate (Flick, 2004). We addressed this by

314   introducing facilitators to help to ensure that each participant was able to contribute; that

315   discussions were conducted in a fair and respectful manner; and to probe deeper into points raised.

316   Whilst the conversational style of the workshops facilitated more complex and nuanced

317   understandings, they missed the opportunity to probe individual perspectives at a greater depth.

318

319   The event focussed on exploring what participants thought and felt about Cornwall, and what they

320   believed that the future held for them in the region.   The 'hook' to generate interest was the

321   development of a 'Citizens Manifesto' which would be presented to 'keynote listeners', drawn from

322   chief executives of various voluntary and public sector service providers; leading Cornwall

323   Councillors; and a local Member of Parliament.   In the morning workshop groups discussed their

324   perceptions of Cornwall's past, present, and future, which was presented to the whole group and

325   keynote listeners in the afternoon. Initially this was envisaged as a creative activity using images as a

326   form of memory trigger (Heras and Tabera 2014), but in practice the creative approach did not

327   resonate with how participants wanted to express themselves; and whilst some people engaged

328   directly with the 'story of Cornwall' format, others preferred to start from the concept of perception.

329   Discussions were recorded by the groups on flipchart paper (see figure 1), reflecting a negotiated

330   resolution of groupwork. This formed the basis of the Manifesto that participants negotiated at the

331   start of the afternoon, and took the format of a set of priorities that participants felt needed to be

332   put in place for Cornwall to move forward successfully. Working groups shared their Manifesto

333   ideas in a flipchart-feedback session, before selecting the ideas that would make the final Manifesto.

334   This meant that the content of the Manifesto was discussed, agreed and written by the participants

335   during the event.

336

337   The data presented below comes from the workshop flipchart notes, facilitator fieldnotes (which

338   tended to cover generalised observations of the process rather than specific comments), and the

339   Citizens Manifesto. The latter reflects the negotiated priorities arrived at over the course of the

340   event. To analyse, we began by writing up the flipchart work and fieldnotes, which we coded

341 thematically and presented in a table. Next we constructed a narrative about the themes which

342 arose from the day. A copy of the narrative and table were sent to all participants (using details

343 provided on their consent forms), who were invited to provide their feedback in order to negotiate

344 research findings. We derived the final categories presented here from the negotiated feedback

345 phase of the data collection. Despite this, the assemblages and articulations presented here should

346 not be taken as undisputed nor unities, but represent a multiplicity of articulations around which

347 contested signs, symbols, meanings and institutions congregate.

348

349 **Findings**

350

351 The question we now turn to is whether people really do challenge core representations of place, in

352 order to understand how this might be operationalised in future development. For this, we consider

353 the assemblage of Cornwall which emerged from the Citizens Takeover, looking at it through the

354 typology outlined above of symbolisms and ideas generated; phenomenological resonances

355 engendered; lines of articulation created; and possibilities that are opened up.   Throughout this

356 process we will consider how this interacts with the more hegemonic narratives outlined earlier.

357

358 <u>Cornwall and the challenge to core productions of place</u>

359

360 The Citizens Manifesto provides the starting point for our analysis, because although it represented

361 the culmination of the day's activities, it is also a synthesis of the knowledges articulated. These

362 knowledges coagulated around three distinct conceptual themes, representing emotionally affective

363 'hotspots' within participants' wider assemblages of Cornwall. These were Culture, Environment,

364 and Power – or more often, powerlessness. One might imagine these themes as assembled

365 discourses, which plugged in to, resonated with, and produced participants' personal assemblages of

366 Cornwall. We were looking for themes that collected together the key symbolic meanings from the

367   manifesto, and which crucially, resonated with the discussions from the morning. We might also

368   have included the economy and government, but these were deeply interwoven across the thematic

369   assemblages that we encountered. If we imagine the assemblage as a network of complex,

370   overlapping interrelationships, connected by lines of articulation; most of the points making up the

371   manifesto, and much of the material from the earlier discussions are plugged in to at least one of

372   these themes. Our supporting material is drawn from throughout the event.

373

374   To illustrate, the articulation that '*Development should evolve naturally, coming from locally*

375   *generated planning, based on need, not greed*' was presented as a policy issue, but was located

376   amongst textured and multi-layered memories, ideas and symbolic meanings around concern about

377   the rural and 'natural' environments. This fused with a sense of powerlessness felt by a failure to

378   challenge the imagined 'corporate greed' of specific developments. Equally, the statement that

379   '*Policy tools need to be developed for social outcomes*', whilst being predominantly a reaction to a

380   sense of powerlessness and a desire for greater community control, had a feedback loop with a

381   perceived necessity for ensuring the sustainability of local culture.

382

383   The centrality of culture provided one of the most emotionally charged moments of the day; when

384   supported by a number of others in the room, a participant objected to some language used to

385   describe Cornwall. This risked closing off further discussion in later parts of the workshop, silencing

386   questioning voices. Instead, the opposite happened and people talked about how they understood

387   identity. Culture is woven through Cornwalls assemblage to such an extent that the awkward

388   moment from earlier amplified throughout discussion, generating a complex weave of ideas and

389   meanings. This included debate about the meanings attached to 'Cornishness' meant. For example,

390   '*Cornwall is about One and All*' acts as what Delanda (2011) would describe as a relation of

391   interiority, binding the assemblage of together against the tendency of identities to dissipate. In

392   using this ancient motto, it references temporal attachments and emphasises a shared heritage

393 based on international trade and innovation, whilst at the same time, allowing a means of including

394 newer residents. For others, it is a colourful part of local identity, such as the participant who stated

395 that '*it gives us a lot of character, and it's an expression of who we are*'. Culture also played a role in

396 creating a space of potentiality whereby something 'new' could happen envisioning the future by

397 remembering a time when Cornwall was not peripheral but led the industrial revolution. This is

398 encapsulated in the following response. '*We've got a history of self-reliance, and our mining*

399 *heritage shows that. We've got to draw on that old independence of spirit*'. We see here that

400 culture is not imagined as a passive object to consume as in core representations of Cornwall

401 (Dickinson, 2008), but is experienced as an active and lived force that shapes how the present and

402 future assemblage of Cornwall will look, as powerlessness slides into potential power.

403

404 Although borrowing from a similarly available cultural repertoire, core representations reference an

405 affective register which privileges exoticism. This provides us with an example of where a Deleuzian

406 framework is helpful in our analyses of peripheralisation. Unlike the Cornwall of DuMaurier (1972),

407 and the romanticised 'land that time forgot', the assemblages of participants do not coalesce around

408 'quirkiness', or 'exoticism'. Where it risks bumping into the exotic, it recoils and reinterprets these

409 symbolisms to present a more active, rather than passive, appearance. Instead, it foregrounds a

410 utilitarian set of meanings to cultural resonances which seeks to fit 'useful' characteristics to

411 articulations of culture. Indeed, an assemblage that coalesced around and was energised by Cornish

412 culture for utilitarian gains, was used to maximise its support from European Union structural funds

413 (Willett, 2013). More recently, the assertion of a Cornish cultural assemblage was instrumental in

414 the region developing the governance institutions necessary for the 2015 grant of a Devolution Deal

415 from central government. Arguably this improves regional visibility at a national policy level, using a

416 cultural powerlessness as an impetus for creating change, developing new spaces of potentiality for

417 local agents. However, the 'exotic' and 'utilitarian' assemblages around Cornish culture are not

418   mutually complementary, and the acceptance of either requires the abandonment of something

419   deep in the imagination of self or other.

420   The natural environment and landscape emerged as another conceptual theme that assembled a

421   distinct group of discursive productions of the region, and is encapsulated in the quote that Cornwall

422   *'has a very green and eco image'*. This was formed from two smaller assemblages. One was built on

423   a constellation of emotional attachment to rurality, and desire to protect the rural environment

424   from the real threat imagined to come from over-development. *'Cornwall's been sold out*

425   *underneath us'*. Identity, community and the environment is bound together and imagined as under

426   threat and vulnerable to destruction. Individuals and communities are powerless to challenge these

427   movements because of distant national level planning structures which are imagined to place the

428   balance of power with corporate interests. But the second congregation of ideas imagines the

429   environment as a site of possibility for positive change. The Citizens Manifesto was infused with

430   possibilities for challenging disempowering hierarchies and developing a more environmentally

431   sustainable and resilient future, encouraging local food and renewable energy production, circular

432   economies, and incorporating nature into definitions of wellbeing. *'If we could get a land use policy*

433   *that's more localised, we could look after the environment and support local growers, and it would*

434   *be a win-win for the economy too'*. Threats to the environment become a source of power and

435   energy, built on an affective register of productivity, but in an economy which places an ethical value

436   on the natural landscape.

437   Core constructions of Cornwall tend to gather ideas, objects and symbolisms which see the

438   environment in terms of its amenity as a green space. Often this fuses with, resonates around, and

439   amplifies from symbolisms and discourses around the rural idyll (Dickinson 2008; Willett 2010).

440   Here, the importance of the landscape lies in the enjoyment and pleasure that can be derived from

441   its consumption and commodification. This denotes an important distinction from the assemblages

442   of the research participants, who have a complicated relationship with the rural idyll, and reject

443   outright its commodification and consumption; interpreting this as conversely risking over-

444   development and therefore requiring protection. Nevertheless, the assemblages collide over a

445   shared appreciation of environmental amenity value. The rejection of core assembled

446   representations was articulated by a participant with regards to one of the magazines offered as

447   conversation joggers. '*This calls itself My Cornwall but it's not <u>our</u> Cornwall'.* Core and peripheral

448   productions of place may use similar symbolisms, but they draw on very different interpretive

449   meanings.

450

451   We can imagine power as the extent to which participants feel able to shape the physical and

452   ideational assemblages from which they are situated within, and draw from to mediate their worlds.

453   When applied to the present and the past, power was most usually articulated as powerlessness,

454   infused with fear, and anxiety about what is happening in the present and what risks continuing into

455   the future. For example, '*power should come from people in Cornwall, not dictated from*

456   *Westminster'*. For the most part fear echoes, reverberates and intertwines with frustration over a

457   perceived inability to influence key decisions about Cornwall's future in both recent history and the

458   present, which has engendered a highly anxious emotional response. Some use as symbolic markers

459   the waste incinerator that central government had recently approved despite years of fierce local

460   opposition, and the despondency associated with their failure to influence government policy.

461   Failure to shape the physical environments alienated participants, separating them from UK wide

462   social, cultural and political processes, whilst tightening the binding connections and relations of

463   interiority around their assemblages of Cornwall. This has interesting resonances with the

464   'hollowing out' of the State, and the anti-democratising processes of privatisation and corporate

465   interests (Jessop, 2002). Consequently the reaction to powerlessness generated its own energy,

466   mobilising and strengthening the Cornish assemblage, reinterpreting culture as a part of a move to a

467   more resilient future, discussed above and below.

468

469   Participants articulated things that mattered to them. Some things touched a nerve, generating

470   disproportionate affective impacts which rippled and amplified through later discussions (such as

471   regarding planning), whilst others were more ephemeral.   But as with the case of culture and the

472   environment, these emotive factors generated their own resonance machines of emotions,

473   symbolisms, ideas and tropes, repeating, amplifying and sustaining specific knowledges through

474   their capacity to affect participants.   Power differentials are grounded in the phenomenological

475   capacity of topics to resonate, and affect the individuals concerned. This was not about whether

476   topics came from the most authoritative sources, but about whether topics could connect with an

477   affective topography to which individuals and groups are embedded.

478

479   Insert Figure 1 here.

480

481   <u>Spaces of Possibility and Becoming as tools for improving regional capacity?</u>

482

483   We now need to consider how an alternative approach to power that is based on the agency within

484   assemblages can improve peripheral development, and we can do this through spaces of possibility.

485   Spaces of possibility represent the discursive places that allow new things and ideas to emerge (see

486   Connolly 2002). If a structure is a repetition of a pattern, a space of possibility is the conditions

487   through which that pattern can be overturned. This might be through looking at something in a

488   different way, or from introducing something new. Alternatively, an outside event might create

489   circumstances for making the shift which breaks down structural patterns. The more embedded and

490   entrenched that a structure becomes, the deeper that its patterns are etched on social and political

491   organisation. 'Becoming' is the future element of a thing, and relates to 'what something will

492   become' (see Bergson, 2004). In a space of possibility, 'becoming' is the potentiality that the

493   structure has for becoming something new.

494

495

496   Currently, peripheries are not imagined as being able to shape their becoming, or create their own

497   spaces of possibility (Eriksson 2008; Jansson 2003; Bürk, Kühn and Sommer 2012). We see this as a

498   tension in the Citizens Takeover ~~data~~material. On the one hand, the powerlessness which emerged

499   as a key theme suggests a *lack* of becoming, or a lack of the capacity to shape one's own future.

500   Indeed, powerlessness had a deep attachment to and resonance with~~,~~ governance, indicating a

501   ~~percieved~~perceived inability to shape the local landscape. However, alongside this evident *political*

502   powerlessness, participants displayed a strong capacity to shape the discursive environment.

503   Consequently, culture becomes reinterpreted to emphasise the qualities that exist in the cultural

504   repertoire which may be used to shape contemporary development and plans for the future. We

505   noted above the reference to Cornish '*independence of spirit',* which was combined elsewhere with

506   the global interconnectedness provided by mining, the historic shipping industry and Cornwall's role

507   in hosting major telecommunications and satellite stations at Porthcurno and Goonhilly. These

508   appeals to the past and real or imagined greatness provide a kind of map as a means to negotiate an

509   uncertain present, in order to arrive at a better future (Bergson, 2004). It is infused with a sense of

510   'becoming' that challenges the otherness and backwardness of core representations (Willett 2016.

511   Also see Eriksson, 2008), creating a space of possibility based on this capacity.

512

513   But in order to become something new, ideas and becoming need to be energised. There were

514   some things that the Citizens Manifesto participants were so unenthused by that they did not talk

515   about them. But as we have seen, there are other phenomena which participants cared about,

516   wanted to talk about, and more importantly, wanted to *do* something about. The strength of

517   resonance and power of affect mobilised people from passive respondents to energised actors. This

518   suggests something about the power of identity, not just in producing the cultural landscape of a

519   region, or even challenging stigmatising productions of place, but also for creating change within a

520   region or space. This is fundamentally different from, but also complementary to using identity as a

521 marketing tool (Hilpert, 2006), or by trying to create endogenous growth through developing social

522 capital within communities (Dargan and Shucksmith 2008; Rodriguez-Pose and Crescenzi 2008;

523 Atterton 2007; Lee et al. 2005; Shortall 2004; Murdoch et al. 2003). To a degree, this is a proposal

524 for a more deeply endogenous model than these, which can tend to be about improving what

525 'other' people feel is instrumentally lacking in a location. This is not about a 'hands off' approach to

526 development. Communities need resources and support in order to facilitate and actualise the

527 energy that they contain. The task for regional development is to find the things that people are

528 energised by, and use this to create new the spaces of possibility. Perhaps an example might be how

529 culture energised and mobilised the Cornish campaign for EU structural funding (Willett, 2013). In

530 this case, the dynamism and passion that people felt for their identity was used as a way of creating

531 regional visibility on a much bigger platform, which has created its own sets of spaces of possibility.

532 The challenge for regional development is to help to facilitate the spaces whereby the most affective

533 matters can be explored.

534

535

536

537

538 **Conclusion**

539

540 We sought to know more about how power operates in the way that peripheries become

541 discursively produced, and to explore how agency operates in the discursive construction and

542 perception of peripheral regions. From the case study we see clear signs of a sense of

543 disempowerment – but this is in terms of political *structures*, rather than in discourse. Participants

544 had little difficulty describing their own interpretation of Cornwall, could construct their own

545 symbolisms and meanings, subvert or reject core perceptions, and had an overwhelming sense of

546 pride and deep local identity embedded in rich and textured layers of cultural practices. The

547   problem is not that participants felt powerless to challenge how Cornwall was imagined, but that

548   they felt powerless to influence *political* decisions that shape place.   They found it difficult to

549   actualise their discursive power because in systemic, structural terms, power has coagulated around

550   the core (or at least, 'more-core') regions. National agenda's took precedence over local planning,

551   and central government frequently over-ruled Cornwall Council decisions that went to appeal.

552   Ongoing privatisation of public assets contributes to feelings of powerlessness over the capacity to

553   physically shape local environments. Our solution is to reconceptualise power from a unidirectional

554   perspective which invites notions of the 'powerful' and the 'powerless', towards an understanding of

555   power as a networked multiplicity – or assemblage. Following from this, our solution in a highly

556   centralised political system would be find better ways of influencing core assemblages and

557   perceptions, finding more effective ways to take the lead in the co-production of regional

558   knowledges. This can be done by finding the topics, stories, memes, memories and meanings that

559   generate deeply amplificatory affects, energise local communities, and can challenge stigmatising

560   perceptions.

561

562   What does this mean for analyses of the discursive production of peripheries? The discursive

563   construction of place and internal othering from a model drawn from Foucault and Said is an

564   excellent starting point and raises important questions about the economic implications of such

565   processes (see Eriksson 2008; Jansson 2003). We see this paper as a complement to existing

566   material which considers the effects of peripheral representation (Bürk, Kühn and Sommer, 2012)

567   But if we use an alternative model of power drawn from Deleuze and Guattari's assemblages, we can

568   take a more nuanced look at this process by incorporating the phenomenological processes behind

569   symbolisms, resonance and becoming. This accepts individuals (and peripheries) as active agents

570   who can shape the socio-cultural production of the spaces within which they reside (see Lefebvre

571   1991; Massey 2005; Thrift 2008; Hetherington 2008). This transforms peripheries from passive

572   victims at the mercy of powerful organisations and bodies, to active agents who can be, and should

573 be, involved, imagined and incorporated into the discursive process. As regional analysts, we need

574 to understand the nuances and subtleties underneath the resonance of symbolic markers, and we

575 need to be exploring how these markers can be best utilised within the regional development

576 process.

577

578 A wealth of scholarship links identity to regional development (Bosworth and Willett 2011;

579 Vepsäläinen and Pitkänen 2010; Galani-Moutafi 2013; Bryce 2012, Eriksson 2008; Murdoch and

580 Lowe 2003), and indeed in Cornwall some important structural changes have been won through

581 mobilising identity – for example, through the hard fought campaign to access the highest levels of

582 EU structural funding (Willett, 2013). In other words, the ways that a place is talked about can at

583 one and the same time deem a place as worthy of investment, generate emotions and feelings

584 which can galvanise challenges to dominant narratives, and motivate people and groups into action.

585 This is not about adopting a hands-off approach to development, but about helping to create the

586 spaces where change can happen. This is a space where the discursive can co-constitute the

587 political. Understanding the articulations and reverberations within regional assemblages can help

588 us to find practical, physical, and symbolic markers which can resonate within the space, galvanising

589 individuals to action. The power of assemblages lies in their amplificatory affects. To use a language

590 borrowed from Deleuze and Guattari, better knowledge of these affects can help to create spaces of

591 possibility, where hopefully regions can find a way to overturn their peripheral status.

592

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