

Neo-Liberal Economic Development, Competitiveness, and the Growth of Mebyon Kernow in Cornish Politics

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Abstract

Nations without states, and their identities, have become very topical in the UK with the forthcoming Scottish vote on independence, raising questions about the role of identity within the nation state. This is of especial interest given that only a few years ago, the effects of economic and cultural globalisation were theorized as risking cultural homogeneity. Smith (1988) hypothesizes this kind of phenomena as being about the salience of national and ethnic cultural identities, but whilst this paper is not going to debunk this claim, it is going to draw attention to the overlay between growing nationalism, and the economic liberalism adopted within European regional development – or the 'New Regionalism'. Throughout this process regional competitiveness is fostered by individuating regions from each other – through branding and appeals to identity.

The case of Cornwall illustrates this process. Although Cornish nationalism has been a factor in Cornish politics for many decades, it is only relatively recently that Cornish political nationalism has been treated as a credible (as opposed to an oppositional) alternative. Mebyon Kernow, the Cornish nationalist party is still only a small force amongst elected representatives, but its growth over the past 15 years has been very marked, and its ideas have been influential in Cornish politics. The paper will claim that the political spaces for this to happen have been fostered by the close link between identity and the economy, drawn by the neo-liberal new regionalist agenda.

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Three years ago Arianna Giovannini and Joanie Willett first presented the paper *The Uneven Path of UK Devolution*, (2014). At the time, less than a year into the Coalition government, regionalism and regional identity was off the political agenda, and regionalising structures such as the Government Offices of the Regions and Regional Development Agencies had been dismantled. This was a fascinating turn-around given the very real force and momentum behind the political debate around regionalism less than a decade earlier (see Bond, McCrone and Brown 2004; Burch and Gomez 2002; Jones and Macleod 1999). The paper claimed that this marginalisation had been precipitated by New Labour's managerialism, which killed the move towards regional assemblies, setting in place the chain of events which would take regionalism with it into obscurity. As it happened, whilst there is much else of value about this paper - in particular its analysis of the regional assembly campaigns in Cornwall and the North East, the overall claim was too hasty and with the referendum for Scottish independence, regionalism, albeit in a different form, is now firmly back on the agenda. This signals a growing awareness of the importance of local, regional and national identity in British political governance. This is interesting because according to Guibernau (2006), the recognition and mutual respect accorded by devolution should minimise the antagonisms within the power relationships between nations without states and the government within which they are situated, and consequently the Scottish question should have calmed after the establishment of a Scottish Parliament, rather than sharpened.

This appearance of calm seems to have applied predominantly to regionalism as defined by regional governance within the English administrative territories rather than being a pan European trend. Wales and Scotland were enjoying their own newly acquired devolution, and questions of devolved governance to the English regions, or addressing the English democratic deficit opened up by the irregularity of being the only official nation of the UK not to have its very own governmental arena, were quiet. To follow Guibernau (2006), Scottish and Welsh devolution should have guaranteed an easing of the secessionist movement in these nations and would have made the referendum for Scottish independence less likely to happen. This raises the question of why this did not occur.

What is happening in the UK with regards to Scotland appears to be a part of a form of a regionalist 'zeitgeist' across Europe (Keating and Wilson 2009; Agnew, 2001). Within the academic literature, we are told of some high profile examples of what Guibernau (1999) calls 'nations without states' questioning the relationship between Catalunya (Miley, 2013), the Basque Country (Gomez-Forbes and Cabeza Perez, 2013) and Spain, Brittany and France (Gemie, 2005), and even the Flemish relationship with Belgium (Ceuppens, 2011). Within the first few months of 2014 several high profile events have happened to support this claim. On the 30th of March 2014 4000 people demonstrated in Brussels to demonstrate 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 2014 b), 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). Clearly we need some exploration and analysis to explain the growing voices calling for regional independence and autonomy across Europe.

To consider this further, we can turn first to Guibernau's 1999 *Nations Without States*. Here, Guibernau addresses a vigorous debate at the time around cultural homogenisation. This debate drew on Tonnies idea of community, Anthony Giddens' and Zygmunt Bauman's claims around increasing individualisation within the post-modern body politic, and Keninche Ohmae's arguments that in an era of neoliberal globalised capital, supranational organisations and multi-national corporations, the nation state had lost its salience. These claims linked to identity by arguing that the individualisation fostered within neoliberalism breaks down the links, shared norms and values between and within communities. Increasingly atomised individuals eschew identity groupings based on territory and contiguity, instead adopting the norms and values loudly articulated within the pervasive consumer society (Guibernau, 1999). To pastiche this position, Identities became constructed through consumption and followed a top-down and tiered trajectory from the strongest, and most dominant actors (the multi-national corporations) down to the the weakest. But Guibernau observed that despite the forecast flattening and homogenising of identity, it became retrenched and deepened, claiming that the dislocation articulated by the postmodern condition also led to subnational cultural resistance, and reindividualisation, or a reassertion of difference. Campaigns for regional governance can also be imagined as a way of asserting this difference (Bond et al., 2003), and Conversi (2014) argues that the movements towards cultural autonomy that are currently gaining pace across Europe, are fostered by the de-regulative policies of neoliberal globalisation.

Clearly there is a strong link between the politics of devolution, autonomy and separatism, and dominant economic paradigms, but this needs to be explored further, and for this we turn to the regionalism literature. The history of regionalism in the UK, is embedded within concerns over uneven development and the real or perceived exploitation of peripheral regions by the economic core. This feeling of exploitation and inequality, combined with cultural memories retained from prior to the homogenisation of the nation state (see Gellner, 2006) has fueled internal nationalisms (Nairn 1981; Hobsbawm 1992) with nationalist movements framing their arguments in terms of the emancipation of internal colonies (Hechter 1975, Nairn, 1981). The claim here - and which Guibernau also develops, is that the unity of the nation state becomes compromised by its inability during certain points of history to fulfil the role required of the modern State (Gellner 2006; Nairn, 1981), and provide an internally coherent homogenous identity. More traditional regionalism from this perspective is an emancipatory phenomenon, that seeks to counter the perceived or real neglect of peripheral areas, exacerbated by the centrifugal affects of the neoliberal economic paradigm, which draws resources and attention towards core regions.

In more recent years, regionalism has been fostered by structures embedded within the European Union (Burch and Gomez 2002; Keating 2000), which provides the counter to the risk of centralising governance structures within Brussels through developing a 'Europe of the Regions' (Roberts, 2003). Here, regionalism becomes a means of decentralising decision-making through a more federalising process (Keating 2000; Keating 2008; Roberts 2003), and was at the heart of the rationale of the New Labour government in the UK in developing regional structures such as development agencies and regional assemblies, both in their initial unelected format, and the push towards their democratisation (Tomaney and Pike, 2006). However, whilst these might have been read or imagined in some quarters in terms of the earlier regional emancipation debate, the rationale behind more contemporary regionalism is somewhat different. Instead of regional governance being about improved democratisation, they were responding to shifts in the global economy which saw the potential of regions as primarily economic, rather than democratic units (Keating, 2008). Fostering regional governance structures was linked to developing inter-regional economic competitiveness within the global marketplace.

Regional identity was seen as a crucial part of this individuation, with a number of benefits. In economic terms, it provides a marketable asset which could 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). Regional identity also became the place where struggling and particularly peripheral areas could grow their tourist market, drawing on assets for visitor consumption such as landscape, traditional culture, history and food (Bessiere, 1998). This encourages and supports the assertion of local identities and histories, providing an economic value to processes and identities which may at one time have been considered as hopelessly old fashioned and belonging to a romanticism which had no part within a contemporary, modern, social and economic arena (Bruckmeier and Tovey, 2008). In fact this perspective speaks to the fears about cultural homogenisation discussed above.

A more recent incarnation of regional identity politics, which incorporates all of these discourses is in how entrenched 'the creative industries' have become as an economic development tool. This draws on Richard Florida's (2002) claims that dynamic and innovative individuals are attracted to places within which they can exercise their creativity socially - which later translates to economic creativity - and which has an important function in the global knowledge economy. Florida uses San Francisco as an example of a place where people were able to challenge traditional conventions and structures, and from which Silicon Valley developed. In practical regional policy terms, this is interpreted as encouraging creative and cultural industries within a region in order to attract dynamic entrepreneurs who can contribute to local economies (Miller 2009). Regional brands have sold this line, again drawing on specific cultural and historic strengths in order to market the area (Giles et al. 2013; Lee et. al 2005).

Identity is also imagined to have a social function, often linked to Social Capital, as popularised by Robert Putnam (2000). Here, strong local identities both foster and draw on well developed networks of interactions between individuals, businesses and other organisations within a region (Lee et. al, 2005). From a broader economic perspective, the networks that are developed and interactions that this enables facilitate the sharing of information and create relationships of mutual support and trust crucial within a well functioning business environment (Waters and Lawton Smith; 2008, Atterton, 2007) and enable the mobilising of indigenous potential (Pike et. al, 2006). On an individual level, this relates to developing and growing networks of interactions within a region, enhancing human capital and enabling individuals to maximise their personal and economic potential (Shortall, 2004). Facilitating and encouraging engagement in cultural and historic events becomes one way that people can do this. (Baker and Brown 2008; Buciek et. al 2006)

In recent economic development, identity has an important function not as a good in and of itself, but for its utility as a social, economic, and even governance tool. This has created an environment whereby regions with or without claims to national status have been encouraged to celebrate their individuality and distinctiveness. It is also an interesting correlation, that this development of regional identities has happened at the same time that the UK is facing a very real shake-up to its constitutional arrangement through appeals to local (and national) identities. That is not of course, to claim that the recent activities of stateless nations is a new phenomenon. Of course it is not, neither in the UK, nor in Europe. However it does pose the question at the heart of this paper, as to the extent to which the identity politics of regional economic development policy fosters political nationalism in nations without states.

Now we need to consider the development of recent identity politics in conjunction with economic development, and for this we turn to the case study of Cornwall. We choose Cornwall for a number of reasons. Firstly much has already been written in the UK about Scotland and Wales, and their devolution campaigns have been a part of the fabric of British political debate for many decades already. But what is interesting about Cornwall is the way

that it is only relatively recently, perhaps only in the past twenty years or so, that voices calling for Cornish devolution have started to be heard on a UK level. That is not to say either that Cornish nationalism is a new phenomena - it is not, and we will talk more about this later. But neither has it had the profile of its British Celtic cousins. What is also interesting about the Cornish example, is the uneasy but symbiotic relationship that economic development, regionalism and Cornish nationalism have had in recent decades. In the next part of this paper we will consider this relationship, making the claim that there is a close link between the rise, legitimisation and growing popularity of Cornish identity politics within local economic development. This leads to the question of the strength of political, as opposed to cultural nationalism in Cornwall, from where we see that although Cornish nationalism does not appear to have become a particularly strong force in terms of party politics, the nationalist party Mebyon Kernow have had a significant role in setting the agenda for local policy.

Cornish Identity, Nationalism and Regional Economic Development

Cornwall does not neatly overlay EU regional governance structures, but is a NUTS 2 region, rather than NUTS 1 as in Scotland and Wales. Instead, and highly contentiously, it formed a part of the South West regional governance apparatus. 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 illustrates the interplay between regional governance, economic development, and identity politics in Cornwall. There was a dual point behind this campaign for statistical change. On the one hand it drew on narratives of Cornish national identity to say that Cornwall should be a NUTS 2 region in it's own right, but campaigners were able to get broad based institutional and popular support for this otherwise obscure alteration, by drawing on an economic rationale which meant that Cornwall was able to secure European Union Structural Funding (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 (Esposti and Bussoletti, 2008; Ramajo et. al 2008) and Cornwall as a NUTS 2 region, qualified comfortably (Deacon et. al, 2003). The Single Programming Document (SPD) outlining what Cornwall would do with the monies placed a heavy emphasis on the Celticity 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 did, and echoing the shift towards identity politics in the academic regional development debate, was to institutionalise the importance of 'Cornish cultural differences' within local policy.

To illustrate, in 1992 Cornwall Council commissioned the report *The Economic Perspective of Cornwall: A Project to Assess the Challenges Facing the Region for Private Sector Initiatives* (Hawkins Wright, 1992). As perhaps might have been expected, this document, as an economic development consultation, did not consider identity politics to be relevant to a report concerned with business development. Similarly, the material which came out of the 'Cornwall, The Way Ahead conference in 1987 (Cornwall Conference, 1987) focussed on improving jobs, infrastructure, and skills base, combined with international case studies, and was not in the slightest bit interested with questions of Cornish national identity. But this all changed by the late 1990's with the SPD, which drew on Cornwall's industrial history as a leader of the industrial revolution, culture, physical environment and arts, fusing these with Celtic influence (Government Office South West, 1999).

Cornish cultural distinctiveness has since this time developed not only a stickiness, but has also snowballed. Later economic development literature have 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) retained 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 be removed from its prior ethnic foundations, and was being articulated around the distinctiveness of the kind of lifestyle that individuals can consume in Cornwall, such as waterspouts and a landscape which includes many Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (CEF, 2007). In the instance where ethnic symbolism was mentioned, the reference read terribly and had the feel of something that had 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, p.71). This has altered again in the most recent strategic incarnation, which is 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), indicating the embedded nature of Cornish cultural distinctiveness within economic development literature in Cornwall. This echoes much of the trends within broader studies and practice of economic development as outlined above.

It would be wrong, however, to claim too causal a relationship with EU strategic regional development structures. The shifting meanings underlying 'distinctiveness' illustrate that economic competitive differentiation could have been achieved through various 'lifestyle' type factors including landscape and pace and quality of life. These are certainly alternative narratives that have retained a strong presence throughout Cornish economic development discourse for several decades (see Willett, 2010) 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 ethnic nationalism, but fuses economic and cultural policy as mutually constitutive and symbiotic. This feels like a significant policy shift from the divorce between cultural and political nationalism and economic development up until the late 1990's and echoes the broader strategic and academic links between regional identity politics, differentiation, and competitive advantage.

This link becomes more visible through analysis of the strength of which Cornish national symbolisms are embedded within the Cornish business environment. 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, see also Willett, 2010). Successful applicants allowed to adopt the logo become brand ambassadors on a UK and international stage, fusing the nationalism of the flag with a thriving business environment. In a similar vein, Visit Cornwall the tourist information service, has recently placed a ban on references within its promotional material of Cornwall as a 'county' that is part of 'England', 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 also 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), Organic produce (Carleys Organic, 2014), and Perhaps not unsurprisingly, this has translated into a growing awareness of and pride in a sense of distinct Cornish cultural identity within broader civil society, together with an increasing use of symbolisms associated with nationalism within popular culture (Husk and Williams 2012; Deacon et. al, 2003).

What seems clear is that mirroring the regional individuation of competitive regions, embedded in policy and supported by academia, Cornish national culture has been able to flourish, developing a number of mutually supportive feedback loops. Whilst EU regional and economic policy might have provided the space for an articulation of Cornish nationalism, it could only have taken hold in the way that it has if it were embedded within

deeper structures of meaning within popular culture. 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 have. In other words, regional competitiveness has not made Cornwall assert its national heritage, but it has allowed the space within which it has been able to take hold in ways that were not possible in different times.

However what is less clear is about electoral support for Cornish nationalism. There is a Cornish Nationalist party, Mebyon Kernow, however so far they have failed to secure a deposit in a general election, and whilst they have often outpolled Labour in local elections, within the Unitary Authority Cornwall Council they are currently the 6th largest group with 4 councillors out of 123 (Cornwall Council, 2014). Evidently, despite the rise of regionalism within and outside the UK, party political Cornish nationalism seems to be struggling and appears as a more of a persistent, rather than significant force. We will explore this in the next section, looking not at vote share, but instead at agenda setting to consider the degree to which Mebyon Kernow (MK) has influenced political discourse in Cornwall.

Cornish Nationalism, Mebyon Kernow and Agenda Setting

Mebyon Kernow – the party for Cornwall was founded on the 6th of January 1951 in Redruth Cornwall, as a result of the positive experiences of members interacting with Plaid Cymru and the International Celtic Congress (Jenkin, 2001 October) which had been held in Truro in 1950 (Mebyon Kernow, 2011). The point needs to be emphasised here that prior to the founding of Mebyon Kernow there was and still are other external organisations that help to shape the Cornish body politic. This includes a myriad of Cornish language organisations, the Cornish Gorseth (akin the Welsh Gorsedd), The Stannary Parliament, The Old Cornwall Society and many others. Mebyon Kernow (MK) originated as pressure group and remained so until the 1970^s when it registered itself as a political party (Deacon et al., 2003). However prior this point (predominantly in the mid-sixties e.g. 1964 general election) it had several members of parliament in its ranks such the Liberal Party's John Pardoe (North Cornwall) and Peter Bessell (Bodmin) and the Conservative David Mudd (Camborne & Falmouth) (Deacon et al., 2003). The party does still have one remaining connection to a member of parliament that comes in the form of Andrew George MP, the honourable Liberal Democrat member for the St Ives constituency since 1997. Andrew George is a former MK member, an author of various works on devolution and has been the Vice Chair of the Cornish Constitutional Convention – a campaign group for a Cornish Assembly since its inception in 2000 (George, 2010). In the year of his election to parliament MK also refused to run a candidate against him instead giving him their support (Deacon et al., 2003).

Three themes have been identified that typify the degree to which Cornish politics has become a prime mover in the politics of the South-West; campaigns to respect Cornwall's territorial integrity, the campaign for a Cornish Assembly, and campaigns for recognition for the Cornish Language. What we will see through a historical analysis is that in recent years, incarnations of key Mebyon Kernow policies have become mainstreamed and are frequently adopted by other parties - enabling significant progress to be made.

i. Boundary Politics. Devonwall and Keep Cornwall Whole

The manipulation of the Cornish-Devon boarder has seen multiple events which need to be detailed to explain the formation of a cross party consensus on the issue. However the events described due to lack of space do not account for all the issues arising on this topic e.g. Cornish Objective 1 funding etc. see (Willett, 2013). The initial furore came from the centralisation of policing services between Devon and Cornwall starting in 1964 and finally being implemented in 1967 (Devon and Cornwall Police, 2009). It should be noted that this

happened under a Labour government intent on centralising services as a form of modernisation which also led to a South West Electricity Board and South West Water (Deacon et al., 2003). It was these events that led to the Devonwall neologism and the slow incorporation of Cornish agencies into a larger South-West Region.

The issue in regard to administrative bodies can be traced back to the Labour government's Tamarside Authority fiasco in which several Cornish authorities were proposed to be integrated with a Devon borough (Deacon et al., 2003). The plan was vigorously argued for by Dr David Owen the Labour MP for Plymouth Sutton (Hansard, 1971) but was shelved by the newly elected Conservative government of 1970 (Deacon et al., 2003). The official MK press release described threat with the following Argumentum Ad Hominem: "*Any erosion of our traditional borders 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, 2003 (1970)). From 1979 to 1994 there was a single Cornwall and Plymouth European Union constituency (United Kingdom Election Results, 1984) which was replaced with a wider South West seat which includes Gibraltar. This resulted in what was known as the Campaign for a Cornish Constituency, which was in fact a forced local inquiry that collected over 3,000 signature in 3 months, (Western Morning News, 2003 (1993)). The vexation about being annexed into a wider South-West Euro seat is evident in the MK 1991 manifesto: "In Mebyon Kernow's Europe of regions and historic nations, Cornwall, Wales and others, would have a greater say in how they are governed, and would also send their own representatives to Europe in place of the disinterested ministers from London." (Mebyon Kernow, 1991). The Campaign for a Cornish Constituency was not just a MK campaign but the first hints of cross party work in Cornwall in regards to its territorial integrity. Signatories to the idea included Cornwall Council, the six District Councils and 3 out of 5 of Cornwall's MPs as well as many members of the public (Deacon et al., 2003).

The most recent incarnation of this issue was the creation of a Cornish-Devon parliamentary constituency by the coalition government's Boundary Review. The plan is based upon the integration of part of Plymouth with the existing South East Cornwall Constituency (Western Morning News, 2012). This caused widespread opposition from the Liberal Democrat Mayor of Saltash (a border town between Cornwall and Devon) as well as a host of Cornish Liberal and Conservative MPs (Steven Morris, 2010). This particularly emotive issue seemed to increase cross party support at a local level, with speeches at a rally for the cause given by:

Cllr Adam Killeya, Mayor Of Saltash, Cllr Edward Andrews, Mayor of Torpoint, Cllr Mrs Pat Harvey, Chairman of Cornwall Council. Steve Gilbert MP, Liberal Democrat Member for St Austell and Newquay. Sheryll Murray MP, Conservative Member for SE Cornwall, Jennifer Forbes, Vice-Chair of Cornish Labour Party, Cllr Roger Creagh-Osborne, Cornish Green Party, Trevor Cornwall MEP UKIP Member for the South West, Mick Paynter, Grand Bard of the Cornish Gorseth, Cllr Andrew Long, Mebyon Kernow, Cornwall Council (Fierek, 2010).

The rally speeches climatically peaked with the Liberal Democrat MP Stephan Gilbert's ecstatic proclamation and gesticulations that: "*This is Cornwall and that is England and let's keep it that way ... if Westminster had any doubt about our resolve and commitment to defend and protect our ancient right, our national identity, that myth and that illusions should be dispelled here and now*" (Cole, 2011). Current plans to delay the implementation until 2018 have been carried by Liberal Democrat intervention in the House of Lords (Business Cornwall, 2013). The Liberal Democrats are the current leading force in this debate but its inception was clearly based on the industrious work of MK and other non-party activists, and provides an example of how traditional MK territory has become incorporated by local representatives of mainstream politics.

ii A Cornish Assembly

Once again the movement for Cornish self-determination can be traced to before the 1951 formation of Mebyon Kernow. However the pressure group and political party has without doubt been the driver for the increase in momentum over the years. In September 1951 MK reviewed its aims and decided upon an adjunction of self-government for aim 4 so that it read “to further the acceptance of the Celtic Character of Cornwall and its right to self-government in domestic affairs in a federated United Kingdom”. It was in 1953 that MK produced its first pamphlet on the issue entitled “What is home rule?” in an attempt to further this issue (Jenkin, 1991), and the campaigning in various guises has not stopped since.

From then until now the most impressive event of the campaign for devolution came through the Declaration for a Cornish Assembly which stated “Cornwall is a nation with its own identity, culture, traditions and history”. The declaration amounted to just over 50,000 signatures approximately 10 % of the Cornish electorate (Mebyon Kernow, 2011). Although to begin with it was an MK initiative it soon burgeoned to include 4 of Cornwall’s 5 MPs, over 130 councillors of all parties in Cornwall. External to Cornwall signatories included MPs, MEPS, Plaid Cymru Welsh Assembly members, SNP MSPs and several members of the Dáil Éireann including the Minister of the state department of agriculture (Deacon et al., 2003). Signatures were collected over a 1 year period entirely on paper by volunteers.

The campaign however impressive was not acted upon by the Labour government. It was hoped that it would impact on John Prescott’s white paper ‘your region your choice revitalizing the English regions’ for directly elected regional assemblies which led to a referendum in the North East. If successful it would certainly have been able to tap into what was a loud political debate at the time (See also Bond and McCrone, 2004). However no such event occurred, but from that date a number of important milestones occurred. David Whalley Liberal Democrat leader of the then Cornwall Council said that and the creation of a Unitary Authority was 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). It is with a jaundiced scepticism that the author highlights the date of the private members bill’s first reading being 10 months prior to a general election. And that its timetable in the daily parliamentary schedule was so late, it was not read. Nor was it read on the second reading either (Parliament, 2009).

The Conservative party’s inclination to devolution for Cornwall has amounted effectively to sound bites. There has been no manifesto or policy commitments to devolve power to Cornwall to date. What can be established are statements such as this from David Cameron: “I think Cornish national identity is very powerful – people feel a great affinity with Cornwall. We’re going to devolve a lot of power to Cornwall” (West Briton, 2010). This position was more recently echoed by Greg Clark the Cities and Constitution minister when he stated that there was an “appetite” to devolve powers to Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (Demianyk, 2014b). Once again to stray into cynicism the proximity to the 2015 general election and the issuing of such statement does seem to have a regular pattern. This lackadaisical approach is perhaps encapsulated by David Cameron’s flaccid attempt at Cornish patriotism by taking the 2nd middle name of his fourth child as Endellion after the village of St Endellion in North Cornwall where the family holiday (BBC, 2010).

The most recent event is the Liberal Democrats voting to adopt a Cornish Assembly policy at their spring conference (Demianyk, 2014a). This is a key moment as it is the first commitment in a party’s policy outside of Mebyon Kernow to a law making assembly in Cornwall. There have been press releases and ample verbiage from political parties about Cornish issues; one need only recall Stephen Gilbert’s Cri de Coeur of “This is Cornwall” in the Devonwall proceedings. Whether this represents a genuine change in the direction of the debate remains to be seen, but once more, it demonstrates the recognition of the

Westminster parties of the popular resonance that key MK policies have with the electorate, and a realisation that this MK territory needs to be engaged with. In conjunction Mebyon Kernow has since the beginning of 2014 re-launched its assembly petition in an attempt to recreate the 50,000 signature event of the year 2000.

iii Cornish Language policy

Since the publication of Henry Jenner's Handbook of the Cornish Language in 1904 in an attempt to revive the Cornish language from extinction in a spoken form - e.g. excluding that the use of family names, dialect and toponyms derived from Cornish that are prevalent throughout Cornwall – it has found a place in the life of Cornish Politics, more so in recent times. As such it can be seen once more that the issue predates MK's formation date of 1951. Making it no surprise that in the initial MK aims laid out in January 1951, number 2 was to “foster the Cornish language and literature” (Jenkin, 1991) as would be expected of a pressure group that named itself in Cornish. The promotion and use of the language has remained part of the MK manifesto ever since its inception. Evidence of cross party support for language policy comes not from manifestos but the policies of governmental bodies in Cornwall. Such as Cornwall Council setting out its own Cornish Language policy in 2009 (Cornwall Council, 2009a) under a Liberal Democrat administration. Other actions of promotion include the use of bilingual road and street signs (This is Plymouth, 2009). However this approach predates Cornwall Council and was introduced by Kerrier District Council in 2006 by the Portfolio Holder for Democratic Renewal's Single Issue Panel chair Cllr Trevenen-Jenkin who was and is a MK member (Mugford, 2013). Many other non-MK controlled town council have also produced their own policies in addition, illustrating that is it not a party political matter specifically. The most recent developments include the current Liberal Democrat and Independent controlled Cornwall Council giving the Cornish Language Partnership £500,000 a year for language development which unusually drew praise from Labour party members on the Council (Davis, 2013). Following this development in relation to the cross party contributions to the language the coalition government announced an additional £120,000 in funding (BBC, 2014). This national level contribution was perhaps more perplexing given that the announcement was made in Devon by Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg, unseemly connected to his visit and without prior indication. More sceptical observers may indicate that the timing of the arbitrary financial announcement is precariously close the date the 2015 general election, as most financial contributions to Cornish issues seem to be from the central administration. The reasoning behind this point will be illustrated further below.

Cornwall – the UK's Cubans?

Many of the intentions of the Conservative, Liberal and Labour politicians in the points discussed may have been described in an overly cynical manner; it is however not without logic that these actions propagate themselves. There is little doubt that general elections are won and lost on swing seats. The exact number remains fluctuating, at somewhere around 80-100 key marginals (Mason, 2012, Carlin, 2007).

There are 6 parliamentary seats in Cornwall, and a total (currently) of 650 parliamentary seats in the UK government. In terms of marginality e.g. lowest majority there are 4 marginal seats in Cornwall, Camborne & Redruth ranked 4th out 650, with a Tory majority of 66, Truro & Falmouth ranked 23rd with a Conservative majority of 435, St Austell & Newquay ranked 51st with a Liberal Democrat majority of 1312 and St Ives ranked 70th with a Liberal Democrat majority of 1719 (Mason, 2012). The remaining two constituencies North Cornwall- Liberal Democrat, and South East Cornwall- Conservative are ranked 127th and 136th accordingly. Making all of the Cornish constituencies at the last general election in the lowest quartile of the entire parliament, 4 of which are in the lowest 10% (Hough and Cracknell, 2013).

Simon Rix the Liberal Democrat candidate for Truro & Falmouth describes the seat as an ultra-marginal (Liberal Democrats, 2014). The researcher can attest to the ultra-marginality of the Camborne & Redruth seat as he was present on the night of the 2010 count, and the number of spoilt ballot papers exceeded the conservative winner's majority of 66. In addition to this point the less than illustrious history of the Labour Party in Cornwall must be mentioned, for example failing to get more votes in Cornwall than MK and the Green Party in Cornwall in the 2009 European elections, pushing them into 5th places in the County (This is Devon, 2009). Or the failure to get a single Cornwall Councillor in the 2009 Unitary Authority election (Cornwall Council, 2009b). Since 1997 the Labour party have only had 1 MP in Cornwall, although this wasn't always the case (Cornish Labour party, 2003 (1932)), and it used to have strongholds in the area.

As can be seen from the above data all the parliamentary seats in Cornwall are currently Liberal or Conservative. This explains why the apparent aping of MK policy seems to be solely a Conservative or Liberal Democrat trait due to the poor electoral performance of the Labour party, but also the highly marginal nature of the seats. As is noted by (Tregidga, 2000) there is a trend in Liberal party politics to incorporate pseudo-nationalist and devolutionary policy based on the work of Mebyon Kernow and other groups. While there have been elements of Conservative Support, it has been more intermittent with a less demonstrable commitment. Whereas the Labour Party would at times seem openly hostile the pro-Cornish policy addenda. This Cornish pro patria hierarchy is explained as remarked by the potential for winning parliamentary seats in Cornwall due to their marginality.

As such similar to the case of Cubans in the swing state of Florida, who make up a key ethnic population that can shift the vote on winning or losing the state (Eckstein, 2009). Cornwall and the Cornwall-centric issues form part of the narrative in 4 of the key marginal UK seats. This explains the reason for the parties with a realistic chance of winning key marginals mimicking an indigenous regional/ethnic party's policy. As such it seems that MK have shaped some of the key debates around this narrative in Cornish politics (although most topics predate its formation) but largely because it forms an exploitable quantity to bolster the electoral capital of those wishing to form a UK government. This would also help to explain why most of the issues outlined have produced significantly more rhetoric than action by the political classes. Because if your prerogative is to be elected, these narratives provide a means to an ends, not an ends in themselves as they are for the nationalists.

There are two further observations that we can make from this material. Firstly, that political parties shift their terrain with regards to the interests of the electorate that they represent. The second, is that for parties operating in marginal seats in Cornwall to follow some of the nationalist agenda of Mebyon Kernow, these policies must have found a way to resonate strongly with the local electorate. This must have been a shift that has happened relatively recently or presumably the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives would have taken up these key and deeply symbolic MK far earlier. This also means that MK's influence in local politics goes far beyond what might be anticipated from their voter share. It is also possible to hypothesise that if a pro-Cornish agenda had not been taken up by the jostling Westminster parties, that MK might be more of a force electorally - or put another way, that these parties actively take votes away from MK.

Conclusion

It is impossible to say at this stage that there is a *causal* relationship between the growth of regionalism and the agenda setting capacity of Mebyon Kernow in Cornwall. However there does appear to be a strong correlation which could be explored further. Far from the globalised neo-liberal economy signalling an *end* to territorial differentiation, and a general homogenisation of identities in the UK and in Europe, it has provided the spaces and

platforms for territorial identities to make a resurgence. It is clear, both within the academic literature but also in Cornwall, that mapping the rise of regionalism, with its emphasis on individuation for competitive advantage, Cornish identity and nationalism has become a growth area within popular discourse. Whilst 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. This is neatly encapsulated by Cornwall Council's most recent economic development strategy (2014) being based on the assumption of the interplay between the economy and culture. Bringing identity politics 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, paving the way for autonomist, devolutionist and separatist politics.

Regionalist identity politics is thereby strengthened through a tripartite conceptual system meaning that devolution and separatism is much deeper than merely a cultural phenomenon, which happens to have brought forth a political movement. Instead it seems to have become embedded within an economic framework and ontology which underpins a popular worldview. What this calls for now is for a comprehensive comparative study between EU regions, economic policy and practice, and autonomist and separatist movements. Regardless of the outcome of the Scottish vote, it also signals the requirement for serious strategic debate across the EU about the relationship between nations and regions, autonomy and separatism, including whether this is something that can/should be accepted. It also calls for serious debate which considers better the interplay between politics, culture, and economics. The Scottish referendum has widely been treated within the UK as just an internal issue, bumping into European politics mostly with regard to whether an independent Scotland can be a member of the EU. However, it actually is much more than a British 'problem' and needs to be regarded as such.

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