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"For England, see Wales"

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## Cymru Yfory: Incrementalism or Transformation for the Regional Economy?

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## Introduction

- 1 A millennium of English dominance – from the incursions of the Anglo-Normans and outright conquest by Edward Longshanks, through to the 16<sup>th</sup> century Acts of Union, and the imposition of Anglophone education in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – has failed to dent the sense of Wales as a separate and distinct place.<sup>1</sup> During this period, and especially since the industrial revolution, Wales has also been different in socio-economic terms. Its position as a resource periphery (first supplying wood, wool and meats; then iron, steel and coal; and latterly cheap labour) has combined with a “hollowing out” of distinctly Welsh civic, cultural and political structures to leave the region poor and, for most of British history, politically unimportant.<sup>2</sup> This is not a fate that ever befell Scotland.
- 2 Long-held Celtic resentments, centred on the dominance of England and the London Parliament, have led (after a false start in 1979) to the current position of the UK as a unitary state, but with devolved parliaments sitting in Edinburgh, Cardiff and (occasionally) Belfast. Inaugurated in 1999 after referendums (with Wales voting incredibly narrowly in favour), these bodies have incrementally gathered greater policy and legal powers covering health, education, economic development, and territorial and environmental planning. Despite the retention of key economic levers in Westminster – for example over fiscal and monetary policy – this autonomy has enabled Wales to develop distinctly different (from England) policies, and Welsh Governments to better represent the region’s left-leaning proclivities. This trend was already clear in the early days of the (then) Welsh Assembly when Wales’ First Minister, Rhodri Morgan, sought to place “clear red water”<sup>3</sup> between Blair’s New Labour and his

own leftist administration: these differences became far more obvious after the election of coalition and Conservative governments after 2010: a period when post-industrial Wales suffered more than most, and also when differences in cultural and social attitudes between classes became ever more obvious and important, not least with reference to Brexit.<sup>4</sup>

- 3 Despite the proclamations of consecutive Welsh Governments, differences with England in economic policy (or with indeed English regions or Scotland) were minimal until relatively recently – with the usual focus on inward investment, entrepreneurship and innovation sitting squarely in the ‘neo-liberal’ post-Thatcher tradition.<sup>5</sup> In Wales however, at least compared to Scotland, the pressures for ‘better’ development are more intense, given the continuing propensity of Wales in terms of economic growth, and employment and unemployment rates, located towards the bottom of Western European leagues, and as a consequence, the presence of significant social and health dysfunctions. This desire for ‘better’ development has been allied to a sense that Wales suffers from the incursion of non-local actors who benefit from the appropriation of ‘Welsh’ resources, with little benefit remaining in the region, but with Wales shouldering significant cost. However, the modern Welsh nationalist continues to embrace the ghosts of Welsh villages drowned in reservoirs to supply English cities with water; the children buried under the coaltip at Aberfan; the seaside villages currently empty of life in the off season; and the hillsides covered in wind turbines controlled in faraway boardrooms and benefitting faraway shareholders.<sup>6</sup>
- 4 There is certainly much anti-English sentiment in these debates, but this is entwined with a concern that the global economic system is stacked against Wales – and places like it. What is interesting is that this debate is further juxtaposed with one that recognises that the Earth itself has been poorly served by global capitalism, and that a radical reshaping is necessary to protect ecological function, climate balance, and the wellbeing of those in the environmental front line – largely in the global South. In the period since 2015, and especially since the election of the most recent Welsh Labour government in 2021,<sup>7</sup> these civic and social debates have seen a resultant shift in Welsh Government policy in a variety of areas. Importantly, these developments also include the passing of Wales-specific legislation that will outlast a number of governments and have a significant influence on the shape and scope of economic development policy – notably the Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015<sup>8</sup>, the Environment (Wales) Act, 2016<sup>9</sup> and the upcoming Social Partnership and Public Procurement Act.
- 5 In summary, economic development (and indeed public) policy in Wales is becoming more ecologically and climate aware, more concerned with local wellbeing, and more focussed on the protection of ‘Welsh’ resources and places. However, these policies raise clear tensions and push against a number of important constraints. It is not clear whether, as a whole, they constitute a radically different approach to polity and place development, or mere tinkering. The remainder of this paper addresses this question by examining several key policy developments, assessing their origins and likely impact, and asking whether they are likely to lead to a more innovative, more responsible, fairer, and indeed *better* Wales.

## The Discernible Tenets of Welsh Policy

- 6 The Welsh Government does not narrate an overarching vision for government that binds together disparate policy areas. Arguably, few governments do. However, as a wider range of powers – including to make laws – has been granted to Wales (albeit not to the level in Scotland) we are able to see how the Welsh polity – the Welsh Government, the Senedd majority, NGOs and other civic actors – have coalesced around a number of important differences to the approach deployed elsewhere in the UK.
- 7 Firstly, policy and law in Wales is more cognisant and respectful of the role of natural resources, a stable climate, and well-functioning ecosystems in supporting sustainable wellbeing than the government in Westminster. Westminster governments have varied significantly in their environmental emphasis (often within administrative terms) but have typically been far more fossil fuel and less (onshore) renewables friendly than Cardiff counterparts. Westminster promises to abolish EU environmental regulations post-Brexit,<sup>10</sup> with potential application in Wales, were met with extreme dismay in Cardiff. In Wales, however, the Government legislated in the Environment Act to require the proactive and integrated sustainable management of natural resources, and to enforce carbon reduction budgets (as well as to inaugurate the UK's first disposable plastic bag charge).<sup>11</sup> A moratorium on new fossil fuel developments was announced in 2021, and an (effective) halt to most new road building in 2022 (see Section 3).
- 8 Secondly, Welsh Government policy is increasingly concerned with creating and protecting (sustainable) wellbeing for the people of Wales as the core policy objective, to be achieved whilst appropriately respecting both the wellbeing of those outside Wales, and notions of fairness and social justice (for example in the climate transition<sup>12</sup>). To some extent, this is a legal requirement of the Future Generations Act for all the public service bodies under its remit, but it is notable how these themes have gained in prominence since the inauguration of the Act in 2015. Early, 'tick box' approaches by the Government and others are giving way to a situation where even documents that are conceptually quite a long way from wellbeing concerns – for example the Innovation Strategy published in 2023 are heavily couched within notions of fairness (and greenness).
- 9 A third (and perhaps the most recent difference) is the way in which Welsh Government policy and narrative is more locally oriented and communitarian, than in England at least. Wales has long had a reputation as a communitarian polity, comprised of highly interlinked communities, embedded in their *Cynefin*.<sup>13</sup> The extent to which the functioning of these communities is challenged by non-local and "placeless" actors<sup>14</sup> which hold dominant market power – thus enabling the appropriation of land, housing and natural resources important to places and to Welsh cultures– has (perhaps belatedly) begun to inform Government, municipal and public agencies' policy in Wales. Whilst the Welsh Government has inaugurated policies that seek to rebalance economic equations in favour of the local, and where local resources are exploited, to capture a greater share of resultant economic benefits for Wales, also notable is the wider desire to protect and reclaim place names in *Cymraeg*, resulting in the re- (or rather) un-branding of Welsh mountains and national parks back to the original.<sup>15</sup> There is very little, in comparison, in UK Government policy that is at all concerned with protecting local communities from the depredations (as it were) of global capitalism and non-local forces – the only somewhat related case perhaps being where

the demand for additional housing runs up against the political logic of home-shires NIMBYism<sup>16</sup>, (not in my backyard) operated in the Home counties close to London.

- 10 From a position, then, where in the 1990s, economic development and place policy was largely indistinguishable from poorer parts of England, Wales has developed, and is developing, very distinct approaches in the areas of economic development and environmental management, with these informed by a cross-cutting interest in long-term wellbeing and ecological and climate function.<sup>17</sup> In the next section we choose a selection of recent policy innovations and ask whether these (and policies like them) will markedly change the nature of Wales compared to England, or whether they may have only minor and peripheral effects.

## Assessing ‘Different’ Welsh Policies

- 11 Table 1 summarises a selection of policies – related to economic development, place and the environment – that comprise significant divergence in policy approach from England. Policy difference has become more marked since the early years of the Assembly (now Senedd), driven not only by increasing policy and legislative autonomy, but also by an increased confidence and maturity in the Welsh Government – notable, for example in its different (and more cautious) response to the COVID-19 Crisis.

Table 1 - Selected Policy Innovations in Wales 2018-23

	Policy Intervention	Target(s)	Description	Comment
1	<b>The Economic Contract (2018)</b> <a href="https://businesswales.gov.wales/economic-contract">https://businesswales.gov.wales/economic-contract</a>	Firms seeking government support in inward investors	Firms required to demonstrate contributions across four areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic Strength &amp; Adaptability</li> <li>• Fair Work</li> <li>• Promotion of Wellbeing (healthier society, cohesive communities and vibrant Welsh culture)</li> <li>• Low Carbon and Climate Resilience</li> </ul>	If successful, would shape foreign direct investment (FDI) to deliver greater regional economic benefits, and positively impact the wider regional aspirations exemplified in Wales’ Future Generations Act. However, very limited information on operationalisation, audit, sign-up or impact has been made available since 2018.
2	<b>Foundational Economy (2019)</b> <a href="https://record.assembly.wales/Plenary/6045#A54684">https://record.assembly.wales/Plenary/6045#A54684</a>	Firms, social enterprises, public procurement; peripheral & post-industrial places	Move away from sectoral to economic policies based on ‘mundane’ but wellbeing-important commodities & services, and seek to use public levers to grow the missing	Initial interventions comprised the funding of ‘learning pilots’ with c. £6m of Welsh Government support. In 2021 the initiative was extended to health & social services, seeking to reshape procurement to

			Welsh-owned <i>Mittelstand</i> <sup>18</sup>	better serve Welsh communities and firms
3	<b>Roads Review (2021)</b> <a href="https://www.gov.wales/roads-review">https://www.gov.wales/roads-review</a>	All travellers in the region	Independent re-evaluation of all proposed WG road schemes to ensure appropriate response to the climate emergency via encouraging reduced journeys and modal shift.	Significant intervention. Of 59 reviewed projects, 44 to be cancelled or significantly altered. Criteria for future road building tightened very considerably.
4	<b>Renewable Energy Developer for Wales (2022)</b> <a href="https://www.gov.wales/renewable-energy-developer-wales">https://www.gov.wales/renewable-energy-developer-wales</a>	Rest-of-UK and multinational energy investors leasing and buying renewables-suitable land	A publicly owned entity to manage (and potentially own) renewables developments on the Welsh Government estate (c. 7% of Wales)	Intended to increase the retention of renewables returns in Wales, and especially to geographically close communities. Only relevant to (largely forested) public land.
5	<b>Council tax premiums for long-term empty and second homes (2023)</b> <a href="https://www.gov.wales/council-tax-premiums-long-term-empty-and-second-homes-guidance-local-authorities-html">https://www.gov.wales/council-tax-premiums-long-term-empty-and-second-homes-guidance-local-authorities-html</a>	Second homeowners (especially in tourism hotspots).	Weighting of up to 300% of council tax on second/empty homes. To be implemented at the discretion of local authorities.	Five local authorities – Môn, Gwynedd, Conwy, Flintshire, Powys – have increased the 2 <sup>nd</sup> home premium homes for 2023-24, with Gwynedd the highest at 150%. Similar powers now announced by the SNP in Scotland.
6	<b>The Innovation Strategy for Wales (2023)</b> <a href="https://www.gov.wales/innovation-strategy-wales">https://www.gov.wales/innovation-strategy-wales</a>	Firms, higher education, public and third sectors	Four innovation ‘missions’ to create a ‘stronger, fairer, greener Wales’ targeting; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a stronger and more resilient economy.</li> <li>• raised educational standards, esp in tertiary education and research.</li> <li>• effective, sustainable health and care with better services for vulnerable people.</li> <li>• emergencies of climate and nature</li> </ul>	Move away from technology to focus on social innovation for (local) benefit. Inclusive view of innovators to include all economic, public & education sectors. No direct focus on innovation as a driver of economic growth/GDP.

- 12 In each of the above cases, both the policy objective and policy approach are qualitatively different to that in England. For example, policies (1) and (4) seek to capture more regional economic value from activities that occur territorially in Wales by placing (potentially quite onerous) responsibilities and requirements on non-regional firms. This is antithetical to a UK approach that celebrates investment into places with few or no constraints, and which has in large part justified the UK's exit from the European Union with reference to the abolition of "burdensome" regulation.<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, policies (2) and (6) seek to shape the regional economy (and indeed the public policy sphere) into one that is more resilient, and locally- and inclusively-beneficial – a stark difference from Westminster governments that have prioritised the traditional metrics of economic growth and jobs. For example, in the Innovation Strategy health the "wellbeing" word appears 22 times in its 53 pages (compared to six times in the 114 pages of the UK Government's parallel document<sup>20</sup>).
- 13 Meanwhile, the Roads Review (3) is part of a wider suite of policies that seek to address Wales' global and environmental impacts and responsibilities by shaping the region to be more respectful of the climate and ecosystem services upon which all human activity rests. Additional actions in this regard include a moratorium on (initially unconventional or fracked and then all) fossil fuel exploration and exploitation in the territory and its seas, and the inauguration of binding five-year carbon budgets. Whilst the last is also a feature of UK Government legislation, successive administrations have consistently failed to prioritise (and hence deliver on) a variety of environmental and climate actions.<sup>21</sup>
- 14 The revised approach to Council (property) Tax (5) is worth deeper analysis, with Wales' 22 municipal authorities now able to significantly weight such taxes for empty or second homes. This policy responds to an increasing realisation that a specific set of communities in Wales are at danger of dilution or disappearance due to the incursion of non-local 'semi-residents' and commercial landlords, who are able to use wealth and economic power gained in more prosperous parts of the UK (including the rest of Wales) to purchase properties in rural and seaside villages. This is particularly problematic for several reasons. Firstly, for example, many of these communities in western, northern and rural Wales have long been bastions of *Cymraeg* – the indigenous language spoken by around a quarter of the population, and the growth of which is a key Welsh Government objective.<sup>22</sup> Secondly, increasing wealth inequality (including intergenerationally) and technological innovation (AirBnB etc.) has made the purchase of residential properties by non-local buyers and their partial residential use both feasible and attractive (financially and/or in terms of the new owners' wellbeing). The result is a number of communities where up to 40% of properties may be in partial or seasonal use only, yet with prices extremely high, with significant implications for the viability of local schools, community cohesion and use of *Cymraeg*, and the forced out-migration of young people who cannot afford local house prices or rents.
- 15 This intervention will have, in all probability, modest impacts (although the maximum allowable weighting of the tax would comprise an additional annual payment of well over £5000 for some homeowners in most municipalities). It is, however, notable as a deliberate intervention to rebalance the economic equation away from non-locals and the "placeless", and towards the embedded people and communities that have often lost out from globalisation.<sup>23</sup> Whilst the prioritisation of "locals" in housing and planning processes is extant in various contexts,<sup>24</sup> this intervention – in the *private*

housing market – is extremely unusual in a British context. A somewhat related upcoming intervention in the tourism sector, enabling a per-person-night tax on commercial accommodation,<sup>25</sup> again implemented by municipalities (on a need-basis) is intended to provide funds to manage and remediate visitor impacts.

## What Chance Transformation?

- 16 This is in many ways an impressive set of policies – in some respects more radical than those suggested or implemented in other devolved contexts, notably Scotland, the Celtic comparator with a far more mature polity, historically unbroken legal and professional differentiation from England and greater policy autonomy. The extent to which these interventions will result in a Wales that is demonstrably different from the rest of the UK (or England), and especially in ways which affect inclusion and equity, wellbeing and sustainability in the region is still however very uncertain. There are a number of reasons for this.
- 17 **The Autonomy Gap** – Devolution in the UK has come a long way since 1999, and especially in Wales. For the first decade the Welsh Assembly had a remit that, whilst far beyond that of (say) English municipal counties, lagged both Scotland, and in some respects even the Greater London Authority (for example in managing public transportation). The last decade has seen the (now) Senedd gain primary law-making powers, the receipt (in part) of income tax, and the ability to create new and bespoke taxes. It remains true, however, that key economic policy and regulatory levers remain in London. For example, Wales cannot protect its farmers with trade deals that are more environmentally respectful; it cannot impose a four-day working week beyond the public sector; and it cannot implement – or even trial at large scale – a Universal Basic Income.<sup>26</sup> Without access to key employment, social security, trade and macroeconomic policy, Wales' differences are necessarily in the economic margin – which is not to say they cannot be impactful on the regional economy; but it is certainly made more difficult.
- 18 **The Political Economy Gap** – Wales is fundamentally a resource periphery; largely bereft of headquartered large companies, fairly unimportant in UK party-political terms,<sup>27</sup> and lacking a well-developed, noisy and dynamic civic sphere. This lack of wider salience arguably restricts the ability of the Welsh Government (or other regional actors) to move the socio-economic compass to better point to Welsh objectives. In the private sphere for example, those who decide if and how Wales' steel industry becomes low carbon reside in boardrooms in Mumbai, Barcelona and Essen.<sup>28</sup> In the political sphere, it has proved difficult to make London politicians (of any stripe) recognise that Wales has uniquely Welsh problems, let alone to move to help solve them.<sup>29</sup> In this context, the lack of formal powers over the 'commanding heights' of the regional economy becomes stark and impactful – because Wales has little soft power to use as a substitute.
- 19 **The Political Courage Gap** – It is not, however the case that Wales' lack of 'progressive progress' is solely the result of external forces and structural issues. Issues internal to the Government in Cardiff have had a significant influence. Firstly, Welsh Governments prior to 2021, always Labour or Labour-led, have been reluctant to push for additional devolved competence in several areas – for example justice and social security. Both (at time of writing) remain within Westminster's ambit, despite a decade of debate on the



merits of their devolution<sup>30</sup> and (as noted above) this naturally limits Wales' ambitions in relevant areas,<sup>31</sup> whatever the political or fiscal arguments for their retention in London. Secondly, where devolved competence *does* exist, Welsh Government policy throughout the first two decades of devolution was rather timid. For example, despite the ability to license onshore renewables at significant scale, and despite a statutory duty toward sustainable development, installations in Wales have been (and continue to be) slower than in other parts of the UK, and with historically rather lukewarm support from Ministers.<sup>32</sup> Interventions in health and social care have taken the form of resistance to (Conservative) pro-market innovations in England, rather than any forging of a progressive new path.<sup>33</sup> Not only does this leave Wales less 'green', progressive, and distinctive than it might have been after two decades of (albeit limited) devolution, but it also has the effect of diluting the enthusiasm (and building the cynicism) of a range of civic actors, activists and others who would be natural fellow-travellers towards a more sustainable and fairer Wales.

- 20 ***The Implementation and Competence Gap*** – A final issue relates to the desire and ability to, as it were, 'be the change its policies want to see in the world'. Only the most supportive of commentators would characterise the Welsh Government as highly efficient, transparent and with a sufficiency of policy development and implementation 'nous' or common sense. The (British) Civil Service practice of rotating staff around portfolios, and promoting generalist over specialists is alive and well, with unfortunate consequences<sup>34</sup>. Meanwhile, the OECD in a report published 20 years into devolution pointed to the need for Welsh Government to strengthen its governance practices and regional cooperation, and improve implementation capability on the ground – whilst, reading between the lines, developing a less patriarchal relationship with Wales' 22 local authorities.<sup>35</sup> There is consensus politics in Wales, but it is the consensus of many rabbits and a polar bear. Additionally, it is too often the perception that the Welsh Government sees its job as done when, after having extensively consulted people, the policy hits the website – rather than when change is happening on the ground. The result is a nation seen as the "Land of Artist's Impressions",<sup>36</sup> where much is promised but little done – and where a significant implementation gap is the norm. For a Welsh Government with an increasingly radical agenda, this perception matters.
- 21 The above 'gaps' analysis does not mean it is impossible for the Welsh Government and its partners to forge a distinctively different policy path – and to potentially create a transformed (or preferred) future – but it does illustrate that progress is contingent on a variety of internal and external factors, only some of which are amenable to action by the Welsh Government – or indeed *any* within-Wales actor. The position of the small, peripheral region with big ideas, but meshed within widespread political and economic networks – and oftentimes subservient to other players in those networks – is not an easy one.

## Conclusion

- 22 Wales is a territory and nation that has engaged internationally in a very particular way. Economically and politically weak compared to most other European regions, Wales was buoyed for over a century by its advantaged position at the core of the British Empire, but in recent decades has faced increasing challenges within more liberalised global capitalist structures, unable to develop a more broad-based and

resilient economy, and with the British state unwilling or unable to help it find prosperity. For Wales, the neoliberal turn of 1980 was especially painful, reinforcing a relative economic weakness that stretches back to at least Henry Tudor (if not further), related closely to the resource-based nature of economic activity, and lack of ownership of resources by genuinely local and embedded agents. None of the ameliorative policies enacted by UK and Welsh Governments or the EU, in good or not-so-good faith, have managed to address, or in some cases even understand, these problems.

- 23 The Blair government delivered devolution in 1999. Devolution did not deliver any discernible devolution dividend – at least in economic terms. Economic performance relative to the rest of the UK has remained effectively static. Indeed, Wales has simply remained in the lowest rank of the UK regions that were left behind as London and the Southeast sprinted away.<sup>37</sup> Twenty-first century Wales is, however, different, from English regions at least, in that it has a distinctive and autonomous (albeit contingent) political settlement, a cultural sense of self upon which collective action can be pinned, and an increasing (albeit patchy) awareness across political and civic spheres that the current approach to economic and place development is a busted flush. Tried and tested policies have been tried, tested, and largely failed.<sup>38</sup> From this perspective, prior failure may provide an opportunity to go back to basics, to think about what regional development and the economy are actually for, and to forge different paths toward national objectives.
- 24 The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act in 2015 was built on an extensive national conversation to identify not only seven wellbeing “goal areas” for Wales, but also five ways of working toward their achievement, with these requiring long-term, preventative and inclusive approaches to policy. The Act applies only to the public sector, is overly bureaucratic, and lacks much in the way of teeth, yet it is increasingly important. Its application to policy development, and the centrality of wellbeing and global responsibility, reveals harsh logics associated with policy choices. For example, government policies that attract employment in high carbon sectors, within mobile multinational firms, and with much of the benefit accruing to remote shareholders become far harder to defend, as do infrastructure developments that prioritise environmentally damaging private transport, when a fifth of households, often poor, have no car.<sup>39</sup> Separately, recent policy developments by the Welsh Government seem to recognise the increasing demand on embedded regional resources – both natural and physical, and the pressures on important eco- and social systems, responding with policies that seek to (modestly) rebalance power towards economically weaker local actors. That this is happening with no populist, nativist or anti-English narrative (or apparently sentiment) is also notable given the situation in other parts of Europe, and indeed in the UK.
- 25 The jury is thus very much out on whether these policy divergences will make much of a difference on the ground. Given their scope and scale, probably not. Indeed, the economic weakness that has in part spurred the policies listed in Table 1 may militate against their ability to transform. Perhaps a more important question is whether this increased focus on sustainable and responsible regional wellbeing will lead to more, and more impactful, changes to regional policies over time, and move the narrative dial away from development policies that look for success through ever-more exposure to an ecologically dysfunctional and unfair global economy. What could replace such

global economic integration is an open question. Despite Wales' pronouncements on global responsibility, equity, and sustainability, and despite its natural wealth, it is still fundamentally dependent for wellbeing, along with all other Western regions, on material resources ultimately taken via unequal exchange from the global South.<sup>40</sup> Addressing this global inequality (alongside climate emissions) seems a core requirement of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act; we cannot become more prosperous by immiserating others. Squaring this 'responsibility and sustainability circle' will likely require far more radical approaches to supporting regional wellbeing, perhaps going beyond notions of 'green growth' and the wellbeing economy, through to discussions of regional *decroissance*.<sup>41</sup> Whilst such a transformation in the regional approach to the economy seems some way off, Wales is at least embarking upon conversations – and the first steps on a policy path – which leads inexorably to the conclusion that responsibility, resilience and sustainable wellbeing have not been outcomes of old policy approaches, and that only a fundamentally different – and arguably far more *Cynefin*-aware approach – can deliver what Wales needs.

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## NOTES

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3. The expression comes from a speech delivered by Rhodri Morgan in December 2002, in which he explained he wanted to implement Welsh, and not New Labour policies for Wales.
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14. Calvin Jones, "The Triumph of the Placeless", 2022 <https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/id/eprint/149136/> consulted 18 May 2023.

15. Rhys Jones, Bryonny Goodwin-Hawkins, and Michael Woods, "From territorial cohesion to regional spatial justice: The well-being of future generations act in Wales." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 44, no. 894-912, 2020.
16. See for example <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/may/18/rishi-sunak-stands-by-pledge-to-protect-green-belt-after-starmer-housing-comments> consulted 17 May 2023.
17. These developments are joined by quite different approaches in areas such as health and education; not covered here for reasons of space.
18. The term commonly refers to a group of stable business enterprises in Germany, Austria and Switzerland that have proved successful in enduring economic change and turbulence.
19. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-benefits-of-brexit> consulted 15 May 2023.
20. Detail at <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2023-04/wales-innovates-creating-a-stronger-fairer-greener-wales.pdf> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-innovation-strategy-leading-the-future-by-creating-it> consulted 15 May 2023.
21. See for example the Climate Change Committee's varied concerns at <https://www.theccc.org.uk>. Meanwhile, the UK Parliament in 2022 pointed out that the UK was on target to miss 14 out of 19 biodiversity targets, and that no systematic policy framework existed to restore UK nature; <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5802/cmselect/cmenvaud/136/136-report.html> consulted 16 May 2023.
22. <https://www.gov.wales/cymraeg-2050-welsh-language-strategy> consulted 15 May 2023.
23. Calvin Jones, "The Triumph of the Placeless". 2022 <https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/id/eprint/149136/> consulted 15 May 2023.
24. For example in affordable housing in the Netherlands, <https://www.government.nl/topics/municipalities/municipalities-tasks/applying-for-an-affordable-housing-permit>, and see the 'Flemish Decree' of 2009, struck down by the EU as it was considered to restrict free movement, <https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2012-10/cp120123en.pdf> consulted 15 May 2023.
25. <https://www.gov.wales/a-visitor-levy-for-wales> consulted 16 May 2023.
26. A (by no means universal) pilot was inaugurated in 2022; <https://www.gov.wales/wales-pilots-basic-income-scheme> consulted 15 May 2023.
27. Richard Wyn Jones, R & Jac Larner, J., "Progressive home rule?" *IPPR Progressive Review*, 27(3), 235-245, 2021.
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30. See the reports of the Silk Commission; <https://law.gov.wales/constitution-and-government/constitution-and-devolution/commission-devolution-wales> consulted 16 May 2023.
31. Scotland and Northern Ireland have their own justice systems, and social security is partly devolved to both; <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9535/> consulted 17 May 2023.
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35. OECD (2020), *The Future of Regional Development and Public Investment in Wales, United Kingdom*, <https://www.oecd.org/unitedkingdom/the-future-of-regional-development-and-public-investment-in-wales-united-kingdom-e6f5201d-en.htm>.
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## ABSTRACTS

Wales has economically underperformed its European neighbours for decades. As societies and economies transform in response to key climate, nature and technological pressures, this paper asks whether recent policy innovations in Wales, the result of political devolution from London, signal a new radicalism. Will this comprise a different approach to regional development, one that values the local over the global, and wellbeing over economic growth, resulting in a more resilient, sustainable and responsible region?

Depuis des décennies, le pays de Galles affiche des performances économiques inférieures à celles de ses voisins européens. Alors que les sociétés et les économies se transforment en réponse aux pressions climatiques, naturelles et technologiques, il convient de se demander si les récentes innovations politiques au pays de Galles, résultat d'une dévolution politique accordée par Londres, sont le signe d'un nouveau radicalisme. S'agira-t-il d'une approche différente du développement régional, qui valorise le local plutôt que le global, et le bien-être plutôt que la croissance économique, avec pour résultat une région plus résiliente, plus durable et plus responsable ?

## INDEX

**Mots-clés:** développement durable, bien-être, déconcentration, politique

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