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Regional Studies Conference Abstract

Purposeful Regional Development: A Case Study of 4theRegion

The aim of this paper is to critically evaluate the novel purposeful approach taken by 4theRegion to regional development in the Swansea Bay city region, west Wales. Regional development is a widely researched area that explores reducing regional disparities, with literature acknowledging that there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Indeed, regions vary widely according to geographic, demographic, economic and cultural characteristics. Consequently, this paper critically evaluates the specific approach by 4theRegion, a community interest group led by two local entrepreneurs who aim to promote 'holistic flourishing' within the region through organising regional development activities around inclusive community-led asset-based growth. Innovation is seen in this method by emphasising purposeful development, led by the organisation's social ethos and an influence of well-being through the Well-being of Future Generations Act, which underpins decision-making in Wales.

Viewed through a resource-based view lens, research of this case study includes interviews with both directors of the organisation, interviews with representatives of 10 member organisations and document analysis of 4theRegion's publications. Interviews aimed to develop a holistic understanding of the impact of this approach to regional development, supplemented by secondary data to understand the organisation's social purpose. This research contributes to the conference theme of 'Transforming Regions' by investigating this new approach to purposeful regional development that focusses on place-specific issues and involves various local stakeholders. Findings underline the value of stakeholder engagement across the region and promote well-being as a core component of purposeful development. Implications are apparent in applying purposeful development activities by various government bodies.