

**City-Regionalism:
A case study of South East Wales**

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Summary

Within the UK the concept of the 'city-region' has gained increasing prominence in both academic and policy realms, particularly within the inter-related domains of spatial planning, public service delivery and economic development. However, our knowledge on the concept is currently limited in several respects. This includes a paucity of detailed accounts of how city-regions are formed and an over-reliance in existing analyses which consider city-regions as contingent responses to globalising economic imperatives.

The main aim of the thesis is to show how powerful city-regional narratives are materialised. To achieve this aim the research considers three key theoretical, methodological and empirical issues. In terms of theory, the research considers the role played by processes of narrative construction and institutionalisation in mediating the development of city-region agendas and subsequent material change. Methodologically, it asks how research can be designed to understand the relationship between these processes. Empirically, the research looks to increase our knowledge and understanding of these processes and events within South East Wales.

South East Wales was identified as a fertile geographic location for research attention in light of the significant progression of a city-regional debate and the unique social, historical, institutional, and economic characteristics of the area. The research covers a period between 1992 and 2008 and explores the changing geographies of state spatiality and region-building processes operating in and around the case study area.

The research approach draws on literature from several disciplines including human geography, political economy, international relations, and urban and regional planning. A three-stage analytical framework was developed to focus attention on particular elements of city-regionalism: i) the narrative construction of the city-region by key stakeholders; ii) institutionalisation of the narratives; and iii) materialisation of the city-region concept. Evidence was generated through the use of semi-structured interviews, documentary analysis and participant observation. The results indicate that greater attention should be given to the specific contexts in which city-regional agendas are promoted, including the roles played by personal relationships and the socio-economic conditions in the hinterland. The results also highlight the role played by the politics of scale as part of city-regional contestation and the tangible links which exist between discursive processes and the materialisation of city-regions.

Abbreviations

AM	Assembly Member
ASHE	Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BPC	Business Partnership Council
CAAC	Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities
CAQDAS	Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
CC	Cardiff Council
CDC	Cardiff District Council
COTI	Cities of the Isles
CPLAN	School of City and Regional Planning, Cardiff University
DASTS	Delivering a Sustainable Transport System
DETR	Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
EC	European Commission
ELWa	Education and Learning Wales
ESDP	European Spatial Development Perspective
HOV	Heads of the Valleys
GCC	Glamorgan County Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GVA	Gross Value Added
LA	Local Authority
LDP	Local Development Plan
LPA	Local Planning Authority
LSOA	Lower Super Output Area
LTP	Local Transport Plan
MTC	Making the Connections
NAW	National Assembly for Wales
NCC	Newport City Council
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PES	Payment for Ecosystem Services
QUANGO	Quasi-Autonomous Non-Governmental Organisation
R&D	Research and development
RCT	Rhondda-Cynon-Taf
RICS	Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors
RSV	Regional Skills Vehicle
RTP	Regional Transport Plan
SEWEF	South East Wales Economic Forum
SEWRHF	South East Wales Regional Housing Forum
SEWSPG	South East Wales Strategic Planning Group
SEWTA	South East Wales Transport Alliance
SEWWG	South East Wales Waste Group
SGCC	South Glamorgan County Council

SWIFT	South Wales Integrated Fast Transit
TIGER	Transport Integration in the Gwent Economic Region
TTWA	Travel To-Work-Area
WAG	Welsh Assembly Government
WAVE	Wales A Vibrant Economy
WDA	Welsh Development Agency
WIMD	Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation
WLGA	Welsh Local Government Association
WSP	Wales Spatial Plan
WTP	Wales Transport Strategy

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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The main aim of this research is to show how powerful city-regional narratives are materialised. To achieve this aim the research considers three key theoretical, methodological and empirical issues. In terms of theory, the research considers the role played by processes of narrative construction and institutionalisation in mediating the development of city-region agendas and subsequent material change. Methodologically, it asks how research can be designed to understand the relationship between these processes. Empirically, the research looks to increase our knowledge and understanding of these processes and events within South East Wales.

It has been modestly suggested that ‘there is no more interesting study in town growth and development than Cardiff’ (Daunton 1977, 1). This claim would seem to be supported by the economic, social, environmental and political context in which the city and its surrounding area has developed and continues to change. Following centuries of stagnation the town’s rapid urbanisation post-1851 was later than most urban areas in Britain. Up to the end of the 18th century Cardiff remained a small administrative centre for the surrounding agricultural hinterland. However, this changed significantly following the construction of the Glamorganshire Canal from Abercynon with a sea lock at Cardiff between 1792 and 1794 (Hooper 2006). The connection between Cardiff and the expanding iron industry in Merthyr established an enduring relationship between the town and its surrounding hinterland whilst also establishing a key economic role for Cardiff within the global economic marketplace.

Cardiff’s population and that of its hinterland continued to expand from around 40,000 in 1801 to approximately 85,000 by the First World War (Daunton 1977). In 1873 Cardiff was referred to for the first time as ‘the metropolis of Wales’ and its rapid expansion drew comparisons to the notorious growth of some American cities of the time, as it was called ‘the Chicago of Wales’ (Daunton 1977, 2). During its economic

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and physical growth in the 19th century Cardiff asserted itself as the ‘regional capital of south Wales and [...] developed a significant commercial and administrative sector which enabled it to dominate over other towns’ (Hooper 2006, 9).

However, despite Cardiff’s designation as the capital city of Wales in 1955, the decline of coal trade and a failure to establish itself as a manufacturing centre mean that the city struggled economically between 1914 and 1974 (Hooper 2006). Its position within the regional settlement hierarchy was solidified through the continuity of its commercial, retail and wholesaling activities and through the growth of the services industries after the Second World War (ibid). More recently, the city has received attention for the high profile programme of physical regeneration in Cardiff Bay and the city centre. These activities have been driven by the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation (1987-2000) and an increasingly entrepreneurial city government which has ‘attempted to identify itself as a resurgent city and to establish itself as significantly advantaged in relation to competitor cities (Hooper 2006, 12).

However, Cardiff’s growth would have never occurred without the unprecedented extractive and industrial activities within coalfields of the south Wales valleys (Daunton 1977). The growth of the towns and villages in this area paralleled the successful development in Cardiff and the fortunes of the two areas were recognised to be mutually dependent. However, following the peak of employment in the coalfields in the 1920s, the subsequent declining economic fortunes of the south Wales valleys and the area’s current prevalence of relative deprivation and inequality provide an important contextual factor for current processes of economic governance and provision of collective consumption. The relative small size of the capital city set against a much larger – both in geographic terms and in population – and more impoverished hinterland creates a unique set of socio-economic circumstances which permeate all levels of political discussion and contestation, whilst dictating competing functional rationales for state intervention. It is this relationship which provides the backdrop for such an interesting case study of state restructuring processes in which different state imperatives for economic develop-

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ment, sustainable development and wider realms of social policy intersect, are contested and re-defined as part of ongoing scalar struggles for dominance.

Additionally, as the physical topography of South East Wales led to the establishment of canals and railways leading from the valleys down to Cardiff's ports, the nation's geographic position within Great Britain and bordering England presents unique opportunities and challenges for actors seeking to influence the production and management of state space. Numerous rounds of administrative reform over the last three decades, culminating with devolution and the establishment of the National Assembly for Wales, have engendered a dynamic and rapidly evolving regulatory environment where a newly created national state government attempts to govern a regional context defined by historical rivalries and rife with underlining parochial tension. The efforts by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG)¹ to work with, and sometimes against, an ambitious and increasingly entrepreneurial city (see: Harvey 1989) add another interesting dynamic to the progression of the city-region agenda in South East Wales. Both scales of government have embraced the idea of the city-region as an important spatial metaphor through which the governance of economy and collective consumption should be organised. This high level support for city-regionalism over a period of approximately two decades provides fertile ground for an in-depth examination of its conceptualisation, institutionalisation, and ultimately materialisation through its embodiment in tangible, physical domains which affect the lives of those living, working and visiting South East Wales.

Within the UK the concept of the 'city-region' has gained increasing prominence in both academic and policy fields (particularly within the inter-related domains of spatial planning, service delivery and economic development). The 'new regionalism' school of thought asserts that globalisation and the 'hollowing-out' of the nation state have resulted in the re-emergence of the region as the pre-eminent site and scale for economic organisation in contemporary capitalism (Lovering 1999). Arguably, as the regional scale of

¹ The Welsh Assembly Government consists of: the First Minister; Welsh Ministers; The Counsel General; and Deputy Ministers. They are supported by Civil Servants who work across devolved competency areas. By contrast, the National Assembly for Wales (NAW) is the elected body that represents the interests of Wales and its people, makes laws for Wales and holds the Welsh Government to account.

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government in England failed to develop into a democratically-supported and stable regulatory scale, emphasis across the UK shifted to the sub-regional tier to provide this function. This has subsequently led to a resurgent policy emphasis on the city to create a powerful impetus for the development of policies for city-regional growth (A Scott 2001; Le Gales 2002). One outcome of this agenda is increasing attempts to understand, measure and rank the economic performance or ‘competitiveness’ of European city-regions – an exercise which reveals that many UK cities lag behind their European counterparts (Boddy and Parkinson 2004). In light of the attention city-regions have received there are a number of empirical, theoretical and policy-related questions surrounding the concept’s resurgence. While it is generally accepted that the ‘city-region’ refers to interdependencies between cities and their surrounding areas (e.g. travel-to-work areas or business supply chains) there is no clear understanding of the complex and contingent social, political and economic geographies which shape them (Brenner 2002; L Ward and Jonas 2004). In particular, despite sporadic periods of research and city-regional policy development over the past century, there remains a failure to appreciate not only the extent to which cities influence patterns of development within their hinterlands, but also how these effects are reciprocated through city-regional politics and policy. An additional level of complexity is layered on top of these questions by the diverse institutional and political context in which city-regions are governed, particularly in devolved regions where different tiers of governance overlap to create complex, often contested patterns of authority which may not necessarily coincide with economic boundaries (Giordano and Roller 2003).

Whilst the increasing economic focus on the ‘city-region’ is propelling a need for new governance relationships which can operate across established administrative boundaries, there is limited empirical understanding of the inherently contingent and contested processes of state restructuring and political alliance formation likely to result (L Ward and Jonas 2004). However, these processes are also entangled with potentially ‘wicked’ (Williams 2007) issues such as the promotion of economic competitiveness and environmental protection and enhancement, whilst ensuring social equality.

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Adopting a social constructivist epistemology this research provides an in-depth case study of city-region building activities within South East Wales. Whilst a particular report (Cooke 1992) is widely acknowledged locally to represent the emergence of the city-region agenda within South East Wales, a useful bracket was defined in 2008 by the global economic recession. It is the events within this 16 year time period that receive the majority of critical analytical attention and for which evidence was collected and analysed to test certain elements of the wide body of theory which comprises this research field. While this is analysed in much greater detail in the proceeding chapters, the research findings seek to illuminate issues related to: the processes and contexts in which competing spatial narratives emerge and are competed over; the chaotic, messy and iterative institutionalisation of the city-region concept as an outcome of strategic state selectivity and the various tools and techniques through which the objectives of some key actors are furthered whilst others are constrained; and the connection between the discursive construction of city-regionalism and its subsequent materialisation.

1.2 Why this research matters

This research was conducted during the end of what Brenner (2009, 130) describes as the end of the first wave of research on state rescaling and notes that there are ‘signs that this initial phase of theory development and exploratory research is now reaching maturity.’ This research will be published on the cusp of a ‘second wave’ of research, a period Brenner (2009, 133) states is

an opportune moment for researches to elaborate more creative, adventurous methodological procedures designed to illuminate exactly how, when, where and why processes of state rescaling unfold, how such processes evolve over time, and how they impact various realms of political-economic life.

Theoretically, this research matters because it directly responds to this challenge by: i) providing a detailed empirical account of state restructuring within a specific context; ii) challenging theoretical accounts of city-regions which position them as a contingent response to globalising economic imperatives; iii) shedding light on previously under-researched aspects of city-regionalism by reflexively re-interpreting the relationship between cities and their hinterlands, and examining the role of collective consumption

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within city-regional politics of scale; and iv) by developing a new, theoretically-informed methodological approach to uncovering and analysing these processes by forging links between discursive processes and material change.

Although not the primary intention of this research it also holds policy relevance for the ongoing evolution of spatial planning and economic governance within Wales and the rest of the UK. In particular, the important role of strategic spatial planning in Wales provides a distinct contrast to the abolition of regional planning in England following the recent election of a Conservative-Liberal Democrat government who promptly abolished spatial planning and all existing regional spatial strategies. It is unclear what form of state restructuring will unfold from this process. The findings from this research will be able to provide policy makers with a more nuanced understanding of the process through which city-regions can be created, shaped, and contested.

1.3 Drawing together the research strands for uncovering and explaining city-regionalism in South East Wales

Numerous theoretical strands from a variety of research fields have been melded together to appropriately situation and direct this dissertation. Broadly, these strands have been drawn on and fused together in order to provide the following key inter-related elements through which the story of city-regionalism in South East Wales is told. First, a theoretical framework of inter-related concepts has been derived in order to guide the research by determining what particular aspects of city-regionalism should be focused on. The theoretical framework is used to identify significant debates and knowledge gaps and from this platform appropriate research aims and objectives are derived. Second, an analytical framework has been developed to structure both the collection of data and the analysis and presentation of research findings. Third, an interpretive framework has been developed which aligns with the study's ontology and epistemology and assists in connecting the different concepts within the theoretical framework together. The interpretive framework also helps to underline the logic through which

causation and correlation of events is determined and provides a link to events which are separated as a result of the artificial divisions created by the analytical framework.

1.3.1 A theoretical framework

The theoretical framework that has been developed to achieve the main research aim is drawn together from numerous fields of research. Broadly, these fields can be categorized as the 'new regionalism' and the political economy of scale. Fused together, they provide: the context in which the arguments presented in this research can be considered; the research gaps the research seeks to address; and the conceptual and methodological tools necessary for uncovering and interpreting data. In building the main arguments and research methodologies, insights from a number of associated strands of research are drawn on to enhance the theoretical robustness of this work.

New Regionalism

The impetus for the interest in city-regionalism from an academic perspective lies in the provocative re-emergence of the concept within policy-making spheres. Within this context two key research themes are revealed through the literature. First, there is the idea that the city-region represents the most appropriate scale of governance through which competitiveness within a global knowledge economy can be pursued. This interpretation builds heavily on the 'new regionalism'. The second research theme considers city-regions as socially constructed and continually shifting outcomes of socio-political processes. This interpretation builds heavily on the political economy of scale.

The new regionalism provides the foundation for understanding the city-region as a desirable policy outcome. Here the city-region is predominantly interpreted as a governance issue arising in response to factors such as wider economic transformations, international benchmarking exercises and the close relationship between policy makers, decision makers and academics, and a perceived inability of the national state to manage market failures.

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In addition to shedding light on the main reasons for the re-emergence of the city-region concept within policy making, the key debates within the new regionalism direct research attention towards the main objectives, significant events and the main governmental processes through which city-regions are developed. For example, key discourses such as 'competitiveness' are strongly connected to the city-region concept (see: Bristow 2005). The examination of regional economic development orthodoxy then helps to identify the governance characteristics that particular places are seen as requiring to ensure their competitiveness (see for example: Storper 1997; A Amin 1999; A.J. Scott 1988a; Morgan 1997; Cooke and Morgan 1998; Porter 1998; 1990). Contributions from economic geography provide explanations for the territorial impacts of economic change as well accounts of the strategies and institutional responses within those strategies (Herrschel and Newman 2002).

The new regionalism debates also highlight the political dimensions of city-regional policy making. In particular, the inherently normative nature of the competitiveness discourse is identified. Following this the governance of city-regions can no longer be interpreted simply as a new approach to economic development but must also be considered as a mechanism creating both 'winners' and 'losers' (see Bristow 2005). From this perspective defining 'what' a city-region is becomes a much less interesting task than exploring 'why' and 'how' city-regions are created.

The concept's embrace within European, National and sub-national tiers of government present multiple possible avenues of research. However, connecting academic debates to policy-making activities (see for example: ODPM 2006) assists in identifying the key scales of governance and areas of collective consumption (such as transport, economic development, planning, waste and housing) which operate as the sites through which city-regions are operationalised. The potential for sub-regional policy making driven by imperatives of economic competitiveness to contribute towards the widening of social inequalities (see: R Martin 2005; Turok 2004) then emerges as an important area where research is needed.

The Political Economy of Scale

While the new regionalism provides an important context for the current research it does not sufficiently provide the methodological and conceptual tools required to critically assess the city-region concept from a critical, bottom-up, and process-based perspective. It is here that the body of work on state restructuring, and more specifically, the political economy of scale, is drawn upon. These studies, whilst not representing a coherent body of work, broadly seek to uncover and explain the changing geographies of statehood through investigations into the dynamic and fluid dimensions of state power (see: Brenner 2009). Within this context, the political and institutional dimensions of city-regionalism are explored and rather than a static object of research attention, the city-region becomes a dynamic rescaling process, rooted in particular places yet at the same time linked to wider social structures. As highlighted by Marston (2000), once scales are accepted as social constructions, recognition must also then be given towards their contingent nature as a result of social, economic and political processes.

Many approaches have been developed to study scale and rescaling processes (Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones 2006). In this study 'rescaling processes' refers primarily to how new scales are created from previously 'fixed' scales, thereby providing new forms and contingencies (Brenner 2004). In developing new frameworks, categories and methodologies to undertake these investigations the concept of scale has emerged as a powerful tool used to progress theoretical debates from a static understanding of geographical territory towards a more sophisticated understanding of state restructuring in which space becomes an additional variable for consideration, alongside society and political structures (Herrschel and Newman 2002).

The literature on the political economy of scale makes it clear that the theoretical value of studying city-regionalism does not lie in providing a descriptive-analytical account of different forms that city-regions may take across multiple sites of implementation followed by policy recommendations for a particular case. Instead, scales of governance

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(such as the city-region) should be viewed as perpetually forming and dissolving as part of ‘historically contingent social processes that are always part of larger-scale territorial transformations (Paasi 2001, 8). From an empirical perspective this literature suggests additional objects for research attention such as ‘the process of enrolling particular actors and networks into scalar constructions’ (Bulkeley 2005, 880), the scalar tools and strategies employed by actors in attempts to wrest control over particular scales (see for example: K Jones 1997; Allmendinger and Haughton 2009), and to uncover the complex relationships and interdependencies amongst actors.

City-Regions

Based on the new regionalism and political economy of scale literature, within this research the city-region is interpreted as ‘an expression, a medium and an outcome of political strategies [and that] processes of rescaling must be understood in terms of the contextually specific political strategies that engendered them’ (Brenner 2009, 127). There are several examples of research which has explored the city-region concept from similar perspectives. This assists not only in confirming the validity of current research approach but this literature also identifies further research gaps while providing additional conceptual tools for understanding specific aspects of city-regionalism.

With respect to research gaps, several empirical studies on city-regions around the world have tended to interpret their emergence as a function of supply-side imperatives (see L Ward and Jonas 2004) that neglect the roles played by drivers that are not global in scale (McGuirk 2007). At the same time, city-regional studies focusing on their emergence through local perspectives do not provide sufficient attention to the effects of processes operating outside of a reified locality (see for example: McCann 2007; Krueger and Savage 2007). Additionally, while previous incarnations of the city-region concept in the 1910s, ‘30s, ‘60s and ‘70s bear few similarities to the concept’s modern manifestation, a prevailing ‘core city’ centrism can be identified within these ‘local’ perspectives. In subscribing to an ontology where causal significance is only provided towards forces

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emanating from the core city outwards to the hinterland, our understanding of the evolution of city-regions represents only a partial picture. Similar sentiments can be expressed for other under-researched areas such as the role of the national state or provision of collective consumption (L Ward and Jonas 2004).

With respect to the additional conceptual tools provided by these studies, an important input is provided towards how policy making agenda may be able to concurrently incorporate potentially antithetical imperatives such as economic development and environmental protection or competitiveness and social equality. Concepts such as the sustainability-fix (While, Jonas, and Gibbs 2004) and social reproduction (Krueger and Savage 2007) are discussed in terms of their potential as analytical approaches to better understand policy strategies which incorporate potentially opposing strategic objectives.

1.3.2 An analytical framework

The new regionalism and political economy of scale and the more specific studies on city-regions contribute towards a richer understanding of relationships between social, economic and political processes and struggles. However, there are suggestions that the politics of scale as a conceptual tool lacks the power to uncover the types of interactions and mechanisms through which scale actually engenders power (see: Haarstad and Floystrand 2007; Prytherch 2006). In response, a number of different strands of knowledge are brought together to provide both an appropriate framework for collecting and presenting data on the development of city-regionalism in South East Wales and to also provide a theoretically justified explanation of causality between the separated analytical categories. The categories developed to analyse the process through which city-regionalism in South East Wales developed are:

- narrative construction
- institutionalisation
- materialisation

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Insights drawn from work infusing geographical and social analysis with the study of language and culture (summarised in: Lees 2004; see also: A Jones 2006; Gonzalez 2006; Prytherch 2006) provides the additional theoretical context through which the narrative construction of city-regionalism is explored. Here the politics of scale framework is redefined to include greater attention to discursive elements whereby key actors ‘engage in a discursive strategy to make their scalar political project seem as natural, normal and legitimate as possible (Gonzalez 2006, 838). This approach closely chimes with a rich body of work within urban and regional planning (see: Healey 1999; 2004; Throgmorton 2003; Flyvbjerg 2002; Coop and H Thomas 2007) and in particular it attunes the research towards the potential interaction between competing city-regional narratives and suggests a potential pathway through which they are developed and refined. It enjoins the research to provide consideration for uncovering how actors construct images about space and how these images are contested over and are subsequently embedded within institutional settings. Studies from international relations (see for example A Jones 2006) are drawn on in developing this framework as they have demonstrated the use of narratives as discursive aspects of the politics of scales in advancing normative agendas within territorially-defined scales of governance.

It is recognised however, that the activities of social actors take place within broader structural contexts – such as those provided by institutions and institutional norms – which both enable and constrain action (Hajer 1995). Additionally, Jessop (2002a) argues that new scales can only be operationalised as a means to strategic ends if they are able to achieve a sufficient degree of institutional thickness. Bringing together these insights it is argued that for the city-region agenda to lead to substantive changes the discourses comprising the narrative must be incorporated and supported within rescaled institutional settings. However, whilst Paasi (2001) cautions that region building activities entail the construction of unstable institutional arrangements as the different interests of those included in the process are accentuated as they are brought together, the purpose of analysing the changing institutional structures at the city-region scale is to provide detail on the intermediary phase between scalar narratives which set out the parameters and ambition of social actors and the realisation of these aims.

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The materialisation of the city-region agenda in South East Wales represents the third analytical component that has been developed to structure the case study of this phenomenon. Harding (2007a) has noted that within city-regional studies there has been a raft of studies which focus solely on discursive transformations whilst failing to empirically demonstrate either the transformations or any material changes caused as a result of these processes. Additionally, Ward and Jonas (2004) and Lovering (2007) separately consider the philosophies of liberalism and Marxism (and their contemporary neo-Smithian and neo-Marxist extents) and note that they are both significant for what they fail to provide to our understandings of city-regions and regeneration, respectively. Together these articles highlight a) a need to further consider the role of the nation state within the formation of city-regions and to widen explanations for city-regional formations to include determinants such as infrastructure provision, housing, land use, sustainable development and other aspects of collective consumption; and b) a need to focus on the material result of the 'strategies, tactics, negotiations and conflict-resolution potential among the players involved' in regeneration processes (Lovering 2007, 363). Admittedly, there is little academic overlap between city-regional studies and urban regeneration however the comparison is useful for several reasons. Broadly, both city-regionalism and urban regeneration represent normative, urban-centric attempts to improve the quality of life for residents within and around the proximate areas in which activities are located. Additionally, contemporary city-regional strategies are often predicated around urban regeneration and through the implementation of associated policies. Therefore, the comments from both sets of authors serve to reinforce their respective observations for extending an identified knowledge gap within city-regionalism.

To address these gaps and provide the final component of city-regionalism development, the concept of the cultural landscape is employed as an epistemic tool to link discursive and material elements of city-regionalism. In line with Brenner's (2009) call for the development of creative research methodologies to progress our understanding of state spatiality, arguments are presented based on the notion that landscapes can be under-

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stood as ‘discourse materialised’ (Schein 1997, 664) and that the cultural landscape can be used to ‘normalize/neutralize social and cultural practice, to reproduce it, to challenge it’. Adopting this methodology allows us to both consider whether or not the city-region narrative has led to specific changes in the landscapes of South East Wales, and if it has, whether it has played a role in normalising the hegemonic discourses inherent to such a narrative. The cultural landscape of transport is identified as an appropriate lens through which these questions can be considered.

Transport provision has been identified as an integral part in the materialisation any city-regional strategy (Morgan 2006a; Marshall 2007), so by focusing on this aspect of the cultural landscape several knowledge gaps are addressed. First, transport provision as collective consumption remains an under-researched aspect of city-regionalism (L Ward and Jonas 2004). Second, adopting insights from narrative-based approaches to region-building (A Jones 2006; Hajer 1995; Paasi 2001), the politics of scale (K Jones 1997; Smith 1992a; Gonzalez 2006; Paasi 2004; Moore 2008), and the cultural landscape (Schein 1997; Prytherch 2006) allows a tangible connection to be made between the discursive positioning inherent to city-regionalism and the previously ambiguous material effects (Harding 2007a).

1.3.3 An interpretive framework

The theoretical and analytical frameworks, when considered in conjunction with the approach adopted for analysing data (see Chapter Three), effectively form an interpretive framework for the study. The interpretive framework represents an internally consistent ontological and epistemological position and performs an important role in connecting together the various conceptual devices and analytical categories. As previously alluded to, an important concept underpinning the theoretical and analytical frameworks refers to narratives and their particular role within processes of region-building and state restructuring. However, to effectively interpret narratives attention needs to be directed towards the different discursive threads which coalesce to form coherent narratives through which reality is interpreted and from which policy and implementation proceeds.

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To analyse the vast amounts of data generated through the collection of documentary sources and interview transcriptions, qualitative documentary analysis was merged with discourse analysis to provide a robust, coherent and useful approach. This approach was considered the most appropriate because discourse analysis has increasingly been used as a methodology for uncovering and explaining urban and regional policy processes and, in particular, the ways in which power is exercised by key actors (Jacobs 2006). It has also been used to understand the links between hegemony and the processes of state rescaling (see: A Jones 2006; Gonzalez 2006; Prytherch 2007). Broadly, researchers utilising discourse analysis are concerned with highlighting both the interpretive context (social setting) in which the discourse is located and how the discourse is created and its authority established (Jacobs 2006). In this sense the underlying theories informing the approach to analysing data have also helped contribute towards identifying particular objects of research. This is because analytical attention of discourse analysis is directed towards the ‘arenas’ in which different interest groups seek to establish a particular narrative or versions of events as a means to pursue political objectives (Jacobs 2006, 39). In addition to helping direct attention to certain aspects of city-regionalism, the methodological implications of discourse analysis also play an important role (alongside the theoretical framework) in providing a deeper explanation of the interplay between competing city-regional narratives and subsequent implications. The examination of emergent city-regional narratives is provided with additional relative importance because the rhetoric associated with the policy making debates not only influence the relationships between key actors but it also highlights them, thereby the researcher to position and group different sets of actors according to their subscription to certain agendas.

1.4 Dissertation structure

The thesis consists of eight separate chapters. Chapter Two presents a discussion of the key sources of literature that were reviewed to situate and inform the research. The two key fields of literature used to inform the research include new regionalism and work on the processes of state restructuring. Finally, insights from cultural geography are provided in the form of consideration for the role of narratives in wider state processes

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of state spatiality, and for the concept of the cultural landscape. The chapter is arranged according to a three broad categories asking why city-regions are an area of interest, what is the way the concept should be understood, and how can it be studied. Where appropriate, connections between contemporary policy making processes and their underlying theoretical influences are described.

Chapter Three outlines the approach and methodology adopted to fulfil the aims and objectives of the research. Details of the research process are provided, potential alternative approaches to the research are considered and the researcher's own positionality is reflected upon. The detailed discussion over the use of discourse analysis within the research operates alongside the theoretical and analytical frameworks to provide an appropriate interpretive framework through which the research is undertaken and the evidence analysed.

Chapter Four provides a detailed description of South East Wales in order to appropriately situate the current research. The chapter first addresses the administrative changes to government and governance in South East Wales and secondly details the socio-economic context of the region, highlighting key differences between Cardiff and the surrounding area. While consisting of an assemblage of data the importance provided to the local context in interpreting research findings means that the scope of information contained in this chapter is heavily informed by the theoretical framework developed in Chapter Two.

Chapter Five marks the first of three chapters presenting and analysing empirical findings. This chapter details the naissance of the city-region agenda in South East Wales by focusing on the emergence of various competing narratives which seek to define the problems to which city-regionalism should address and the solutions which unfold from the particular framings. The chapter focuses on key events between 1992 and 2002 in which three competing narrative emerge from local actors within South East Wales and identifies key aspects of interplay between them. Wider processes of governance are

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drawn on to help explain the contextual characteristics through which they emerge and why they subsequently fail to secure sufficient social and institutionalisation.

Chapter Six presents and analyses the empirical findings in relation to the second phase of city-regionalism which occurred between 2002 and 2008. Analytical attention is directed towards the discursive and territorialising activities of the national Welsh state as it seeks to institutionalise a re-defined interpretation of city-regionalism within South East Wales. It also reflects on the reactive actions of key actors and particularly those of Cardiff Council. The activities of these key actors are compared with particular regard to differential territorial ambitions, and their contrasting approaches to securing legitimacy for their city-regional interpretations including use of technical studies, collaborative planning and integration with multi-scalar networks.

Chapter Seven is the final chapter of empirical analysis and it provides evidence of the links between discursive and institutional elements of the city-region agenda in South East Wales and its materialisation within the cultural landscape of transport. Following consideration for a surprising lack of conflict as the narrative is materialised, attention is directed towards the role of the landscape in solidifying the local hegemonic interpretation of city-regionalism and the processes through which this was achieved. Connections between the key discourses informing the dominant narrative and their manifestation within the transport sector are analysed. Key features of transport provision and provision which are analysed include a proposed M4 relief road, the dualling of the Heads of the Valleys road, and the re-opening of disused passenger rail lines into Cardiff.

Chapter eight summarises the key points of the empirical analysis as presented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven and considers them through the lens of the main research aim and sub-questions.

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Chapter nine revisits the core arguments that are made by the research, the key contributions that are provided to academics and policy makers, and outlines future research challenges.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

As stated in the previous chapter, the core research question this research responds to is how do powerful city-regional narratives become materialised. To uncover the role played by processes of insitutionalisation in mediating the construction of narratives and material change, several distinct strands of knowledge are brought together in this chapter. The following discussion provides an appropriate theoretical context for this study, identifies and evaluates previous research undertaken in this area, clarifies key terms and concepts, and identify the key knowledge gaps that are addressed. The literature reviewed in this chapter is primarily drawn from the fields of the ‘new regionalism’ and the political economy of scale. However, it is also incorporates insights drawn from a number of diverse threads from human geography (including economic, cultural and critical geography), political economy, international relations, and urban and regional planning. These discussions subsequently guide the methodological and empirical dimensions of the research.

In conducting the literature review it is recognised that all attempts to explain the complex social processes involved in city-regionalism will ultimately provide only a partial representation. However, to ensure that the most important aspects of the ‘story’ of city-regionalism in South East Wales are considered the chapter progresses according to a categorical schema which separates city-regionalism according to three distinct elements; namely it queries the *why*, *what* and *how* of contemporary city-regionalism

To better understand *why* city-regions re-emerged as an object of political (and academic) interest the chapter initially focuses on contemporary city-regional policy in the UK and links it to the academic theories upon which such spatial logics are based. This discussion is heavily informed by the new regionalism and associated fields of study while city-regionalism in this context can most appropriately be considered as an issue of governance. It serves to identify the primary reasons why city-regional narratives are constructed, where the core elements of these narratives have emerged from and what

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they are seeking to achieve, who the key actors involved in the creation and contestation of city-region agendas are,, and the normative basis upon which arguments for the city-region have traditionally been based.

The discussion is then pointed towards uncovering *what* the city-region is. Here the focus is not explicitly concerned with characterising the key elements of a city-regional policy framework but more on clarifying how the city-region is conceptualised for the purposes of this research. It is argued that there is little theoretical mileage to be gained from continuing the new regional approach to studying new forms of the state simply as optimal governance arrangements. Rather, there are significant knowledge gaps with respect to the processes through which city-regions are established. An approach drawing heavily on the political economy of scale is advanced as the most appropriate research pathway for addressing these gaps, particularly because it enables the development of a methodology that can uncover the relationships between the construction of narratives and their materialisation.

A key question addressed by this research is how should research be designed to understand the relationships between the construction of narratives and material change? The third part of the chapter develops a theoretically-grounded framework through which the evolution of city-regionalism can be traced by artificially demarcating three discrete dimensions that are used to describe *how* city-regions are established. This framework consists of three intersecting dimensions: narrative construction, institutionalisation, and materialisation. These three dimensions are identified through the literature as key components of rescaling and region-building processes. Importantly, the literature also demonstrates how the social processes inherent to each discrete dimension can be tied together as part of wider processes of changing state spatiality. As such, the three stage framework developed in this research to show how city-regional narratives become materialised has been developed for several reasons. These are: a) to describe and analyse inter-related social processes in a way that accounts for their evolution over time within a particular context; b) to identify elements of causality over this period of time;

and c) to allow for comparisons to be made by future research efforts in other geographical contexts.

2.2 Part One: *Why, city-regionalism*

The city-region as a concept is not entirely new but been used both to explain social phenomena and inform policy making. Parr (2005) provides a brief overview of the concept's general lineage, noting that while slight differences are apparent as the concept emerged throughout the 20th century, the focus centres on relationships between core cities and the areas which surround them. Geddes (1915) used the term 'conurbation' to point towards growth processes stemming from industrial expansion and rail transport which led to the coalescence of urban areas (also see: Davies 1972). McKenzie (1933) used the term 'metropolitan community' while considering the economic and social influences of large cities on surrounding areas. Friedmann and Miller (1964) drew attention to the key role of large cities within spatial organisation, whilst Boudeville (1966) highlighted the negative effects within a wider region which arose from the development of a growth pole. Cumulatively these examples focused either on the different sets of processes (e.g. transport, housing) on urban areas and/or the effects of a core city (or growth pole) on its surrounding region, with the focus remaining largely confined to academic circles (Parr 2005).

This academic-centrism changed dramatically during the 1960s and 1970s as the work of Dickenson (Dickenson 1967), Senior (1966) and the Redcliffe-Maud Review of Local Government in 1969 (Great Britain 1969) fostered new links between academic and policy worlds. The Redcliffe-Maud Review assessed the potential of the 'city-region' to serve as the ideal delivery scale for strategic planning. The Commission's report suggested 58 new unitary authorities and three metropolitan areas outside London. Derek Senior (an important member of the commission) questioned the ability of the Commission's city-regions to delivery urban and rural governance in an integrated way (N Ward 2005) and in response (Great Britain 1969) advocated the creation of a two tier system of 38 'city regions' and 148 districts. However, neither proposal was ever included in any subsequent legislation (Parr 2005) arguably, because of the difficulties

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accommodating for the often antagonistic relationships between cities and the areas which surround them (N Ward 2005).

This begs the question as to why the city-region concept emerged more strongly in policy discussions around the appropriate governance of large urban areas in the UK in the late 1990s / early 2000s. It is argued here that three broad policy drivers can be identified: the capacity to govern functional economic geographies; international benchmarking and policy transfer; and the inability of the central state to manage market failure. These categories are by no means mutually exclusive and specific city-region formations may often be predicated around multiple logics.

2.2.1 Functional economic geographies

An important reason why city-regions were again a topic of political and professional discussion was because they were identified as the optimal spatial scale at which to manage functional economic geographies. Functional economic geographies refer to the connections and relationships between core urban areas and their surrounding territory in terms of where people live and work, and where they access a range of public and private services (ODPM 2006). Additionally it refers to business supply chains and accessibility between firms and producer services (ibid.). A consensus emerged which held that administrative regions and local authorities were no longer the most appropriate scale for enacting policy interventions across a range of service areas with the city-region possessing greater economic and social resonance. The ODPM report, *A Framework for City-Regions* (2006, 5), succinctly summed up this logic:

Regions are generally too large to capture the most important functional linkages and the geography of everyday life. Districts are invariably too small to be considered ideal 'units' for strategic decision-making in key areas such as transport, economic development, planning and housing. Serious interest in city-regions has grown as the 'reach' of core cities has expanded, making their formal boundaries increasingly outdated, and because of the recognition that the functional nature of city-regions makes them increasingly appropriate for a range of strategic issues.

Cities as they were bound were deemed to no longer reflect the economic and social structures characterising society (Parr 2005). In response, the city-region paradigm

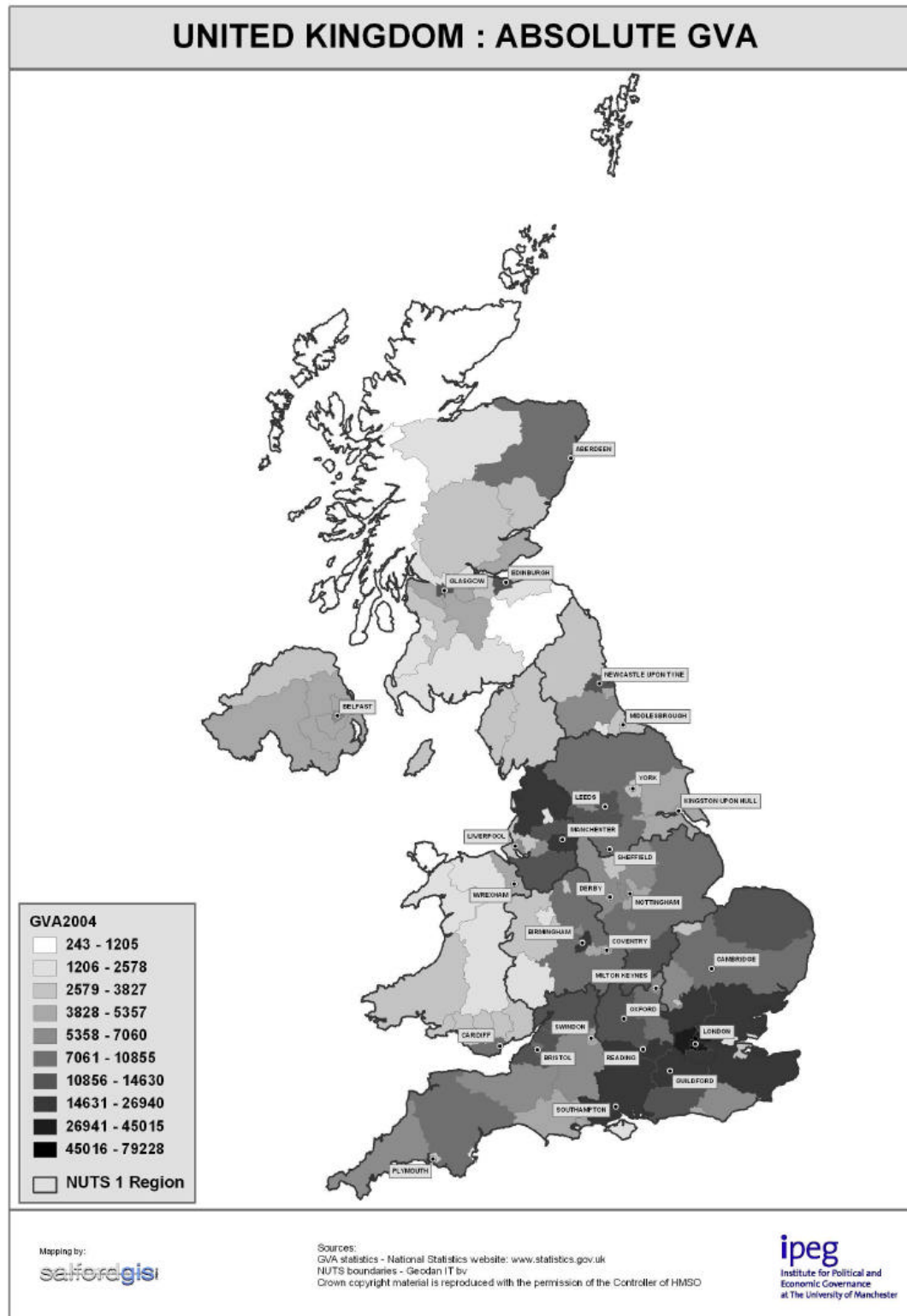
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became an ideal organising principal for the strategic planning of sub-regional logistic (including marketing) and infrastructure systems ultimately designed to foster productivity advantages through processes of agglomeration (ibid).

The OPDM report underscores this notion by using Gross Value Added (GVA) data to show that major city-regions in the UK outperform their surrounding regions and demonstrate higher rates of growth. Figure 2-1 (ODPM 2006) shows the distribution of GVA across the UK in 2004 and illustrates that the areas with the greatest concentrations of total economic output are mostly found in the south of England. Outside this area the significant concentrations of economic strength are found around the core cities of Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham, Bristol, Newcastle, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen (Harding 2007a). In light of these findings, the city-region orthodoxy suggests that these areas should be provided with a mixture of state support, flexible regulatory arrangements and other measures to promote their economic status and overall performance within a global hierarchy of competing city-regions.

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Figure 2-1: NUTS III GVA levels in the UK, 2004 (Harding 2007a)



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The emerging emphasis on the city-region dovetailed with the search for the appropriate scale to achieve economic competitiveness. As Harrison (2007) has shown, the two discourses have been inextricably linked. Scott (1988b) was among the first to demonstrate that the importance of location was actually strengthened through the processes of globalisation. He did this by observing the shift from large, vertically integrated companies to a more flexible marketplace characterised by subcontracting arrangements and independent supplier relationships. Under these arrangements small companies through spatial proximity were able to quickly adjust to market changes by switching subcontracting arrangements rather than investing in physical infrastructure such as a new factory. Thus, the region re-emerged as a category of importance both in terms of analysis and policy-making.

Therefore, alongside intensifying competition within a globalising marketplace certain regions such as Silicon Valley, central Italy, and Baden-Wurttemberg maintained and enhanced their competitive advantage. Following these observations academic interest began to concentrate on identifying the reasons why certain areas were able to succeed under the new market conditions and others were not. It is within this context the territorial concept of *competitiveness* emerged, eventually becoming the dominant orthodoxy driving economic development theory and spatial policy.

Although there is no general consensus over the definition of competitiveness (and this will not be dwelled upon here) it is the policy implications of this 'hegemonic discourse' (Bristow 2005) that are of importance for this study as it allows us to better understand the motivations for particular narrative constructs and how these narratives manifest themselves through the implementation of government policy. Competitiveness has been described from an institutional perspective where sub-national agencies compete directly for investment and other resources and as an informal activity of firms trading in the open market (Turok 2004). However, Michael Storper's definition (1997, 264) has found particular resonance with UK policy makers. Storper's definition, based on a conceptualisation of territorial competitiveness which links regional competitiveness and regional prosperity, defines it as,

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the capability of a region to attract and keep firms with stable or increasing market shares in an activity, while maintaining stable or increasing standards of living for those who participate in it' (1997, 264).

Under this definition the state assume an important role in creating market conditions and leads policy makers to question what the physical, economic, social and institutional resources or assets of a territorial area are that influence the performance of firms within that area (Turok 2004). This connection between regional economic performance and spatial policy became instrumental in progressing the policy orthodoxy of the 'new regionalism' as the UK Government (in the form of the Department for Trade and Industry, HM Treasury and the now defunct ODPM) and the European Commission both embraced competitiveness as a strategic policy aim. However, as the concept's profile grew it also began to draw nuanced opposition with regard to its utility at both national and sub-national scales. While territorial competitiveness is a widely contested term at the national scale (see: Reich 1990, 925; Krugman 1997, 5; Kitson, R Martin, and Tyler 2004), it has had a much stronger resonance at the city-region scale (R Martin 2005, 8). Subsequently, at the sub-national level a range of policy responses have been developed including assistance to vulnerable industries; business subsidies; place marketing and incentives to attract outside investments; city boosterism which aims to highlight flagship events, build iconic physical infrastructure, attract tourism, skilled human talent and public investment, the exploitation of unique 'urban assets' such as highly trained local labour pools, university commercialisation potential, and institutional networks (Turok 2004). This array of policy approaches reflects the various theories that have emerged which explain why economic competitiveness may best be created at the city-region scale.

One research strand stemming from endogenous growth theory highlighted the important roles played by economic externalities and economies of scale associated with spatial clustering and specialisation. Largely based on the work of Porter (1990; 1998), places which specialise in certain industries and their associated upstream and downstream links are perceived to 'benefit from the scale economies of agglomeration and advantages associated with specialization' (A Amin 1999, 368). The fundamental thrust of this argument is that the spatial clustering of related industries, skilled labour and

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technological innovations comprise primary ingredients for growth and competitiveness. As Parkinson (2004, 4) writes:

Production costs are lower by being shared with common social and physical infrastructure. Second, transportation and transaction costs may be reduced as a consequence of enhances interaction between suppliers and customers located side by side.

Subsequently, attention also focused on the role played by localisation economies. This idea holds that firms are attracted more by the advantages of being close to a large amount of potential customers, suppliers and competitors and this close spatial proximity in turn leads to shared understandings and transactions (Storper 1997). However, despite a sound theoretical and empirical foundation, these theories do not adequately explain the sources of localised advantages.

During the early 1990s the 'new institutionalism' merged with the new economic geography and arguments were made claiming that the key to the success of some regions under globalising forces was not a direct function of their physical assets or resources but

through the emergence of socially and institutionally mediated forms of selective co-operation between actors...Institutions provide the basis for localised social and economic networks and contacts and, consequently, it is argued that strong local institutional relations may act as a prelude to regional economic success (Raco 1999, 951).

From this premise a number of theories developed to explain and identify the conditions which best facilitate innovation-based and hence competitive regional economies. For example, Amin and Thrift (1994, 11) argue that in the face of globalisation, economic intervention directed towards sub-national scales could counter higher order economic realities so that 'global processes [could be] 'pinned down' in some places, to become the basis for self-sustaining growth at the local level'. By including social and cultural factors to traditional economic factors of success they developed the concept of 'institutional thickness' to describe the ensemble of local conditions favourable to economic growth. These included a strong institutional presence, high levels of formal and informal interaction, as well as a common agenda and coordination.

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In a similar vein Storper (1995; 1997) posits that the development of ‘untraded interdependencies’ between firms constitute the recipe for economic success. These include a constellation of ‘soft factors’ such as public institutions, rules, routines, networks, customs and values alongside market-based competition. Taken together these factors facilitate the development of technological and organisational change as well as the production of non-standardised goods which are necessarily regionalised (Raco 1999).

Morgan (1997) introduced the concept of the ‘learning region’ stressing that regional economic success is contingent upon the utilisation and generation of knowledge, networked cooperation, and the presence of interconnected social and economic institutions. The spatial proximity of these territorially defined assets also plays a key role in these processes which allow the firms which constitute a regional economy anticipate, adjust, and shape market demands. Extending on these ideas Cooke and Morgan (1998) suggest that interactive networking alongside governmental activity encourages economic development and lessons from successful regions elsewhere in the world can be imported and appropriately adjusted to stimulate less successful regions such as Wales. This idea of transference is an important key for understanding the second factor for the re-emergence of city-regions and is discussed further below.

However, with the re-emergence of city-regionalism, authors such as Turok (2004) focused more on the effects of competitiveness-rooted policies rather than their theoretical justification. This research helps to highlight the potential for territorially-based concepts such as city-regionalism to engender conflict between certain groups within these areas. Turok (ibid) notes that place-based competition (whereby subsidies and other means are used to promote the relocation of business) can be interpreted as a zero-sum game since the success of one area could come at the expense of another. Within a context whereby city-regions are understood to have emerged through the conscious actions of vested interests, the re-emergence of city-regionalism presents opportunities for creating both ‘winners’ and ‘losers’. Additionally, place-based competition can also encourage a misallocation of resources in a variety of ways. For instance, rivalry with nearby communities may lead to unnecessary imitation and the duplication of public

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services or it can lead to lost opportunities through an unwillingness to collaborate on knowledge based or physical joint ventures. Symbolic promotional events and incentives for sporting and cultural events may also unwarrantedly draw funding while some important business sectors may lose financial support to less important but higher profile sectors. Martin (2005) and Turok (2004) also remind us that competition can lead to immense human costs and widen social inequalities. A poorer starting condition or certain market forces may reinforce disparities. Alternatively, more privileged cities or regions may become increasingly prosperous. However, these concerns have done little to counter the entrenchment of territorial competitiveness in economic development policy. In this context the ethical and political dimensions of city-regional policy becomes apparent, thereby suggesting that research which looks to explain the development of city-regions must also consider the role played by these factors as part of the processes of policy formulation.

2.2.2 International benchmarking and policy transfer

During the late 1980s and early 1990s the new regionalism began to highlight examples of flourishing regional economies –such as Baden-Wurttemberg in Germany, Emilia-Romagna in Italy, and Silicon Valley in the United States – and numerous attempts were made at dissecting the causal factors underlining their success. Driving this was a hope that once these complex processes were understood then the lessons learned in these successful regions could be transferred to less prosperous areas that were having difficulties coping with the transition to a post-industrial society. However, it became apparent that these same ‘successful’ regions were unable to maintain their competitive advantages so focus began shifting towards examples of successful cities lying within relatively prosperous surrounding areas. For example, Turin in Italy, Lyon in France and Portland in the United States are generally regarded as examples of city-regional success stories. Subsequently, the debate concerning the appropriate scale for delivering economic competitiveness unfolded with theory, politics and practice all progressively converging on the city-region scale.

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Benchmarking and policy transfer are inextricably linked to competitiveness. Benchmarking refers to methodologies which systematically compare the economic performance of an area to that of other competing areas. These comparative methodologies began in Europe in the 1980s and focused on the convergence or divergence of regional fortunes and the specific dynamics of successful or failing regions (Herrschel and Newman 2002). Subsequent efforts focused on European cities and whilst situated within their regional contexts, attention was given to analysing the specifically urban factors which allowed some cities to become more economically successful than others (see: Parkinson et al. 1992). Benchmarking studies played an important role highlighting to policy makers in the UK that UK core cities were not making as significant a contribution towards the national economy relative to that made by cities on the European continent (Parkinson et al. 2004). Here a picture was painted of UK cities

lag[ging] behind their competitors in terms of GDP, innovation levels, educational levels, connectivity, social cohesion, quality of life, political capacity and connections with their wider territories. Crucially, they [also] lag in the eyes of international investors (Parkinson et al. 2004, 5).

Within the UK this realisation led to both top-down efforts to better understand the nature of spatial economies around core urban areas and how a more supportive policy framework could be developed and to bottom-up efforts from key urban areas to draw down resources and bolster performance capacities. This previous statement implicitly suggests that the re-emergence of the city-region concept cannot simply be understood as a pragmatic response to a new economic context but should also be considered as a function of direct action by particular vested interests. In particular, the work of Lovering (1999) argues this point and helped contribute to the shift from a regional to a city-regional policy orthodoxy. From this introduction a number of critical approaches to the city-region concept are discussed to present the academic debate which this research is situated within and contributes towards and to further draw attention to the role played by politics within the development of city-regional agendas and the methods through which they these agendas can be progressed.

While some commentators such as Krugman (2003) concede that competitiveness may be an applicable concept at the regional level, during the late 1990s the new regionalism

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played an important role providing theoretical justification for policy interventions directed towards the regional scale. This was generally acknowledged to come at the expense (or as a result) of a weakening nation state. Lovering (1999) was one of the first to suggest that the close relationship between academics and vested policy makers (a relationship termed the 'theory-policy interface' (Boland 2007)) and the conflation between discourses of globalisation and the knowledge economy promoted questionable theorisations and poor policies (Lovering 1999). While the new regionalist rhetoric appeared fairly robust – it was empirically strong and grounded in a well supported body of theory – Lovering led a critical attack on this work which revolved around conceptual issues, the nature of the theory-policy interface and the ultimate effects of new regionalist policy recommendations.

For Lovering (1999) the new regionalism is constituted by four main features. First, new regionalist findings emerge through highly selective case studies which concentrate on only the positive merits of certain regional economies. Second, the field utilises an inconsistent ontological and epistemological approach to 'the region'. Lovering demonstrates this ambiguity by citing the work of Scott (1998) in which the region is defined only as 'a geographic area of subnational extent.' However, Lovering notes that some of Scott's examples are not actually sub-national while others are American regions physically larger than many European countries. Third, despite these inconsistencies policy recommendations are advanced on the basis of apparent empirical rigour and theoretically-informed conclusions. However, for Lovering the new regionalist arguments are largely descriptive and, demonstrating an inherent 'normative bias,' they result in 'a set of stories about how parts of a regional economy might work, placed next to a set of policy ideals which might just be useful in some cases' (Lovering 1999, 384 emphases removed). Or, in the words of MacKinnon et al. (2002, 304), new regionalist accounts 'rely upon self-reporting by 'boosterist' agents who have a vested interest in verifying the theoretical propositions advanced.' This final concern is heightened by the fourth feature of new regionalism: an extremely close relationship between academic theorists and policy makers. Based on these features Lovering (1999, 390) concludes that 'the

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policy tail is wagging the analytical dog and wagging it so hard that indeed much of the theory is shaken out.'

Lovering's remarks on new regionalism proved particularly influential. As Harrison (2007, 314) writes,

[i]f the new regionalist zenith was achieved with the publication of Storper's 'The Regional World' (1997), Scott's 'Regions and the World Economy' (1998), Keating's 'New Regionalism in Western Europe' (1998) and Cooke and Morgan's 'The Associational Economy' (1998), then it can be argued that the new regionalism reached its nadir a year later with the publication of Lovering's (1999) evocative critique, 'Theory Led by Policy: the Inadequacies of the New Regionalism.'

While a key component of new regionalism was its efficacy in underpinning policy, following the work of Lovering, other critical commentators pointed out additional theoretical shortcomings and the impacts these would have on the generation of sound policies. Importantly, conceptual deficiencies suggest that it becomes impossible for the new regionalism to refer to homogenous economic processes (such as agglomeration) operating within and across regions (L Ward and Jonas 2004). Both Lovering (1999) and Ward and Jonas (2004) point out that the new regionalism also fails to account for causation, i.e. what specifically drives regional economies in different contexts, thereby undermining any lessons which could be learned in successful regions and transferred externally. Additionally, new regional analysis largely leaves out the role played by the state both within processes of restructuring (see: Macleod 2001) and as an active promoter of regional economic fortunes stemming from investment in areas such as defence, health care, education, and infrastructure (L Ward and Jonas 2004).

Following Lovering's article the new regionalism lost some of its lustre within academic communities yet this shift would take several more years to impact policy making trajectories. The UK's Labour party embarked on a wave of regional policy making after coming to power in 1997. Significantly, this agenda included the devolution of power to a newly created Parliament in Scotland, National Assembly in Wales, and a city-wide authority in London with an elected Mayor. Buoyed by these key constitutional and institutional changes, Labour's attention then moved towards the creation of a

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new tier of regional governance through the creation of directly elected regional assemblies. However, these ambitions were brought to a sudden halt following the emphatic rejection in the North East Regional Referendum in 2004 on the Government's proposals for a regional assembly. This was the last key event which finally allowed the concept of the city-region to re-emerge onto the UK's policy landscape as an important organising principle / regulatory framework underpinning the restructuring of economic development. As Harrison writes (2007, 314), following the rejection of elected regional assemblies,

[t]he city-region became an increasingly important arena for the concentration of academic and political interest in the quest to embrace the hegemonic discourse of competitiveness.

This is not to suggest that contemporary city-regionalism re-emerged at a discrete and identifiable moment. Indeed, there has been an almost continual debate over the role that policy interventions designed around various scales can play in contributing towards economic development. It is also not to suggest that the regional scale has been entirely ejected from praxis – the evolving roles of un-elected regional assemblies and regional development agencies within England's strategic policy-making architecture attest that this was not the case. However, it does reinforce the process through which the city-region concept became firmly established within an already complex institutional landscape of policy making and service delivery. As new institutional partnerships emerged and established themselves within this policy landscape (e.g. around the Core City areas) critical academic attention wondered whether the 'city-regionalism ha[d] rescaled rather than resolved the problems by collapsing the weaknesses identified in the new regionalism into the new city-regionalism' (Harrison 2007, 321).

As competitiveness-rooted policies and discourses began to take root at the city-region scale, other academics took the opportunity to revisit some of the old debates. Jonas and Ward (2007a, 169) in particular state that the re-emergence of the city-region concept has 'been constructed around a rather narrow set of empirical and theoretical issues relating to exchange, interspatial competition and globalization.' The authors claim that city-regions are recognised almost entirely as functional economic spaces and therefore

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for their economic (trade) and political (regulatory) functions. They (2007a, 171) write that

city-regions are, firstly, economic territories because of their role in stimulating trade, creativity, innovation and entrepreneurialism and, second, political territories because within them can be found autonomously developed regulatory and decision-making capacities.

Through this argument the authors identify a significant gap in our understanding of city-regions. In particular they direct attention towards how little is known of 'how new territorial forms are constructed politically and reproduced through everyday acts and struggles around consumption and social reproduction' (2007a, 170). Symptomatic of this narrow understanding is a neglect of the role of the state and the politics of distribution occurring at a variety of sites, scales and spaces across city-regions. This echoes the earlier suggestion by Parr (2005) that previous attempts to implement city-regional governance structures may have failed because of an inability to properly consider the role of social dynamics operating within urban-rural relationships; in constructing city-regions it is these types of variables that are highly affected by the politics of distribution.

Given the evolutionary relationship between the new regionalism and the re-emergence of the city-region concept these debates help to sensitise the researcher to a number of issues. The first is that both spatial approaches appear to be driven by demands for the rescaling of political power and institutional restructuring in order to contribute towards the supply-side of economic development. These demands themselves are structured by the dominant worldview which positions cities and regions within a global hierarchy. Under this aegis policy objectives (and therefore policy options) are constrained by an overarching imperative of improving territorial competitiveness.

This leads to the second issue which highlights the broader political context in which the city-region debate unfolds. MacKinnon et al. (2002, 3-4) warn that 'there is a danger that 'new regionalist' approaches might ultimately support and legitimize elite groups' efforts to construct and promote 'regional agendas' which mask the unequal power relations between particular interests.' As new regionalist policies appear to have been

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unproblematically rescaled to the city-region level the lack of critical attention to processes beyond supply-side measures promoting economic development thereby emerges as a legitimate and important object of research interest. In this sense it becomes clear that city-regions do not emerge as ontologically-given territorial constructions; rather the literature above suggests that the re-emergence of the city-region concept within certain places is the outcome of powerful social relations driven by larger scale transformations within global society. That is, the re-emergence of city-regions can be understood as political projects which find their form through iterative interactions between key social discourses and the politics operating within a given space. The strategic pursuit of a successful knowledge-based economy underwritten by a commitment to competitiveness vis-à-vis other places constitutes one of the key policy discourses around which the concept of the city-region circulates. Additionally, critiques of government policies derived from new regionalist thinking and the recognition that current explanations for the re-emergence are centred on a narrow set of considerations opens the door for more robust analyses of city-regions. These analyses would include the possibility that there may be multiple perspectives on pathways for enhancing territorial competitiveness and that the spatial policy discourses which would emerge from these perspectives would subsequently influence city-regional agendas in ways that reflect the particular contexts in which they unfold.

Box 2-1: Defining Competitive City-Regionalism

An appreciation for the importance of 'functional economic geographies' and the need to perform well against newly developed international benchmarking have contributed towards what will be referred to in this dissertation as 'competitive city-regionalism'. This concept is based on an interpretation of the city-region which includes the following key characteristics:

- Primary purpose: To create an environment that will facilitate the growth of indigenous private enterprise and attract mobile foreign investment within high value-added knowledge economy sectors.
- Governance: Public-private partnerships
- Policy scope: Predominantly supply-side policies focusing on areas such as marketing, the provision of employment land and office facilities, and the development of high profile and highly visible physical regeneration within the urban area.
- Role of the city: To grow as a site of high-value added employment activities
- Role of the surrounding areas: To provide an extended labour pool for supporting growth and to appear alongside the core urban area within marketing efforts
- Role of national state: unclear and variable

2.2.3 Coping with market failure

Finally, a third cause for the re-emergence of city-regions was their positioning as an institutional coping mechanism for multiple forms of market failure. This expansive category can include dysfunctions which can occur between labour supply and demand, housing supply and demand (G Clark 2005), and environmental deterioration. For example, during the late 1990s and early years of the 21st century it became commonplace for news headlines in UK to describe stories of either housing market overheating or large scale abandonment. Rarely were these presented as related issues. However, the city-region represents an appropriate spatial scale of intervention through which these issues can be treated as a single policy matter (see: The Mersey Partnership 2007; Leeds City Region Partnership 2009). Similar scenarios have unfolded with respect to mismatches between the labour requirements of employers and the available labour supply (see: G Clark 2005; ODPM 2006). In addition to the UK, parts of France, Germany and the Netherlands have all looked towards city-regions as the most appropriate spatial scale to coordinate policy efforts and integrate cross-sector implementation in order to effectively deal with these issues. Thus, the elevated priority given to city-regionalism underlined growing concerns that the central state was no longer able to adequately regulate and manage its own internal economies. Across Continental Europe this idea has been reinforced through the principle of subsidiarity and growing dissatisfaction with widening levels of inter-regional inequality (Parr 2005).

Additionally, the continuing degradation of the natural environment is arguably one of the most significant market failures of the current economic epoch and has driven various coping strategies managed across a multitude of scales. While the first two factors driving the re-emergence of the city-region concept can be associated with imperatives of competitiveness in an international market economy, this third factor has been more closely linked in the UK to a wider global commitment to sustainable development. While the tangible effects of this discourse have been felt more within the realms of rhetoric than concrete action, multi-scalar and cross-sectoral commitments to reducing the negative impacts of economic growth can be observed. These include the creation of localised downstream payment for ecosystem service (PES) arrangements,

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state-wide biodiversity offsetting schemes (e.g. New South Wales, Australia), supranational directives imposing strict limits on waste and pollution (e.g. in the European Union) and global trading programmes to deal with greenhouse gas emissions as established by the Kyoto Protocol. Along with these levels of intervention, the city-region was promoted as an appropriate spatial scale to manage the environmental challenges posed by urban expansion and industrial processes. In a speech to senior civic leaders responsible for the ongoing regeneration of Belfast, Greg Clark (2005) extolled the virtues of the city-region as a means to address ‘the challenges of sprawl, the challenge of car dependency, the legacy of industrial pollution and the environmental damage which it causes, and the need to tackle those things.’ While this aspect of city-regionalism did not experience the same high profile or influence in comparison to measures designed to promote economic development it did mark an important extension in the utility of the concept and the terms around which it has been debated.

Despite a nod to the tripartite relationship between balanced social, environmental and economic considerations, most academic work on sustainability focuses on natural or resource limits and more environmental perspectives (Dobson 2003). This bias translates into the city-region debates as the social and economic dimensions are largely ignored (cf: Krueger and Savage 2007). However, the work of Joe Ravetz at Manchester University (2000) identifies the city-region as the key scale at which the growth ambitions of modern economies could be reconciled with the potentially contradictory imperatives of sustainable development. Ravetz adopts a multi-sectoral, systems-based approach to consider how the Manchester city-region can move from an unsustainable to a sustainable mode of development whilst accommodating further economic growth. Despite the obvious tensions which emerge between imperatives designed to both stimulate economic growth and at the same time promote sustainability, Ravetz’s work demonstrates the extension of the city-region concept and an interesting policy convergence between competitiveness and sustainability. While this work promotes the city-region as the most appropriate scale for fostering sustainable economic development, other researchers have focused attention towards a better theoretical understanding of the relationship between economic growth and sustainable development.

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The concept of ecological modernisation - sometimes referred to as the 'greening of capital,' (Keil and Desfor 2003) - suggests that it is possible to combine policies for economic development and environmental protection to achieve mutually beneficial objectives. Contrary to the dominant interpretation of environmental protection as an impediment to development, ecological modernisation instead 'promotes the application of stringent environmental policy as a positive influence on economic efficiency and technological innovation' (Gouldson and Murphy 1996, 11). Additionally, rather than interpreting economic development and growth as a driver of environmental degradation, under ecological modernisation, entrepreneurship can form the basis of environmental gain (ibid). Traditionally, most academic work studying ecological modernisation has focused on national policies and macro-economic forms of intervention (Keil and Desfor 2003) however, a new trend recognises that there is scope for policy packages designed and implemented at the regional or sub-regional level to also achieve win-win objectives. Additionally, while many critical commentators claim that ecological modernization is largely driven by a neo-liberal agenda, there is some hope that the rescaling of policy agendas and the creation of new policy arenas, e.g. through the re-emergence of city-regionalism, brings a potential for debate on stronger sustainability measures (ibid).

While et al. (2004) have considered how within a growth-first context, environmental management is incorporated into governance practices at sub-national and sub-regional scales. They have found that environmentalism has to a significant degree been incorporated into the new entrepreneurial mode of governance which city-regionalism has been likened, whether it is through 'the internalization of negative externalities associated with urban growth or the promotion of positive urban environmental externalities' (While, Jonas, and Gibbs 2004, 550). In their conceptual development of a 'sustainability-fix' they suggest that 'urban entrepreneurialism itself might depend on the active remaking of urban environments and ecologies' (ibid).

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Ecological modernisation and the sustainability fix provide complex conceptual tools through which we can better understand the relationship between competing development imperatives within the policy making process but they are inherently non-spatial in their application. While they are useful for considering how sustainability can be incorporated both within policy making and as a component of achieving strategic growth objectives, their role within processes of state restructuring is not known.

More recently, the concept of 'social reproduction' has been developed to provide a holistic interpretation of policy making at the city-region scale in which the relationship between economic development and sustainability is accounted for. This is achieved by incorporating the social pillar of the sustainability triangle (as opposed to simply environmental concerns) as a key element of city-regional policy and highlighting this aspect to the underlying drivers of institutional transformation. In particular, the work of Krueger and Savage (2007) suggests that the competitiveness of city-regions does not rest solely on their productive capacity but also on their ability to ensure social reproduction. Social reproduction here refers to

strategies for conserving open-space, reducing commute times, delivering public transport, providing affordable housing, improving access to services (such as healthcare), and creating and preserving good wage-earning jobs for those not holding one of the city-regions 'signature' jobs (Krueger and Savage 2007, 1).

Within this context, the re-emergence of city-regionalism can be interpreted as a strategy for managing market failure or new geographies of uneven development (L Ward and Jonas 2004) as well as potentially contradictory policy making objectives (such as those offered by competitiveness and sustainable development). It is this broader understanding of why city-regions have re-emerged within UK policy that will be drawn on in this study. Specifically, social reproduction will be used to help explain the development of city-regionalism, including the region-building activities undertaken by state and non-state actors and the subsequent materialisation of city-regional narratives during the study period. In this sense the progression of the city-region narrative as part of the case study will help to provide clues on the management of the uneasy relationship between

the urban core and the surrounding area as well as the tensions between the hegemonic discourse of territorial competitiveness and that of sustainable development.

2.3 Part Two: *What, city-regionalism*

This section seeks to clarify how the city-region is conceptualised for the purposes of this research. First, gaps within contemporary conceptions of city-regions are outlined and particular importance is directed to the overwhelming analytical focus afforded to the core city as the key mechanism through which city-regions are formed. This primarily comes at the expense of other potential topics of research interest such as the social context and processes located within, and operating through, hinterland areas. Second, the argument is progressed that in order to more fully understand how city-regions understood within the wider theoretical field that this research is located, attention must be turned to how scale is defined and operationalised. The perspective provided by this discussion reveals that as part of wider processes of state transformation, city-regions must be interpreted as dynamic social and political constructions that are definitively malleable.

2.3.1 Knowledge gaps in city-regional form and function

The literature reveals several theoretical short-comings in how city-regions are conceptualised. Most perspectives interpret their emergence as a function of supply-side imperatives organised around ideas of innovation, development and competition (L Ward and Jonas 2004). These perspectives are theoretically underpinned by a reliance on international capitalist logic and exchange relations while neglecting the roles played by drivers that are not global in scale (McGuirk 2007). Conversely, the relatively few city-regional studies which attempt to chart the construction of the city-region through bottom-up processes tend to focus on the interactions between 'local' actors but with little or no reference to actors or processes operating outside the subsequently reified locality (see for example: McCann 2007; Krueger and Savage 2007). In addition, studies on previous incarnations of the city-region bear little relevance to the concept's modern manifestation, however, a prevailing 'core city' centrism persists through a one-

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dimensional conceptualisation of causation. This narrows our understanding of the forces at work within specific city-regions by limiting analysis towards the effects that the core city has on the surrounding region. Consider the following two sets of quotes in Table 2-1, the first from the early 1970s and the second from the first decade of the 21st century:

Table 2-1: Quotes from the 1970s and 2000s illustrating a pervasive core city analytical centrism

1970s	2000s
The broad similarity of results for cities and city regions suggest that the character of the city region is at present largely determined by the characteristics of the city upon which it is centred (Armen 1972, 179).	Serious interest in City-Regions has grown as the 'reach' of core cities has expanded, making their formal boundaries increasingly out-dated, and because of the recognition that the functional nature of city regions makes them increasingly appropriate for a range of strategic issues (ODPM 2006, 1)
Although a coastal conurbation can be recognized in land use terms, a factor analysis of the economic structure and interaction patterns makes it more appropriate to regard it as the core of a city-region in which the interior coalfield communities act as a periphery (Davies 1972, 217)	Under the growing pressure of globalisation and the apparent decline of the nation-state the city-region [...] has increasingly been defined as the natural focus for economic development policies, cities being widely viewed as 'motors of economic growth' (Rob Atkinson 2004, 1)

These four examples are indicative of a limited consideration within city-regional studies for the potential impacts that the hinterland may have on the core city and thus on the particular form of city-regionalism within a specific context. This is one area in which this particular study looks to make a contribution.

These observations are partially reinforced by the discussion in the previous section however, it also hinted towards an extension of the concept – both within practice as the concept becomes associated with the transition towards sustainability (see: Ravetz 2000; Marvin and Robson 2006) and as academia develops new tools and theories to better understand these transformations. Whereas the classic debates on metropolitan reform are based on essentially normative arguments over whether the local or regional is better (Blatter 2006), city-regional institutional reform is likely to be a function of context specific variables (political, cultural, economic, geographical, historical) discursively

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constructed as part of an emerging ‘multilevel polity’ (Morgan 2002). The State of the English Cities Report (Parkinson 2006, 103) notes that,

[t]here are a variety of political, historical, cultural, economic and institutional barriers to successful City-Regional working. They include clashes of economic interest, historic rivalries, fragmented governments, inappropriate boundaries, conflicts over development sites, and inadequate infrastructure [...] Those on the ground underline that City-Regional alliance is easier to say quickly than to undertake quickly.

The multifaceted barriers to the implementation of city-regional structures highlight the importance of developing a more robust understanding of the dynamics and mechanisms at work within individual cases. In addressing this need the following section describes how the concept of the city-region is understood in this study (or in other words, ‘*what it looks like*’). This will then be taken forward in the analytical framework, focusing the study towards the key variables (or aspects) that are of importance. It is argued that in order to interpret and trace the development of city-regionalism through a specific case study the researcher must examine not only the activities within a territorialised frame of reference but must also engage with processes operating across multiple sites and scales of governance. These wider processes play a crucial role in shaping the local capacities to implement contested versions of city-regionalism and the mobilisation of social support required to progress territorialising agendas.

The concept of scale is heavily drawn upon to provide the socio-spatial entry point for both understanding *what* city-regions look like and uncovering the processes through which they develop. Through an understanding of scale an understanding of the city-region becomes clearer. In developing this framework a brief history of the concept will be discussed, leading into the key contemporary academic debates.

2.3.2 The concept of scale

The concept of ‘scale’ is intimately connected to the theoretical basis upon which much critical academic work on city-regions proceeds and constitutes the sociospatial entry point for the current research. Indeed, Herod (1991, 82) once proclaimed that ‘scale is, arguably, geography’s core concept.’ The concept of scale has existed for some time within geography although the conceptual basis which underpins it has steadily evolved.

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Within physical geography and the related areas of geographic information systems, remote sensing and spatial statistics a 'fixed' conception of scale has long been of central concern (Marston 2000). Within these academic fields scale refers to the spatial extents at which a phenomenon operates or is studied and/or measured (ibid).

Scale entered the mainstream lexicon of more socially and critically oriented geographic studies in the early 1980s following Peter Taylor's (1982) paper, 'A materialist framework for political geography'. Taylor maintains a relatively straightforward understanding of scales as nested hierarchical levels, theorising the urban, nation, and global as separate domains while tracing their origins to the expanding capitalist mode of production. This conceptualisation positions scales as separate analytical categories (from local to global) in which political processes may be analysed (Delaney and Leitner 1997).

This early conception of scale added a spatial element to Marxist and post-Marxist geographic research and was used by Harvey (1982) to help explain how capitalism manages to avoid the crisis of overaccumulation. Following Harvey's notion of the 'spatial fix' scale became a tool used for understanding the multifarious effects brought about through the internationalisation of the economy over the course of the last three decades. However, the ontologically pre-given conceptualisation of scales as a fixed hierarchy of bounded spaces began to appear problematic as a tool for understanding increasingly complex societal and economic changes (Delaney and Leitner 1997), partially because this conceptualised failed to account for the processes of region formation and change (Herod 1991). The work of Smith and Dennis (1987) demonstrates that the geographic scales at which economic and social processes are situated are periodically transformed. This finding encouraged Smith (1992b, 73) to note that

[t]here is nothing ontologically given about the traditional division between home and locality, urban and regional, national and global scales" rather, "[t]he differentiation of geographical scales establishes and is established through the geographical structure of social interactions.

Following a more general academic acceptance of social constructivism, scales themselves were conceptualised as constructed ideas (Marston 2000) which subsequently

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became *contingent* factors in social, economic and political processes. Paasi (1991; 2001, 8; 2004) built on these theoretical insights and for him the regional scale is best understood as perpetually forming and dissolving as part of ‘historically contingent social processes that are always part of larger-scale territorial transformations.’ Driving these processes are the international division of labour, technological innovations and a globalising economy where ‘social practices and discourses (in economy, governance, culture) occurring at various spatial scales come together in complex ways’ (Paasi 2001, 8). This conceptualisation has important temporal and spatial implications suggesting that artificial boundaries can be placed around these dimensions.

2.3.3 The politics of scale

The shifting conceptualisation of scale from an ontologically-given category of analysis to a socially constructed, relative and malleable understanding prompted a new research agenda directed towards the relationships between different scales, the processes operating at different scales, and the imperatives they created for political mobilisation. In other words, research questions sought to explain why and how scales were produced.

Several authors have worked towards providing the means to answer these questions. Neil Smith coined the term ‘politics of scale’ in 1990 (1990, 172) and during the decade he extended concept from a framework analysing scales as platforms for capital movement and uneven spatial development towards a much broader range of social activities such as gender relations and oppositional mobilisation. For Smith, politics of scale are important because it ‘is geographical scale that defines the boundaries and bounds the identities around which control is exerted and contested’ (1992b, 66). Primarily the analytical focus of the politics of scale is on the processes of rescaling. As mentioned previously, within human geography it has become almost universally accepted to recognise that scales are socially and politically constructed, and thus contested (Marston 2000). Swyngedouw (2000, 70) expands on this connection between scale, place and power stating,

[i]f the capacity to appropriate place is predicated upon controlling space, then the scale over which command lines extend will strongly influence the capacity to appropriate place. More importantly, as the power to ap-

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appropriate place is always contested and struggled over, then the alliances social groups or classes forge over a certain spatial scale will shape the conditions of appropriation and control over place and have a decisive influence over relative socio-spatial power positions.

Numerous concepts have been introduced to explain and conceptualise the profound sociospatial changes brought about by globalisation and demonstrate the complexity of these processes. Authors such as Swyngedouw, Collinge and Brenner have developed different concepts to describe the relationship between globalisation and scale. Swyngedouw's concept of 'glocalisation' (1992; 1997) refers to a dual process in which global integration proceeds in parallel to the reconfiguration of sociospatial relations at various other scales such as the local, urban, regional, national and supranational. Collinge (1996) refers to this as a 'relativization of scales' in which the dominance of the national scale as a political-economic manager is eroded with the development of new configurations of sociospatial relations at supra- and sub-national scales. The result is that no scale of political-economic management predominates over others. Brenner's (2001, 603) concept of 'scalar structuration' involves the development of 'relations of hierarchization and rehierarchization among vertically differentiated spatial units.' The purpose of these scales being to temporarily territorialise and obviate capitalisms inherent crisis-tendencies. These perspectives sensitive the researcher to the dynamic relationships which exist across scales and in particular to the role that newly created scales play in temporarily managing crises prompted by previous rounds of scalar determination. Brenner in particular suggests that the establishment of a particular scale should not be considered in isolation but should be considered in relation to alternative and concurrent instances of scalar structuration unfolding alongside those at higher and lower levels.

To help provide the conceptual tools to understand the connections between different layers of concurrent scalar structuration, Smith and Cox have identified political tools utilised by social actors in the production and realignment of scales. Smith (1984) introduced the concept 'jumping of scales' to refer to the processes by which political actors seek out alternative scales to engage with to draw power, thus altering the power dynamics within and between scales. Building on this, Cox (1998) uses the 'local' to

explain broader social and political-economic processes. He demonstrates through the related concepts of 'spaces of dependence' and 'spaces of engagement' how different sociospatial arrangements operate outside their administrative boundaries via networked relationships to draw down resources and instrumentalities. Within these two notable examples it becomes clear that the scales referred to (e.g. local, regional, national, supranational) and the boundaries which separate them are not discrete but porous and permeable. Their construction is advanced through complex configurations of actors associated with various social and political processes. Here 'the very process of enrolling particular actors and networks into scalar constructions is part of the politics of scaling' (Bulkeley 2005, 880). These theorisations enjoin the researcher to seek out the scalar tools employed by social actors to realise their territorial ambitions. This subsequently helps to uncover the complex relationships and interdependencies between social actors as well as their motivations.

2.3.4 The scale debates: scalar and relational perspectives

Before outlining an appropriate analytical framework it is worth visiting the intense debates over the concept of scale within human geography in order to further establish the definitions of scale and politics of scale that are adopted in this study. These debates concern the relational and site-based challenges to the concept.

The first debate is founded on challenges towards scale-based approaches to urban and regional studies. Led by a group of mainly UK-based geographers including Amin and Massey, a relational perspective is advocated in place of any territorial or scalar logic within human geography. The underlying motivation for this rejection of scale is that, 'an adequate understanding of the region [...] can only come through a conception of places as open, discontinuous, relational and internally diverse' (Allen, Massey, and Cochrane 1998, 143). This means that conceptualising 'a region in terms of social relations stretched out reveals, not an 'area', but a complex and unbounded lattice of articulations (Allen, Massey, and Cochrane 1998, 65).

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An important driver of this alternative spatial imaginary stems to a certain extent from the forces of globalisation and its effects on the material and experiential nature of cities and regions over the past few decades (MacLeod and M Jones 2007). In the wake of these processes any semblance of a coherent world order composed of nested territorial structures is eliminated from reality and thereby makes scale redundant. Thrift (2004, 54) supports this position, advancing the argument that ‘space is no longer seen as a nested hierarchy moving from ‘global’ to ‘local’. This absurd scale-dependent notion is replaced by the notion that what counts is connectivity.’ Although lengthy, Amin’s (2004, 33-4) reasoning for the rejection of scale in lieu of this new ontology of space provides a thorough foundation for understanding these developments:

In this emerging new order, spatial configurations and spatial boundaries are no longer necessarily or purposively territorial or scalar, since the social, economic, political and cultural inside and outside are constituted through the topologies of actor networks which are becoming increasingly dynamic and varied in spatial constitution. [...] The resulting excess of spatial composition is truly staggering. It includes radiations of telecommunications and transport networks around (and also under and above) the world, which in some places fail to even link up proximate neighbours. [...] It includes well-trodden but not always visible tracks of transnational escape, migration, tourism, business travel, asylum and organized terror which dissect through, and lock, established communities into new circuits of belonging and attachment, resentment and fear [...] it includes political registers that now far exceed the traditional sites of community, town hall, parliament, state and nation, spilling over into the machinery of virtual public spheres, international organizations, global social movements, diaspora politics, and planetary or cosmopolitan projects.

Here the fundamental thrust of the argument is that spatial configurations require a full reconceptualisation in order to accurately theorise and predict social phenomena in the modern world. For example, rather than thinking of a city-region as a discrete area, the relational perspective argues that it should be imagined as an extended network of social relations. MacLeod and Jones (2007) point out that a relational approach to space presents not only ontological and methodological challenges but it would demand new ways of conceptualising the practice and performance of spatial politics. Amin (2004, 36) confirms this, suggesting that rather than exercising power through the control of territory, the emphasis must shift towards exercising ‘nodal power’ and through ‘align-

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ing networks at large in one's own interest' because in reality there is no definable territory to be controlled.

As a corollary to this argument the politics of scale also becomes irredeemably flawed because of its reliance on the abstract existence of a territorialised spatiality inherent to social life. In terms of policy and governance it also suggests dire implications for the management of territory. For example, the creation of *inter alia* regional assemblies, development agencies and city-regions become ineffectual because they are predicated to a certain extent upon the possibility of establishing institutional structural coherence (MacLeod and M Jones 2007). Applying relational theorising to the UK, Amin (2004, 37 emphasis in original) writes that while

devolution politics is grounded in an imaginary of the region as a space of intimacy, shared history or shared identity, and community of interest or fate" the reality is that regions are, "a *heterotopic sense of place* that is no longer reducible to regional moorings or to a territorially confined public sphere, but is made up influences that fold together the culturally plural and the geographically proximate and distant.

The relational conceptualisation of space presented here has nevertheless inspired several criticisms. Sayer (2004, 262-3) dismisses the idea that 'the exercise of power across space should occur without space making a difference,' while Lovering (2006) views the relational turn as reflecting a new imperial geography. Within the context of the current study the criticisms of Morgan (2007a) and MacLeod and Jones (2007) highlight pertinent points. Morgan (2007a) finds that the relational perspective presents a caricatured picture of cities and regions as both closed and static entities. This leads him (2007a, 1248) to state that

to overcome the debilitating binary division between territorial and relational geography one needs to recognize that political space is bounded *and* porous; *bounded* because politicians are held to account through the territorially defined ballot box, a prosaic but important reason why one should not be so dismissive of territorial politics; *porous* because people have multiple identities and they are becoming ever more mobile, spawning communities of relational connectivity that transcend territorial boundaries.

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MacLeod and Jones (2007) share Morgan's concern and are particularly vexed since academics working from territorial perspectives have gone to lengths to emphasise that they are not pre-ordained and static but rather created through various sociospatial activities including political conduct, struggles, and discursive imaginings. Indeed, in a previous article, Jones and Macleod (2004, 436) agree with Allen et al.'s (1998) statement that regions are open and relational rather than purely self-contained. Echoing Cox's (1998) spaces of dependence and engagement conceptualisation, Jones and MacLeod (2004) agree that globalisation forces the realignment of economic and cultural geographies with the transborder networks through which they are created. However, they (2004) maintain that while these networks will be international and complex, they are never placeless.

Morgan's second criticism is that the relational perspective suggests 'that territorial political affinities are antediluvian, parochial or even reactionary' (2007a, 1248). Pointing towards the new spaces of deliberative politics created through devolution, Morgan maintains that whether processes such as regionalism or city-regionalism represent progressive or reactionary agendas or effects is entirely contingent upon the context rather than the nature of territoriality itself. Here the observation that 'everyday *realpolitik* acts' (M Jones and MacLeod 2004, 437) such as regionalism are often targeted and conducted through a pre-existing or aspirant spatial scale suggests that the notion of territoriality is an important analytical component of political geography.

2.3.5 The scale debates: scalar and site-based perspectives

The second challenge to scale within human geography is led by Sallie Marston. In an article in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, Marston et al. (2005) suggest that scale is eliminated altogether from the discipline and in its place present a 'site-based' ontology that draws inspiration from actor-network theory and focuses on sites of interaction.

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Marston's primary argument is predicated on the notion that working from a scalar perspective constrains human geographic research within a vertical ontology and a structure/agency binary. Jonas (2005, 399) interprets this to mean that

scalar analysis either proceeds 'downwards' from 'scale-as-structure' (the global or metatheoretical level) to 'scale-as-agency' (the local or the level of events and outcomes), or 'upwards' so that the arrow of causality is 'local-to-global'.

The upshot of this is that the research emphasis on topics such as politics or identity formation incorrectly privilege scale over other types of spatiality (e.g. networks, space, place, region and mobility) and subsequently 'events and processes come pre-sorted, ready to be inserted into the scalar apparatus at hand' (Marston, Jones III, and Woodward 2005, 422). As a corollary, scalar perspectives implicitly accept certain levels of global determinism alongside a constricted agency within local places (ibid).

A second issue for Marston et al is the conceptual confusion over what scale actually means and how it should be operationalised. To evidence scale's conceptual uncertainty the confusion surrounding the meanings of scale as size (a horizontal conception implying scope or extensiveness) and scale as level (a vertical conception implying a nested hierarchy of space) are pointed towards. Both of these conceptions imply 'reachings' across space which do not differentiate between the manner in which territory is delineated but only through the different vantage point – above and below – from which territories are imagined (ibid).

Marston et al. suggest a 'site-based' ontology through which space is flattened and the need for the concept of scale eliminated. They also reject what they term 'globalising ontologies' such as approaches based on concepts of flows and fluidity. In other words, they dismiss the notion that scale as a useful concept can be salvaged simply through adding socio-spatial dimensions to the analysis. This ontological position is concerned with capturing the 'localized and non-localized event-relations productive of event-spaces that avoid the predetermination of hierarchies and boundlessness' (p. 424). Discrediting any preordained scalar concepts such as a 'region', Marston et al suggest that the focus of research should be on 'assemblages' of diagrammatically linked sites.

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Here the properties of sites are determined not by their situated-ness within a (metaphorically) physical area, or relative to another, but in respect to their ‘diagrammatics’ (JP Jones, Woodward, and Marston 2007, 274).

Respondents to Marston et al. strongly counter many aspects of both the way that the concept of scale is characterised within the debate and the detrimental effects the ejection of scale would have on human geography. Rather than delve into the intricacies of this debate (see: Marston, Jones III, and Woodward 2005; JP Jones, Woodward, and Marston 2007; Collinge 2006; Jonas 2005; Hoefle 2006; Escobar 2007) the following section focuses on the commonalities between the two sides of the debate in drawing together an ontological premise through which the processes of region-building can be examined.

2.3.6 Reconciling scalar perspectives

From an ontological perspective one of the important points to make is that both scalar and site-based approaches represent means to achieve the same broad ends, that is, to

decipher large-scale transformations of sociospatial organization, particularly those associated with the crisis of North Atlantic Fordism, the intensification of ‘globalization’, and the concomitant restructuring of inherited geographies of capital accumulation, state regulation, urbanization, social reproduction, and sociopolitical struggle (Jessop, Brenner, and M Jones 2008, 390).

Rather than establish the pre-eminence of one perspective over the other, this research takes inspiration from Jessop et al (2008) in questioning why any single dimension of sociospatial processes (territory, scale, network, place) should be awarded exclusive explanatory and predictive worth. The authors explicitly point to calls for a ‘flat ontology’ (see: Marston, Jones III, and Woodward 2005; JP Jones, Woodward, and Marston 2007) as an example of a narrow and unproductive research pathway. Instead they argue that while a single sociospatial dimension could be used as a point of entry, analysis and explanation should involve the reflexive combination and articulation of at least two or more of the four dimensions. This study is in line with these comments and utilises scale as the ‘single entry point’ while also incorporating the notions of territoriality and

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networks. Here a scalar, relational or site-based approach is not selected at the mutual exclusion of the others.

However, this approach does not remove the conceptual confusion surrounding the concept of scale (see: Marston, Jones III, and Woodward 2005). This is not a new problem for human geographers and while Brenner (2001) has thoroughly addressed it through his critique on the overextension of its use, scalar ambiguity remains. As noted by Marston et al, scale can be referred to as levels, principally demarcated by the various tiers of government administration (e.g. states, regions, localities) or as size, referring to an extension of sociospatial processes. One approach for providing analytical clarity within the research process is provided by Perkmann (Perkmann 2006, 256) who chooses to limit the meaning of scale to its horizontal interpretation - where it is 'understood as spatially bounded units and objects of public governance' - while investigating the formation of a crossborder region. While in agreement with his observation that 'territorial re-scaling then involves the establishment of governance functions at a scale that is different from where they were previously situated' (ibid) it is hard to imagine that the processes of social mobilisation required to establish the legitimacy of new scalar territories are confined to these territorial units. This is not to say that Perkmann's approach is incorrect, rather it is arguing, in line Jessop et al (2008), that this is an example of a constrained and partial approach to uncovering sociospatial relations because it relies on only one dimension of these processes, that is, territoriality.

A more constructive avenue for clarifying the conceptual confusion surrounding the concept of scale comes from the work of Moore (2008) who defines scale as both a category of practice as well as a category of analysis. He defines a category of practice as 'categories of everyday experience, developed and deployed by ordinary social actors' and a category of analysis as 'experience-distant categories used by social scientists' (Moore 2008; see also: Brubaker and Cooper 2000). According to Moore (2008, 207), most critiques of scale are flawed 'by an unreflexive conflation of scale as an everyday category of practice with their treatment of scale as a substantial category of analysis.' Rather, it should be noted that many terms do operate as both categories. For

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example, Moore notes that nation is used in everyday life by individuals for a variety of reasons (interpreting the world, pursuing political ends, generating social cohesion) but also academically to analyse nationalism. There is nothing inherently wrong with this however, many terms such as 'local', 'national' and 'global' are used as a category of practice to make sense of the world but because of their deeply ingrained social understandings they easily become adopted by scholars as categories of analysis, thereby assuming functionally causal properties. Even within apparently constructivist research Moore identifies a tendency to reify key social categories. Moore (2008, 208) writes that

there remains an implicit assumption in much constructivist research that however contingent and fluid our categories such as the nation or national scale may be, once socially constructed they are treated as every bit as real and fixed as ontological givens.

For example, questions such as 'what is a city-region' or 'what is a scale' presuppose the existence of the entity that is to be defined. Moore identifies an analogous example from identity theory which strongly echoes scale debates. While many social scientists assert the constructed, contingent and fluid nature of ethnic peoples and nations,

they still envision a world as inhabited by these groups. Therefore they possess an ontological framework in which reified ethnic groups and nations occupy a central place in social life (2008, 209).

This reification leads to two primary problems, namely, it constrains analytical frameworks which should be open empirical questions and it directs focus away from the practices which comprise social processes. The unreflexive conflation of scale as a category of practice and a category of analysis can however be removed by focusing on the processes through which city-regions are created rather than using city-regions to explain social processes. It is for these reasons that this research does not seek to provide a definition of what city-regions are, but rather it focuses on their social construction.

2.4 Part Three: *How*, city-regionalism

As shown in Part Two, the concept of a politics of scale has undoubtedly contributed towards a richer understanding of the relationships between various social and economic

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processes and struggles. However, it is not without its critics and beyond questions regarding its ontological utility and conceptual conciseness, underlying issues have been identified with the concept as an epistemological tool. Importantly, some have argued that it is not powerful enough to uncover the types of interactions and mechanisms through which scale actually engenders power (see: Haarstad and Floysand 2007; Prytherch 2006). Prytherch (2007, 422) writes that,

[i]f theories of scale illuminate the wider structural context for local governance and planning, however, they unfortunately do so at a broad level of abstraction (verbal, methodological, empirical), drawing a theoretical map of Europe in which individual places are lost or seem insignificant. The transformation of Europe is not solely a top-down process; a rescaled Europe is in fact constructed through careful planning of local places. Only by descending from the clouds of abstraction to consider urban space can this be fully appreciated.

This perspective suggests that the politics of scale as developed by authors such as Smith (1992b) and Cox (1998) to examine the process through which scalar shifts unfold, lack the theoretical grammar with which these processes can actually be explained. While these authors developed useful tools to shed light on previously unseen, abstract processes, they were not able to explain why for example, the construction of networks enables social actors to exercise control over *spaces of dependence* (Cox 1998). A similar criticism has been directed towards the regulation approach in that it fails in providing the methodological tools to investigate the construction of 'economic imaginaries' inherent to processes such as policy making (Gonzalez 2006). Cox (1998, 7) writes that 'the ability to realize [local interests] is critically conditioned by the ability to exercise territorial power.' Importantly this highlights the construction of multi-scalar networks as an important and necessary component for exercising territorial control yet to deliver a more robust empirical account of these processes the relationship between scale and networks must be augmented by an additional explanatory concept. This is achieved by incorporating insights provided by the fusion of the narrative turn with the politics of scale. From this approach the processes through which rescaling occurs can be tested in an in-depth case study which links space, power, narrative and the activities of vested stakeholders.

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The theoretical context in which this study is situated is largely established through the key ontological and epistemological debates unfolding around the processes of state spatiality and particularly through the concept of scale. These discussions lead to research focusing around the processes through which rescaling occurs rather than their generative properties or causal effects. However, in setting that broad parameter the concept of a politics of scale is revisited from a critical perspective in order to build a more robust conceptual understanding of how it can be augmented to better unlock rescaling processes. The proceeding discussion develops an analytical framework consisting of three inter-related ‘components’:

- narrative construction;
- institutionalisation; and
- materialisation.

2.4.1 The narrative construction of city-regions

Despite its origins as a concept used to decipher the dynamics of capitalist logics, an increasing emphasis of the role of discursive referents can be observed as part of the production of different scalar hierarchies. These developments have been associated with the rising popularity of the ‘cultural turn’ within critical human geography. Indeed, this impact has been strongly felt within urban political geography as scholars increasingly infuse geographical analysis with the study of language and culture (Lees 2004) as a methodology for uncovering and explaining urban and regional policy processes and, in particular, the ways in which power is exercised by key actors (Jacobs 2006). Discourse-based studies have also been used to understand the links between hegemony and the processes of state rescaling (see: A Jones 2006; Gonzalez 2006; Prytherch 2006).

The epistemological assumption underpinning discourse-based approaches is that ‘politics is an arena in which different interest groups seek to establish a particular narrative or versions of events as a means to pursue political objectives’ (Jacobs 2006, 39). The work of Connolly (1983) initially prompted researchers to move away from notions whereby policy language was seen as neutral. Instead an understanding was developed whereby ‘language [was not] a conduit for concepts or ideas but [...] a

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political activity in its own right' (Jacobs 2006, 40). This direction was encouraged by a growing understanding that research focusing purely on the decision-making process and other traditional research methodologies was too narrow and did not allow for in depth examination of some of the power and ideological contestation inherent to the consideration of policy and its implementation (Jacobs 2006).

This approach closely chimes with a rich body of work within urban and regional planning (see: Healey 1999; 2004; Throgmorton 2003; Flyvbjerg 2002; Coop and H Thomas 2007). Healey (1999) argues that discourses and narratives can be reinterpreted and remoulded through the policy making processes in which they are discursively employed. Here, high level framing discourses (R Atkinson 2000) and narratives which operate according to their parameters are rearticulated to fit the appropriate situational and ideological contexts in which they are deployed. Within processes of state transformation and region-building, this rearticulation will also include debate over the causes of the problems that are being addressed through the emerging policies. As Stone (1989, 283) argues:

The different sides in an issue act as if they are trying to find the "true" cause, but they are always struggling to influence which idea is selected to guide policy. Political conflicts over causal stories are, therefore, more than empirical claims about sequences of events. They are fights about the possibility of control and the assignment of responsibility.

During these debates, the new discourses and narratives then recursively act on the original frames of reference and transform them (Healey 1999). Healey (1999) empirically demonstrates this phenomenon by showing how the formal 'authors' of policy at local levels can 'write their own script' as well as integrate concerns and demands from elsewhere to produce a local interpretation of discourses. Similarly, planning doctrine is identified as a narrative tool that can be used in practice to define the key issues that are to receive substantive policy attention, the solutions that are to be deployed as well as predetermining alternative potential solutions that are to be ignored or discarded (Coop and H Thomas 2007). Planning doctrine provides a normative assertion / framing worldview of space in that key territorial issues are identified in lieu of suggesting a rigid and all encompassing guide to an area's development (Coop and H Thomas 2007).

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Therefore, the way in which a policy narrative such as city-regionalism is ‘told’ can provide important information about ‘what is important and what is not, what counts and what does not, what matters and what does not’ (Throgmorton 2003, 128).

The influence of the cultural turn has been felt within the scale debates as increasing recognition is also being given towards the discursive power associated with the naming of hierarchies. For example, how different scales assume meaning simply through use in language (K Jones 1997). Katherine Jones (1997, 27) notes that

once we accept that participants in political disputes deploy arguments about scale discursively, alternately representing their position as global or local to enhance their standing, we must also accept that scale itself is a representational trope, a way of framing political-spatiality that in turn has material effects. And, if scale is a trope, then we can no longer see it as neutral or transparent in how it represents. Every trope carries with it its own rhetoric, its own ability to shape the meaning of space.

Promoting a more culturally-minded research agenda, the work of Jessop (2004) and Sum and Jessop (2001) reflect this shift, stressing the importance of ‘extra-economic’ factors such as meanings, practices and language within the political economy of places. Therefore, for some authors ((see: Gonzalez 2006; Prytherch 2003; 2006; Haarstad and Floysand 2007; Jensen and Richardson 2004) the infusion of the discursive dimension represents more than just an extra tool for unlocking knowledge through a politics of scale framework, rather it signifies the transmutation of the concept itself. Accordingly politics of scales become,

those strategies used by actors to explain, justify, defend and even try to impose the link between a particular scale or scalar configuration and a political project. Logically, not all actors will necessarily agree about the scale at which a particular political project should take place and therefore a process of collaboration, negotiation, exchange, contestation or struggle might happen. In this process, actors engage in a discursive strategy to make their scalar political project seem as natural, normal and legitimate as possible (Gonzalez 2006, 838).

This idea forms the first key analytical component through which the case study will be progressed. The case study of city-regionalism in South East Wales will initially look to uncover the narrative construction of the concept as undertaken by a variety of key stakeholders. For Gonzalez (2006, 839). the concept of narrative is drawn out in refer-

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ence to the ‘discursive aspects of the politics of scale and hints at the importance of rhetoric, communication and language.’ As one of the most basic methods humans have for exchanging information and transmitting values, narratives are used to connect series of events with causal explanation. In this sense narratives contain ontological and epistemic choices reflecting ideology and therefore have the capacity to lead to social and material implications (Gonzalez 2006). Interestingly, narratives have the communicative capacity to express complex ideas as relatively simplistic notions and therefore they can be transferred and adapted to best suit different situations (ibid). As such, they are particularly useful for ‘provid[ing] the dominant social imaginary (context) – the universe of political discourse – in which policy issues are framed, political subjectivities mobilized and judged to be legitimate, rational’ (McGuirk 2004, 1024). Rooted deep in a constructivist ontology, the primary interest among researchers who employ these methods is uncovering how actors construct images about space and how these images are contested over and subsequently become embedded within institutional settings (see: Gonzalez 2006).

From this perspective policy making is interpreted as being conducted on a complicated field of power struggles amongst competing interests striving to present varying versions of truth/reality as common sense (Jensen and Richardson 2004). As previously mentioned, these framings of truth / reality are frequently presented in terms of scale which subsequently leads to particular policy directions and ultimately towards material consequences (McCann 2003). Within the field of international relations, connections have also been made between the development of scalar narratives and policy-making. Specifically analysing region building activities at the international level, Jones (2006) studies how narratives are constructed by political actors in order to rescale state authority. In this sense narratives are interpreted as an important component of state agency in the pursuit of particular interests and the work of Gonzalez (2006) and Jones (2006) each demonstrate the use of narratives as a discursive aspect of the politics of scales in advancing particular normative agendas. Jones (2006, 419) writes that as a narrative, Europeanisation

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serves as a guiding idea that establishes the parameters and legitimacy of engagement for state and European political actors in international region building and one that these actors actively promote to third countries.

However, whilst the narrative construction of scales occupies an important place within rescaling processes, several authors identify that from a territorial perspective, rescaling can also be linked to the establishment of governance functions at scales which are different from where they were previously situated. For Hajer (1995), the activities of social actors take place within broader structural contexts – such as those provided by institutional norms and organisational patterns - which both enable and constrain action. Within this environment, social actors are constantly engaged in either maintaining existing, or creating new, legitimized social arrangements (ibid). Institutional constructions can then be argued to represent a fundamental counterpart to narrative development because they act as a conduit through which narratives become embedded and normalised. Jessop (2002a) adds to this, arguing that new scales can only be operationalised as a means to strategic ends if they can achieve a certain degree of institutional thickness. However, Paasi (2001) cautions that the very nature of region building activities entails the construction of potentially highly unstable institutional arrangements as the different interests of those included in the process become accentuated as they are brought together. In this way the narrative construction of scales and the rescaling of governance functions can be conceptualised as inter-related processes which can be altered by social contestation which these processes themselves inspired. As Perkmann (2006, 257) writes,

[i]t is clear that the strategies underlying such re-scaling processes will therefore be subject to social contestation as they can be expected to affect significantly the power, resource appropriate and life chances of social groups organized at different levels. Narratives and discourses constructing scales as spatial communities as well as, more instrumentally, objects of intervention will play an important role in these processes of social contestation and governance realignment.

Thus, alongside narrative development the second important component of the politics of scale becomes the institutional transformations associated with shifting spatial boundaries.

2.4.2 The institutionalisation of city-regions

The purpose then of analysing the changing institutional structures at the city-region scale is to help uncover the process through which rescaling unfolds by providing detail on the intermediary phase between scalar narratives which set out the parameters and ambition of social actors and the realisation of these aims. As Perkmann (2006) argues, the rescaling of governance functions and the emergence of new institutional bodies act as conduits for the channelling of political and other interests into the decision-making process. Additionally, within the context of this research Haughton and Counsell (2007) suggest that processes such as city-regionalism can be viewed as components of political agendas designed to remove obstacles which stand in the way of achieving particular goals. As a form of institutional experimentation, or ‘scalar flux’ (Brenner 2000), the creation of new scales of governance can have the “potential to provide a creative new direction for policy, and/or break with previous institutional inertia, malaise or ineffectiveness” (Haughton and Counsell 2007). These developments are also important because political and institutional restructuring are key factors which allow for the reconceptualisation of urban issues (Tewdwr-Jones and McNeill 2000) as well as in themselves facilitating new functional rationales for state intervention (Keating 1997).

However, operationalising this framework is not without difficulty as a key divergence distinguishing contemporary city-regionalism from previous Fordist-Keynesian rounds of urban-regional institutional development is that modern arrangements do not appear to be designed and imposed solely from higher tiers of the state. Rather, contemporary city-regionalism emerges to a certain extent from the actions of actors enmeshed within the specific localities in which institutional changes occur (Lefevre 1998). These transformations occur in multifaceted ways and this creates increasing difficulty in tracing these processes as ‘different scales of action come to be linked in various hybrid combinations of vertical, horizontal, diagonal, centripetal, centrifugal and vertical ways’ (Jessop 2002b, 120). This suggests that to derive meaningful empirical evidence of rescaling processes, each instance of restructuring should be understood in its nationally and site-specific context because more generalised accounts would struggle to adequately explain the complex relations between a range of municipal, governmental and

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regional organisations and institutions including public, private, and informal approaches taken by a range of actors possessing vested interests (Brenner et al. 2003). Additionally, interpretations must also be able to account for the multi-scalar, multi-actor and multilevel politics which drive and constitute contemporary city-regions. This is something that neither growth machine (see: Molotch 1976; Logan and Molotch 1987) nor regime theory (see: Stoker 1995) is able to provide (for a fuller discussion see: Harding 2000).

In this light, the framework designed to analyse the institutionalisation of city-regions will progress from a temporally linear position and consider both outcomes and processes in terms of multi-scalar, multi-directional, and networked interactions. That is, it will consider the rescaling and establishment of governance functions at scales which they previously did not operate in terms of their generative drivers, physical characteristics and strategic roles within city-regionalism. Consideration will also be provided for the processes through which key stakeholders seek to establish dominance over a territorial space.

2.4.3 The materialisation of city-regions

According to Paasi (2001, 17), symbolic shaping practices are crucial for the realisation of region building and are often carried out by political elites as they attempt to inscribe upon 'concrete and symbolic landscapes' in efforts to divide and control space and people. Similarly, Marston (2000) suggests that the particular ways in which scales are constructed leads to tangible and material consequences. In light of these observations, two separate arguments will be drawn on to establish the theoretical context for the third analytical component of city-regionalism and the knowledge gap to which it addresses. In developing this context the theoretical philosophies underpinning contemporary city-regional studies are independently discussed by Ward and Jonas (2004) and Lovering (2007). This discussion is then augmented by Harding's (2007b) critique of the power of discursive argumentation within the context of city-regionalism to demonstrate how the current study fits within the city-region debate.

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The logic underpinning contemporary city-regional studies can be traced to either neo-Smithian or neo-Marxist philosophies (L Ward and Jonas 2004). While at first glance it would appear that theorising from the separate philosophies would differ considerably, Ward and Jonas (2004) have argued that within the context of city-regionalism the commonalities which arise from studies based on these two schools of thought have together contributed towards an improved field of study. They find that whilst neo-Smithian approaches locate city-regions in terms of their position within an international division of labour, as the outcomes of agglomeration processes, and as focal points within international circuits of capital, neo-Marxist approaches also demonstrate a tendency to overemphasise exchange relations in explaining the configuration of cities and their surrounding hinterlands into competitive city-regions. City-regional theory as a result represents only a partial body of understanding with significant omissions including the role of the nation state in the formation of city-regions and an interpretation of governance frameworks which explicitly rely on the economic needs of cities whilst ignoring many other determinants such as infrastructure provision, housing, land use, sustainable development and other aspects of collective consumption.

Within the context of urban regeneration, Lovering (2007) notes that the pervasive economic determinism within neo-Austrian economics and neo-Gramscian Marxism also contributes towards a partial understanding within that field of study. The philosophical theories which underpin contemporary knowledge on both urban regeneration and city-regionalism can respectively be traced back to liberalism and Marxism. Admittedly, there is little academic overlap between city-regional studies and urban regeneration however, the comparison is useful for several reasons. Broadly, both city-regionalism and urban regeneration represent normative, urban-centric attempts to improve the quality of life for residents within and around the proximate areas in which activities are located. Additionally, contemporary city-regional strategies are often predicated around urban regeneration and through the implementation of associated policies. Therefore, the comments from both sets of authors serve to reinforce their respective observations for extending an identified knowledge gap within city-regionalism. Lovering (2007, 345) claims that the reductionist tendencies shown by

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contemporary liberal and Marxist theory mean that, '[n]either is therefore adequate as a guide to understanding regeneration or to conducting it, or as a resource for those who want to change it.' Ward and Jonas (2004) recommend that research should focus on underappreciated aspects of collective consumption while Lovering (2007, 363) prompts us to focus on the material result of the 'strategies, tactics, negotiations and conflict-resolution potential among the players involved' in these processes. At the same time Harding (2007a) points out that articles from a city-region symposium presented in the *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* in 2007, while enjoined to examine discursive and material transformations, the articles instead focused on discursive rather than material changes and even the discursive transformations were left as assumptions rather than empirically demonstrated facts.

To address these gaps and provide the final component of city-regionalism development, the concept of the cultural landscape is employed as an epistemic tool to link discursive and material elements of city-regionalism. Building on the work cultural geographer Schein (1997, 664), the argument is made that landscapes can be understood as 'discourse materialized' and applied to uncover how the landscape is used to 'normalize/neutralize social and cultural practice, to reproduce it, to challenge it'. This capability rests on the ability for landscapes to convey information about the relatively independent discourses which are suffused within them. Within the context of American landscapes Schein (1997, 663) observes that 'landscapes [...] are the result of countless individual, independent, self-interested decisions that create, alter, and maintain landscapes, their meaning and their symbolism. [...]' However, these decisions are not independent but are in fact embedded within a discourse and when such decisions result in tangible outcomes the cultural landscape becomes the '*discourse materialized*' (ibid, original emphasis). Examples can include regeneration strategies, planning policy, economic consumption patterns, etc. and as a material element of discourses (or narratives), the cultural landscape becomes part of their ongoing development and reinforcement. Within the context of city-regionalism, the presence of a suitability 'thick' (Jessop 2002a) institutional architecture can arguably play an important role in this decision process. In this light there are several reasons to be optimistic about the

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ability for this concept to shed light on previously unrecognised aspects of city-regional development, particularly the relationship between the cultural landscape and social processes in terms of the power to create change while ameliorating conflict. As Schein (1997, 664) writes,

[t]he cultural landscape, as discourse materialized, is simultaneously disciplinary in its spatial and visual strategies and empowering in the possibilities inherent for individual human action upon the landscape. The cultural landscape thus is continually implicated in the ongoing re-constitution of a discourse, or set of discourses, about social life, and it is in this sense that it serves as both a disciplinary mechanism and a potentially liberating medium for social change.

The literature review has uncovered multiple examples of the conflict inherent to city-regional processes including those relating to personal relationships within the policy making process (e.g. the failure of previous rounds of city-regionalism to account for urban-periphery relations), those relating to the narrative construction of city-regionalism (e.g. despite the apparently contradictory objectives demanded by competitiveness and sustainable development they are both often prominent policy objectives), and those linked to theoretical perspectives on the social struggles included as part of rescaling events.

Some studies have already begun to connect the role of narrative and the materialisation of discourse within processes of state rescaling. Gonzalez (2006) uncovers the processes through which hegemonic narratives are constructed and deployed as part of the urban regeneration of Bilbao, Spain. Her novel approach demonstrates the utility of blending a narrative approach to the politics of scale yet it does not extend as far as shedding light on the interplay between competing social forces while certain narratives fight for dominance. Prytherch (2003; 2006) utilises the concept of the cultural landscape to demonstrate how globally dominant narratives such as ‘competitiveness’ and ‘modernity’ can be recreated within a local context through the ‘cultural landscape’ and the effect this process has on smoothing the processes of political economic rescaling. In this work Prytherch seeks to show, ‘the ways in which political restructuring is discursively narrated in and through regionalist spaces’ (2006, 205). The suggestion here is

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that there is an iterative relationship between the cultural landscape, political agendas as expressed through competing narratives, and the locations in which these events unfold.

Prytherch (2003) empirically demonstrates this investigating the development of an entertainment complex, the *Ciutat de les Arts I de les Ciències*, in Valencia, Spain. The entertainment complex itself, a state-led project, was developed on top of, and by displacing, the traditional and conflict-prone landscapes of the croplands of L'Horta de Valencia. In essence, one landscape through which regional identity was historically enmeshed was replaced by another which is 'emblematic of new, entrepreneurial and globally oriented forms of urban development and identity discourse' (Prytherch 2006, 214). High profile political support and the complicity of the media were critically important in framing the development of the entertainment center as an economic development project vital to the region's innovation and competitiveness. These representations demonstrated the discursive connection between an architectural symbol and regional culture and identity, constituted through narratives of technological advancement and entrepreneurial competitiveness. However, given not only the emotional attachment Valencians have toward the Horta but also the theoretical emphasis on conflict during scale politics it is remarkable that this ideological shift, demonstrated both narratively and materially, does not engender significant amounts of conflict. Prytherch's (2006, 215) hypothesises on this point is that

the apparent consensus behind the Generalitat's project reflects the power of entrepreneurial regionalist rhetoric to narrate potential conflictual processes of restructuring, distract political discourse away from the problematic and perhaps 'indissoluble' questions of historical regionalism and towards the gleaming promise of a hyper-modern new regionalism, and forge a consensus project simultaneously and inextricably of entrepreneurialism and regionalism, all of which may serve to reposition European regions and regionalisms for a globally competitive world.

The argument above postulates that the Generalitat's rhetoric has been established as hegemonic and the mediating force is represented by a discourse of entrepreneurial regionalism which has triumphed over the less powerful narrative of historical regionalism. This highlights the possibility for analysis to focus on the more nuanced political

processes in which subtle strategies or techniques are employed by key stakeholders in order to realise their agendas through materialised cultural landscapes.

2.5 Conclusion

The various strands of literature presented in this chapter contribute towards a framework for uncovering key components city-regionalism within South East Wales. The primary concern of this thesis is to connect public policy interventions at the sub-regional level in South East Wales - while accounting for both site and time specific influences including their conditioning via broader social narratives – to material change. Linking contemporary city-regional policy in the UK to the academic theorisations informing such policy making processes introduces the research agenda and separates it from past approaches. Specifically, the arguments presented for city-regional interventions highlights the motivations of key actors involved in the progression of the city-region agenda while also illuminating potential points of conflict that lead towards particular territorial governance and material outcomes. In particular, the new regionalist literature and associated debates on international benchmarking highlight the implicitly normative bias permeating city-regional policy and theory while paving the way for a critical engagement with the processes through which such agendas are developed and the alternative policy perspectives which can inform them.

However, before building a theoretically-informed framework of the core components of rescaling processes, greater attention must be given towards the analytical tools needed to help with identifying the key practical elements and practices through which such processes unfold. To this end the concept of scale is examined to provide the socio-spatial entry point for developing both a deeper understanding of what city-regions are and how they develop. The theory of scale and the associated politics of scale link the agendas of key social actors with policy discourses to provide perspectives on governing rationalities. These can then be examined as they unfold within as part of revised and newly created institutions, and subsequently provide the conduit through which the city-regions are discursively construction and then materialised. Theories on scale and the politics of scale also draw attention to the relationship between wide global processes

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which influence and act as constraints within the unravelling struggles explored within the case study of South East Wales. This literature emphasises the multi-directional and multi-scalar nature of governance and region building thus directing attention towards and informing our understanding of how control over territorial regulatory arenas is achieved. Through these perspectives the empirical research can provide evidence of the practices through which key actors intervene within newly created state spaces, allowing for comparison in future studies.

While establishing an ontological and conceptual position on scale with reference to rescaling processes in a general sense, empirically operationalising scale within an in-depth case study inspires questions over the most appropriate methodology. Literature examining the philosophical basis upon which most city-regional studies proceed suggests that the focus of such studies must extend beyond solely economic and discursively constructed concerns to uncover the influence of broader governance imperatives such as collective consumption and the material effects these debates have on city-regional geographies. The concept of the cultural landscape and its recent deployment in such debates allows the research to make these connections and an examination of the provision of transport infrastructure within the case study area provides information on the governance of South East Wales in terms of the relationships and power structures within the territorial area as well as how this space is responding to broader economic, social and environmental objectives.

To summarise, a three-stage methodological framework has been developed to analyse the processes through which powerful city-regional narratives are materialised. It has been drawn from a variety of academic fields and consists of the following dimensions: i) the narrative construction of city-regions; ii) the institutionalisation of city-regions; and iii) the materialisation of city-regions.

Chapter Three describes the research methodology used to operationalise this framework and this is followed by a brief overview of the key social, political, economic, and

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institutional changes in South East Wales which provide the backdrop for the progression of city-regionalism.

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology employed in this study and where appropriate it provides theoretical and pragmatic rationales for the choices that were made. Within urban and regional research there are two distinctly different approaches that are undertaken with little overlap between the two. First, there is a body of work known as regional science that employs largely quantitative research methods and econometric approaches to better understand complex processes unfolding at different geographic scales. In contrast, critical human geography has also sought to uncover and theorise complex sets of inter-related processes which unfold at different geographic scales. Predominantly the research designs adopted by this latter group of studies rely on in-depth case studies and qualitative methodologies. More detailed descriptions of why I have adopted the latter approach are provided below.

The research focuses on providing an empirically-driven analysis of a single rescaling event (known as city-regionalism), during a specific time period (approximately between 1992 and 2008), involving actors and processes with particular territorial associations (South East Wales). Through the literature review a three-stage analytical framework was developed that demarcates certain spheres of activity and focuses attention on particular elements of 'city-region building'. The narrative construction of the city-region, by key stakeholders with various perspectives and motivations, is identified as the initial stage of the process. This is then followed by complex institutional arrangements and iterative positioning between key organisations as the narrative progresses. These processes are analysed to trace the movement of the concept from its discursive naissance to its concrete establishment within policy-making. The final stage of the framework is designed to redress the existing gap in knowledge between the discursive elements of city-regionalism and material (physical) changes within the territory. These three analytical aspects to the research (and associated research questions) have informed the development of the methodological framework for this research.

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The chapter is structured as follows. To introduce the research design the chapter begins with the reasons and implications for selecting a qualitative, single case study to develop knowledge. This is followed by the specific qualitative research techniques that have been used to generate empirical data. These include semi-structured interviews, documentary analysis and participant observation. The pilot study undertaken, including its objectives and outcomes, are discussed before leading into a more detailed description of participant selection for the case study interviews. Following these stages the process of data analysis is briefly described before an in-depth consideration of my positionality within the research.

3.2 A case study approach

An interesting debate has emerged within regional geographic studies which includes discussion between Markusen (2003) and Peck (2003) over the utility of certain types of case studies. Markusen (2003, 701) argues that ‘many analyses rely on anecdotal or singular case studies, while constrain cases and more comprehensive comparative inquiries are ignored’ and that they can suffer because they are difficult to replicate and therefore lack generalisability. However, Peck (2003, 731) counters that the role of critical regional research is to

investigate the working out of causal processes or tendencies in different settings, to trace the effects of contingent interactions, and to corroborate and triangulate findings in relation to extant (and emergent) theoretical positions. The validity of any attendant theoretical claims is therefore based not on the representativeness of the sample/case, nor from statistical inferences based on empirical regularities and patterns, but on issues of theoretical necessity and analytical plausibility. Case studies have an important role to play here.

While it may be important that the study design engenders replication in other situations, the argument by Peck for the role that case studies have in developing a robust argument (‘analytical plausibility’) against a theoretical position or to fill a recognised gap, aligns well with the empirical focus of this research. In addition, a case study approach is also appropriate because it helps to address the ‘spirit’ of the research questions, that is, the

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‘how’ and the ‘why’ of contemporary city-regionalism. As Yin (1994, 1) argues, ‘[i]n general, case studies are the preferred strategy when ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events and when this focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real life context.’

The phenomenon that was analysed was a form of socio-political rescaling characterised as ‘city-regionalism’. While the concept is neither entirely original in itself nor substantially divorced from the ‘new regionalism’ (see: L Ward and Jonas 2004; Harrison 2007), its re-emergence suggested that there was a differential aspect to its development than has previously been witnessed. As such, the complex processes through which the city-regional agenda in South East Wales was constructed became the primary interest of the empirical analysis. While single case study research has been criticised because results may not be widely applicable in real life, Yin (1994) has refuted this claim through an explanation on the differences between statistical generalisation and analytic generalisation. In the latter, previously developed theory acts as a template against which empirical results of the single case study are compared. A single-case study was selected partly because of the nature of the funding agreement which supported the doctoral research, but also because, as identified in Chapter Two, there is a lack of detailed empirical evidence on the processes of city-regional formation. While a multiple case study approach might have provided some additional insights, the researcher has gained additional knowledge of city-region developments elsewhere in the UK during the course of attending seminars and events in relation to this research. This has proved invaluable in determining certain general and unique aspects of the Cardiff case.

Case study approaches have also been recently promoted as a methodological avenue for addressing some of the deficiencies surrounding the analysis and theorising of rescaling processes (see: Perkmann 2006; Harrison 2006). Peck (2003, 736) in particular has recognised that case study research can be extended to political economic geography as long as the challenge is met ‘to develop rigorous research designs and validity checks, to set the bar high in terms of standards of corroboration and triangulation, in a fashion that is consistent with the methods and modes that are being employed’. Therefore, in

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developing the analytical framework a conscious effort was made to create a framework and methodology which could analyse as well as compare concrete cases.

Use of a single site case study also had the advantage of allowing for an in-depth exploration of unknown and under-researched characteristics of particular social phenomena. A semi-structured form of inquiry was therefore important for providing the range of inquiry and depth of detail at the contextual level of the different actors whilst still maintaining links towards wider structural issues (e.g. through the examination of higher level discourses and narratives) and significant developments within the field. The case study research strategy satisfies these considerations because it is focused on gaining insights into the dynamics present within single settings and can involve single or multiple cases while enabling multiple levels of analysis (see: Eisenhardt 1989; Yin 1994). While not intentionally an ethnographically-motivated study focused on a detailed investigation of the life and activities of a particular group of people (Orum, Feagin, and Sjorberg 1991), my position within, and relationship to, Cardiff Council offered unique insights into the development and policy-making process. While ethnographic studies can be considered an excellent tool to compliment discursive studies (Megoran 2006), I was also conscious of the problems and/or tensions that an overly Cardiff-centric positioning would bring.

To summarise, a single-case study approach using semi-structured interview techniques and a discourse-based analytical approach was considered the most appropriate method to provide the contextual richness of data needed for this research.

3.3 Case study selection

My case selection of South East Wales was decided above all by the funding arrangement. The research was fully funded through a joint agreement between CC and the Department of City and Regional Planning (CPLAN) at Cardiff University. Nevertheless, South East Wales provided a fertile ground for city-regional research as there had

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been a well documented city-regional agenda progressed by the regional capital situated within a unique political and socio-economic context. These elements are explored further in Chapter Four.

The relationship with CC implicitly demanded a research project more focused on generating empirical evidence to inform policy making and strategising. This impression came through a reading of the original outline proposal and initial meetings with the council representatives. However, given this remit I was afforded remarkable flexibility in selecting the research methods and the aspects of city-regionalism to investigate. In fact, there was a substantial period during the first two years when I had little contact with CC, a contributing factor to this flexibility. It was during this time that the research design became more concerned with developing theoretical insights through empirical evidence and less concerned with the immediate policy implications and recommendations.

The determination that the single case study approach was the most appropriate for acquiring the data needed to address my research questions also helped frame my selection process of interview participants and the area of research requiring in-depth examination. The selection of interview participants is discussed further in section 3.5 however, in terms of where the participants were located I felt representation from across the city-region was necessary. The Wales Spatial Plan makes reference to three sub areas within South East Wales so perspectives from each of these were sought. These areas are: the City Coast; Connections Corridor; and Heads of the Valleys. The intent with this strategy was to avoid prejudicing the study results in favour of any perspective a particular location within the city-region may project and to allow for comparisons and contrasts between perspectives on the similar issues.

The single case study also allowed me to question whether the concept of the city-region held different significance and relevance for those actively involved in its construction and then to trace these understandings to subsequent stages of the region building process. This was an important opportunity for developing a greater appreciation of the

local dynamics involved in constructing city-regions and to present a different picture than those which refer to city-regions as the result of overarching structural forces.

3.4 Research methods

Within the single case study approach that was adopted for this research, several research methods were employed to draw out information and inform interpretation of data. These were:

- Semi-structured interviews
- Documentary analysis
- Participant observation

These are each separately discussed below.

3.4.1 Semi-structured interviews

Having decided to approach city-regionalism through a qualitative lens, there were several options available for deriving information from which I could generate insights into the region-building process. Those considered included focus groups, questionnaires, surveys, and semi-structured interviews. Qualitative interviews, in contrast to quantitative, are understood to provide a greater interest in the interviewee's point of view and insights into what the interviewee sees as relevant and important. Semi-structured interviews were selected as the primary research method because it allowed me to draw out information on specific issues that I wanted to address (see: Bryman 2008) and they can provide a greater depth and breadth of information. Focus groups were discounted largely for practical reasons (e.g. the difficulty in getting individuals such as Chief Executives from local authorities together) and they were not felt to be appropriate for drawing out the different contexts which informed their understanding of the city-region agenda. The engagement I hoped to achieve with the actors interviewed was not so much concerned with 'getting beyond the rhetoric' of their respective institutional frameworks, but more to contrast the rhetoric presented by different individuals and organisations with regard to the city-region concept.

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Prior to conducting interviews I prepared a set of guiding questions for each interview stage that remained largely consistent for all interviews within that stage. As discussed below, the first set of interviews were to provide empirical information to inform chapters on the narrative construction of the city-region and its institutionalisation. The second set of interviews were specific to the materialisation of the city-region agenda and were specifically directed for those involved in the planning and provision of transport in South East Wales.

Interviews were conducted with a range of professionals including those representing business interests, politicians, civil society and civil servants. Because I was funded by, and therefore connected to, Cardiff Council's Economic Development department², perhaps the greatest challenge that I had in conducting the interviews was that of trust. On several occasions my motives were questioned and the interviewees wanted more information on how the report was to be used. I found it was possible to manage this issue by being open with the interviewee on the degree of separation that existing between myself and the council at the time I was undertaking the field work, and that in reality the majority of the funding came from CPLAN which has a very good reputation within South East Wales.

Interviews were usually undertaken at the offices of the interviewee, thereby allowing them to feel more comfortable. Interviews were normally between 45 and 90 minutes in length and I recorded these while at the same time taking notes and keeping the conversation going. I did not use any telephone interviews however, on some occasions I did call or email the interviewee afterwards for clarification of specific points. Shortly after the interview I transcribed them, read them over and wrote in field notes at the bottom to remind myself of key points. They were electronically stored according to the type of organisation the interviewee represented (e.g. local authority, business, etc) and the organisation itself.

² As mentioned previously, while I have referred to the department as the Economic Development department, it did in fact go through several name changes before and during my research in Cardiff. The single moniker has been retained for clarity.

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In total, 22 interviews were undertaken between September and December 2007 (these are shown in Table 3-1).

Table 3-1: Schedule of interviewees

Name	Position	Organisa- tion type	Area of representa- tion	Interview date
Alistair Neil	Chief Executive	LA	Valleys	09/07
Beverley Owen	Head of Regeneration	LA	Valleys	09/07
Chris Freegard	Managing Director	LA	Coast	09/07
Roger Tanner	Strategic Planning and Urban Renewal Manager	LA	Valleys	09/07
Grant Duncan	Manager, Wales Spatial Plan Unit	WAG	Wales	09/07
David Rosser	Director	NGO	Wales	09/07
Craig Mitchell	Policy Manager	Quango	Wales	09/07
Robin Morrison	Chairman	NGO	Wales	10/07
Mark Stephens	Executive Member of Economic Development and Finance	LA	Cardiff	10/07
Chris Ashman	Project Manager (secondment)	WAG	South East Wales	10/07
Mike Cuddy	Policy Manager, Department for Economy and Transport	WAG	Wales	10/07

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Paul Orders	Chief Officer Policy and Economic Development	LA	Cardiff	11/07
Rob Quick	Director, Environmental and Economic Regeneration	LA	Coast	11/07
Elgan Morgan	Executive Member for Environment and Transport	LA	Cardiff	11/07
Paul Carter	Operational Manager	LA	Cardiff	11/07
Cath Mullen	Policy Officer, Transport and Infrastructure	WAG	Wales	11/07
Gareth Hall	Director, Department for Economy and Transport	WAG	Wales	11/07
Justin Cooper	Planning Manager	Regional Body	South East Wales	11/07
Lee Waters	National Director	NGO	Wales	11/07
Simon Pickering	Manager	NGO	Wales	11/07
Russell Goodway	Chief Executive	Chamber of Commerce	Cardiff	11/07
Claire Saralis	Head of Policy	Chamber of Commerce	Cardiff	11/07

3.4.2 Documentary analysis

The second key research methodology that I relied on to draw out information was documentary analysis. It is argued by Atkinson and Coffey (1995) that documents demand a distinct ontological status because they cannot be relied on to provide a transparent representation of social reality. This is because documents are created with

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distinct purposes and therefore may not actually represent the reality of the organisation which produced them. However, they may be able to act as ‘windows onto social and organizational realities’ (Bryman 2008, 526) from which additional methods are required to inform analysis. In this respect, documentary analysis provides a valid methodological avenue for drawing out information on city-regionalism when it is used in conjunction with other methods such as semi-structured interviews and participant observation. However, consideration must also be given to how documents can be interpreted.

Documents were analysed over a time period which began during my literature review stage in 2005. It continued during and past my fieldwork, and concluded as I was writing up the thesis in 2009. Many different types of documents were analysed including statutory policies, non-statutory publications including economic development strategies, meeting minutes, newspaper articles, promotional flyers, conference proceedings, speeches and more. They also emerged from a range of different bodies and individuals. These were obtained from internet searches using key words, recommendations from my supervisor, officers at CC and interviewees, and other means. In addition to the strengths and weaknesses outlined in the paragraph above, a particular strength of this approach is that it allowed me to target the key documents that have played an influential role within development of the city-region concept. However, there is some concern regarding the representativeness of the documents I was able to access and whether I was able to apply the correct interpretation to the text (Bryman 2008).

3.4.3 Participant observation

The third type of research method that I employed during this study was participant observation. In this approach the researcher immerses themselves into a social setting for an extended period of time, ‘observing behaviour, listening to what is said in conversations [...] and asking questions’ (Bryman 2008, 697). It is common for this method to be combined with documentary analysis and interviews (Bryman 2008). There are many reasons why participant observation can be used to augment these other methods, including (ibid):

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- The researcher's extended immersion allows them to better understand the perspectives of actors within the social setting;
- It allows the research to better understand the particular use of language within a social setting;
- The ability to observe behaviour rather than simply what is said (interviews) provides the researcher with a deeper understanding of a social setting;
- Allows the researcher to gain greater access to a social setting which allows them to gain a greater degree of insight as well as highlighting the unexpected;
- It provides links between behaviour and context thereby allowing the researcher, for example, to better identify the motives behind statements and utterances which may be gained from interviews or documentary analysis; and
- Allows the researcher to come closer to a naturalistic emphasis because members of social settings are engaged with minimal disruption to their normal lives.

Expanding on this last point, Megoran (2006) notes that social scientific research methods such as survey, semi-structured interviews, oral histories, and focus groups produce a certain type of data through controlled environments that are 'structured by power relations and discursive formats generally alien to everyday forms of interactions.' Participant observation tries to eliminate these external influences.

As part of the funding arrangement with CC there was provision for me to spend significant amounts of time immersed within what was ostensibly the Council's Economic Development Department. This arrangement not only provided me with access to key individuals within the Council that I was able to interview but it also afforded me the opportunity during the beginning of my first year and throughout my third year to undertake participant observation. This was particularly the case between July 2007 and July 2008 when I spent 1-2 days a week within the economic policy team. As well as writing up my research during this time I also undertook tasks for the department including the preparation of presentations, writing articles for their economic bulletin, prepare consultation responses, and attendance with other members at various events

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such as the Wales Spatial Plan 2008 update consultation for South East Wales. I also sat on the Council's 'Carbon-lite' working group.

During this time several of the reasons listed above for employing participant observation were realised. For example, the relationships and allegiances of key participants became clearer and I gained a better understanding of the nature and conditions in which communications occurred around the city-region agenda. In line with Megoran (2006) this provided a validity check to ensure that the 'etic' (researcher-ascribed) categories and meanings I associated with the social context were consistent with 'emic' (self-ascribed) meanings. In another example, the period of participant observation also provided me with the opportunity to verify some of my initial findings with those involved in building the city-region from a practitioner's perspective. My understanding of the Council's position was demonstrated to be accurate as I drafted a large section of the Council's official response to the Wales Spatial Plan refresh. However, with this level of familiarity there is also the risk that this immersion would bias my results. This is a concern that is related to my funding arrangement and I have addressed in the section on positionality.

3.5 Pilot study

An important phase in developing my research design was a pilot case study. This was undertaken to guide my main empirical research in terms of who to approach, what to ask, and how to analyse the data. It also provided some personal assurances that I was on the 'right track' in that my main aim and sub-questions were in fact relevant to the current theoretical and practical debates. Perhaps the most reassuring message came from a local authority officer during a pilot study interview:

Well you know, it's the same, um, when I was reading through your article [pilot study abstract] I was sure you must have been reading through all the Wales Spatial Plan area stuff which is pretty strange because it's all confidential at the moment (local authority officer).

The pilot study also helped identify the main groups to be sampled and define them, get acquainted with the political/social environment and history, establish the key policy

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documents, ascertain the range or variety of opinions, attitudes, and beliefs regarding the topic of inquiry and other related issues.

The pilot study component of my research consisted of an initial foray into the city-region concept in South East Wales. The primary objective was to uncover the key aspects of the mobilisation around the city-region concept in South East Wales and to help build a general understanding of the political and social environment in which I was conducting research. Additionally, the pilot study improved my interviewing and transcribing skills and helped me assess important factors in case study research, such as: accessibility to information and sources; time constraints; technical familiarity (data collection and data analysis software, industrial and practical jargon); identification of potential research participants and potentially fruitful lines of interest.

I undertook the pilot study in January and April 2007 and it consisted of six interviews with representatives from three local authorities in South East Wales (situated on the Coast, the Connections Corridor and the Heads of the Valleys) and the WAG. Interviews were conducted in my office at CPLAN, at Council offices and in a hotel lobby in Tongwynlais and lasted for approximately one hour each in length. Following the interviews I transcribed them and entered the typed manuscripts into Nvivo (see Section 3.8 for further discussion on Nvivo).

Bryman (2008) states that one of the reasons why pilot studies are useful is because the type and range of answers provided can provide important early information regarding the usefulness of certain questions. For example, if every answer to a question is the same then the resulting data are unlikely to be of interest because they do not form a variable. Similarly, answers from the pilot studies may also direct attention to different types of data that should be collected. During my pilot study an important outcome was in increasing my awareness of the degree to which issues of social inequality, as opposed to environmental concerns, were a key driving force processes of city-region building. This led to a re-examination of my research direction which had originally been more concerned with the relationship between the competitiveness and environmental ele-

ments of the city-region debate. Additionally, the pilot interviews provided me with a better understanding of the policy and political context in which the city-region agenda was being advanced. This improved knowledge of the context in which my research was situated, allowed me to adopt more appropriate terminology, and also enabled me to begin developing associations between events and people that I was then able to use as ‘prompts’ during my fieldwork stage.

3.6 Participant selection

The approach to selecting participants for semi-structured interviews has an important bearing on evidence and theorising. Importantly, while the qualitative approach adopted discourages attempts to generalise findings, it is possible to replicate the analytical framework and methodological approach thereby enabling comparative studies. Nevertheless, it is recognised that within ethnographic-based studies, researchers are often ‘forced to gather information from whatever sources are available to them’ (Bryman 2008, 414).

A mixed approach was used for selecting participants and included both purposive and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling is a non-probability form of sampling where participants for semi-structured interviews are not sought out on a random basis (Bryman 2008). Instead participants are approached specifically on the basis that they are relevant to the research questions being asked but also differ from each other based on certain key characteristics. In my sampling approach these characteristics were primarily inspired by analysis of previous studies within the same topic area and included professional affiliation (i.e. did they work for different tiers of government, industry, or civil society) as well as territorial affiliations (i.e. where were they based within South East Wales). These criteria were developed to ensure that a range of relevant perspectives and array of data sources were produced.

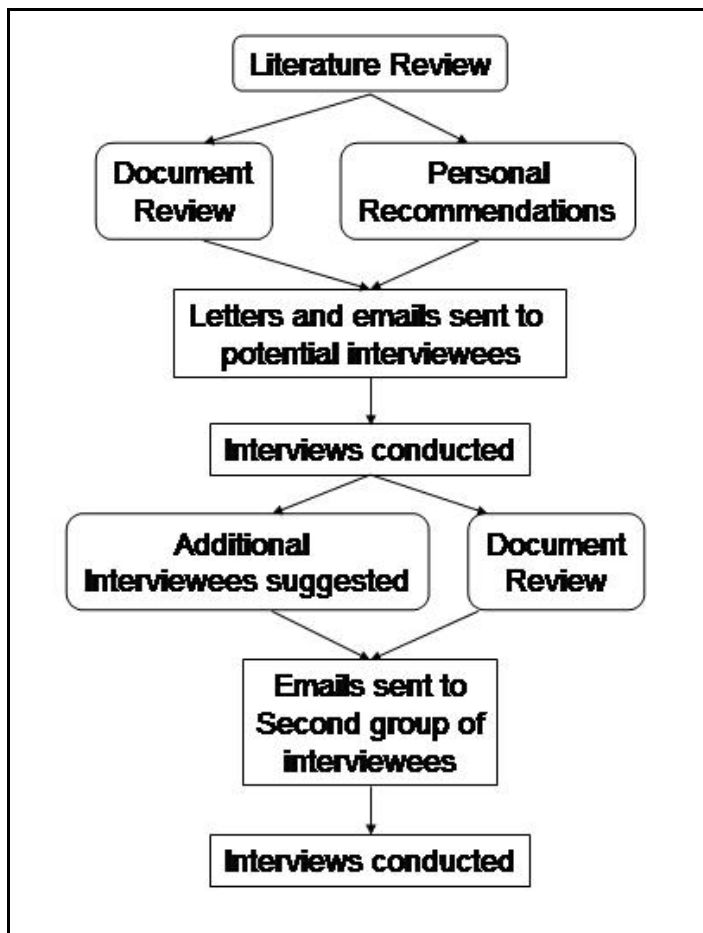
Using a purposive sampling technique, participant selection for the semi-structured interviews was largely derived from two main sources. First, the literature describes many similar studies from which I was able to identify common types of participants.

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Second, my contacts at CC and CPLAN were also able to provide an initial list of suitable contacts. The familiarity of these contacts with the research topic helped to ensure that their suggestions also fit several of the criteria for selection. An additional level of validation for using this strategy is derived from the theoretical framework that was developed in Chapter Two. Within this research area the importance of narratives (based on theories of discourse) are identified and include the assumption that power is not all-encompassing and allows the identity of key actors to be assumed.

Snowball sampling is a type of purposive sampling however, in this technique the researcher uses an initial group of contacts with relevance to the research topic and then uses these to establish connections with others (Bryman 2008). Once the interview process had begun the technique of ‘snowballing’ was also used either to identify previously unknown actors or to confirm candidates I had already identified for participation. Figure 3-1 illustrates the interviewee selection process.

Figure 3-1: Interviewee selection process



The initial selection of participants was largely accomplished by searching through the participants/attendees listed within the minutes of governmental meetings. This included meetings organised by the WAG, local authorities in South East Wales, and from the numerous regional and sub-regional bodies within South East Wales. The purpose of this was to identify relevant individuals that would be able to provide the desired range of perspectives meeting the pre-defined criteria informed by the literature review. Additionally, during background reading I had undertaken to provide context on the case study, a number of other individuals also emerged as prominent figures within the politics of South East Wales. Russell Goodway, former leader of Cardiff Council and the now defunct Cardiff Chamber of Commerce, is a prime example. As mentioned

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previously, representatives were also sought from several local authorities across South East Wales (i.e. not just from Cardiff and the coastal zone), the WAG, as well as public and private organisations.

The selection of participants for this study can be broken down into two stages. During the first stage the process described above is largely accurate. Once these individuals were identified I sent them a personalised written letter and email informing them that I would like to interview them for my research. Included with this letter was a summary of my research and an adapted article by Kevin Morgan on the city-region concept in South East Wales which had previously been published by the Institute of Welsh Affairs (Appendix 1). Thirty-one interviews were requested in this stage and fifteen were carried out. Unfortunately both ministers I had approached, Ieuan Wyn Jones and Jane Davidson, declined to be interviewed. However, Jane Davidson suggested a senior civil servant who I then contacted and subsequently interviewed.

The second stage of participant selection was performed through snowballing. This occurred in two different ways. First, I was suggested new individuals by interviewees during the initial interviewing stage. In addition, interviewees also directed me towards and sent to me additional documents of interest. From these I was also able to identify new potential participants. Once a second list of contacts had been finalised I contacted these individuals via email only and when appropriate mentioned who had suggested that I speak with them. Eight participants were interviewed in this way.

Informal discussions were also held with a number of individuals either during seminars, conferences, or as part of my participant observation. I count seven individuals who contributed towards the research in some way through this medium³.

³ Rachel Jones, Cardiff County Council (CCC); John Sheppard, Labour Leader for Cardiff; Ged McHugh, Blaenau, Gwent County Council; Dylan Owen, CCC; Jonathan Day, CCC; Christian Schmidt, SEWTA.

3.7 Data analysis

It is difficult to describing the methodology employed to analyse the large amounts of data produced from the interviews and documentary review. This is partly because the pathway leading to the analysis was not a simple linear matter of defining a set of research questions, identifying an appropriate methodology for generating data that would answer them and then analyzing the data and interpreting the results. Rather, it would more accurately be described as an iterative progression where new insights garnered from, for example, interviews, meeting minutes, or moments of reflection would lead to a refinement of research questions or slightly alter the approach or interpretive lens. However, the software tool used to organise and present data from the range of sources utilised was Nvivo.

As mentioned previously, an important concept underpinning the theoretical framework for this research is the role of narratives within processes of region-building. To effectively interpret narratives, requires attention to be directed towards the different discursive threads which coalesce to form coherent narratives through which reality is interpreted and from which policy and implementation emerges.

There are several different qualitative approaches used for interpreting documentary text including: content analysis; qualitative content analysis; discourse analysis; semiotics; and hermeneutics (Bryman 2008). The approach adopted here is a combination of qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis.

Qualitative content analysis aims to be systematic and analytic but not overly rigid (Bryman 2008). This approach requires the identification of themes from the onset of the analysis but expects that others will emerge as the research progresses. This suggests that the research process is one in which new discoveries are constantly being made and subsequently informing the research in an iterative manner where the researcher may be required to go back and re-examine certain material and findings in light of new evidence. Data that were analysed included text obtained from documentary sources as well as the transcribed interview manuscripts. These were entered into Nvivo and then

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coded using an initial set of themes derived primarily from the literature review. Further discussion on the analytical process and how it was supported by NVIVO is provided in section 3.8.

Qualitative documentary analysis was merged with discourse analysis to provide a robust analysis of documents and the text of my interviews. Discourse analysis has increasingly been used as a methodology for uncovering and explaining urban and regional policy processes and, in particular, the ways in which power is exercised by key actors (Jacobs 2006). It has also been used to understand the links between hegemony and the processes of state rescaling (see: A Jones 2006; Gonzalez 2006; Prytherch 2007).

Stenson and Watt (1999, 192) argue that

Discourses create, inter alia, a cast list of political and economic agents which government must consider, objects of concern, agendas for action, preferred narratives for making sense of the origins of current situations, conceptual and geographical spaces within which problems of government are made recognisable. They also create a series of absent agendas, agents, objects of concerns and counter-narratives, which are mobilised out of the discursive picture.

However, there are primarily two different approaches to discourse analysis. One strand extends from the Marxist political economy literature of the late 1970s which is used to uncover the significance of ideology and hegemony with respect to powerful interest groups (Lees 2004; Jacobs 2006). This strand is associated with Fairclough's methods of 'critical discourse analysis', and the studies of 'discourse coalitions' notably advanced by several authors (Dryzek 1993; Hajer 2005; Davoudi and Healey 1995; Rydin 1998; Jacobs 2006). In this work the identity of key actors is largely taken for granted and theories are developed into how coalitions form through a focus on discourse and persuasion rather than material interests. Or in other words, 'to establish the linguistic strategies that are deployed by key actors to share policy agendas (Jacobs 2006, 40). The second strand draws primarily from the writings of Michel Foucault and assigns language an instrumental role in establishing 'regimes of truth' (Foucault 1980) through which social problems are identified and then appropriately addressed (Jacobs 2006).

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While these two approaches differ in their philosophical origins they have been successfully combined to inform urban and environmental research. Lees (2004) sites Robert Beuregard's work in *Voices of Decline* as a useful illustration of a mixed approach within urban geographical studies. In his work she identifies an implicit Gramscian-type discourse analysis integrated with an explicit Foucauldian-type discourse analysis. Hajer's (1995) work on environmental policy is suggested as a useful framework for integrating both strands while political science has also been influenced by discourse-based methods. The work of Connolly (1983) was particularly influential and prompted researchers to move away from notions whereby policy language was seen as neutral but rather, 'language [was not] a conduit for concepts or ideas but [...] a political activity in its own right' (Jacobs 2006, 40).

The discussion below identifies the important elements of discourse analysis that have contributed towards the analysis / interpretation of documents alongside semi-structured interviews and participant observation.

At a general level, researchers utilising discourse analysis are concerned with highlighting both the interpretive context (social setting) in which the discourse is located and how the discourse is created and its authority established (Jacobs 2006). This understanding has focused analytical attention towards the 'arenas' in which different interest groups seek to establish a particular narrative or versions of events as a means to pursue political objectives (Jacobs 2006, 39). The work of political scientists in particular has highlighted how research which purely focuses on the narrow decision making process and other traditional research methodologies are too narrow and do not allow for in depth examination of some of the power and ideological contestation inherent to the consideration of policy and its implementation (Jacobs 2006). While this opens up the scope of inquiry for this study it highlights once again the importance of being able to link policy making with implementation in order to demonstrate causation – as noted in the literature review, this is an area of city-regional research that is not particularly strong.

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Whereas qualitative content analysis suggests that themes should be identified through the literature review and documentary analysis, the methodological implication within discourse analysis states that close semantic scrutiny should be placed on ‘rhetoric and turns of phrase to discover particular narrative structures, issue framings and how storylines close off certain lines of thought and action at the expense of others’ (Lees 2004, 102). In identifying how the city-region concept emerged within South East Wales, the suggestion here that narratives and lines of thought are fluid and can be altered following contestation is an important one. This is because it creates the need to search for multiple narrative versions which can then be traced to associated social groups and their interests and motivations identified. This is important since rhetoric within policy debates not only influences relationships between policy actors but also reflects them, thereby allowing analysts to position and group different actors because they may subscribe to the same terms.

Importantly, even though actors may subscribe and use the same term(s) it does not necessarily mean that understand them in the same way (Lees 2004). Rydin (1998, 178) usefully summarises the emphasis and power of discourse analysis:

discourses are reproduced through communicative action by actors and, in using the resources of available linguistic structures, actors can reshape those structures. As a result, language can influence the policy process in a variety of ways: it can alter perceptions of interests and issues; it can define the object of policy attention; it can promote particular policy agendas; it can shape the nature of communication between actors; . . . it can cement coalitions or differences between actors; and it can be diversionary, resulting in a form of symbolic politics.

This points towards not only a temporal imperative which that be considered in undertaking the research (i.e. taking a ‘snapshot’ would only present a partial picture of a particular narrative), but it also suggests that once narrative structures have been put in place and become institutionalised to certain degrees, they can then have intended as well as unintended consequences. As discussed in the previous chapter, discourses and narratives can be reinterpreted and remoulded through the policy-making process (Healey 1999). Therefore, examination of these processes represents an effective

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method for analysing the development of city-region building activities from a more 'local' perspective.

Despite increasing support and use of discourse-based approaches to policy research, a number of criticisms have emerged which primarily argues that these approaches are unsystematic and add little to the evidence base (Jacobs 2006). Some of the most common and powerful critiques charge that discourse-based approaches to analysis contain a lack of clearly defined analytical methods; provide limited use in a practical context; reduce all aspects of social life to language and fail to separate social and spatial practices from their discursive elements; result in a privileging of individual or group agency over structural factors; and discourse-based approaches selectively choose evidence which supports particular arguments (*ibid*). While these charges have been effectively countered by a number of authors (see for example: Jacobs 2006; Fairclough 2000; Fairclough et al. n.d.; Lees 2004), a key method for strengthening the robustness of studies which employ discourse-based approaches is by augmenting them with other research methods (or vice versa) or interpretive methods. This is the approach that has been adopted by this study whereby discourse-based analysis forms one plank of a research methodology that also includes semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Additionally, while language and text has been identified as playing an important role in city-regional studies, these locally-based processes are linked to wider structural factors as well as material realities. It is primarily because the discourse-based analysis was considered to be one part of the overall research methodology (rather than its sole element) to developing a better understanding of city-regions that it was considered the most appropriate potential approach.

3.8 Using Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS)

The software programme NVIVO was used to analyse data generated through interviews and documentary analysis. However, the rising popularity of the use of CAQDAS in qualitative research has led to debates over its appropriateness (Bringer, Johnston, and

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Brackenridge 2004) and therefore must be briefly addressed. Bringer et al (2004) have summarised these debates and note that critiques of the use of CAQDAS include:

- It has the potential to transform qualitative research into an automated analysis of text with the possibility that findings will be misinterpreted without clearly stated epistemological and theoretical assumptions;
- Researchers may choose their theoretical perspectives and analytical techniques based on the power of the software rather than using a more appropriate theoretical perspective to answer the research questions;
- A lack of user training leading to unrecognised assumptions and bias built into the analysis; and
- The use of the software may promote false expectations of rigour.

While these important concerns have been recognised, there is significant support for using computer software such as NVIVO as an effective tool to support qualitative analysis. The description below of the use of NVIVO to collate, organise and analyse textual data as part of the dissertation represents an effort to achieve transparency over the process.

A wide range of documentation was digitally uploaded into the NVIVO programme. Predominantly this included:

- Statutory public policy documents;
- Non-statutory public policy documents;
- Meeting minutes;
- Commissioned research studies;
- Consultation feedback responses; and
- Interview transcripts from this research.

The specific documentary material that was included in the review process was identified in several different ways. This included interviewee recommendations; reference within other documents; types of material that was important within other studies; material that was referred to or I observed others working on or referring to during my

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period at Cardiff Council; web-based searches (using search engines such as Google) using key words that were based on people, places, or research themes.

All documents were then reviewed within the NVIVO programme and coded using 'nodes'. Initially a small number of nodes were pre-defined using key themes drawn from the literature review. Examples of these early nodes include 'competitiveness', 'inequality', 'city-region politics', 'governance', 'rescaling', and 'conflict'. Using this approach, paragraphs, sentences, or sections of sentences were highlighted and linked to the appropriate node. In undertaking this exercise it was possible to bring to interconnect themes into chronologies of events and key story-lines and sub-themes.

As the research progressed, it became clear that some themes were too narrow to capture data usefully while others were much too broad. In response additional themes were added, others were merged together and some were removed altogether. As an example of a node that was expanded once it became clear that new categories of interest were emerging, 'city-region politics' was separated into a number of more nuanced codes including 'Cardiff-Newport relations', 'Cardiff-WAG relationship', and 'urban-hinterland relationship'.

In grounded research, the strategy for coding raw data to identify key themes is known as 'open coding' (Creswell 1998). Once these key themes have been identified and the raw data coded, 'axial coding' is then undertaken as

'[...] exploring the interrelationships of categories [...] that influence the central phenomenon, the strategies for addressing the phenomenon, the context and intervening conditions that shape the strategies, and the consequences of undertaking the strategies' (Creswell 1998, 151).

However, this research did not employ a grounded approach to theory building. Therefore, the three-stage analytical structure (narrative construction, institutionalisation, and materialisation) developed through the literature review provided the categories of primary research interest and were used to arrange information in a hierarchy of concepts. To illustrate this point using Creswell's above quote, under the category of narrative construction:

- **interrelationships of categories that influence the central phenomenon:** codes such as ‘city-region definition’, ‘Cardiff-WAG relationship’, ‘competitiveness’, ‘inequality’, ‘narrative shifts’ and ‘conflict’ were explored to better understand the emergence and development of the city-region agenda in South East Wales;
- **the strategies for addressing the phenomenon:** codes such as ‘city-region debate within politics’, ‘partnerships’, ‘use of experts’, and ‘vision’ were explored to shed further light on how different actors and processes influenced the city-region agenda;
- **the context and intervening conditions that shape the strategies:** coding of the raw data into themes such as ‘case study context’, ‘government reorganisation’, ‘Heads of the Valleys’, ‘delivery deficit’, and ‘historical issues’ was undertaken to help build up a more structured understanding of the case study context which played a role in city-regionalism; and
- **the consequences of undertaking the strategies:** these consequences were largely explored in relation to the overarching analytical category as informed by the theoretical literature.

The analysis and reporting of case study findings was an iterative process. The structure through which case study findings were presented was provided by the overarching analytical categories and the chronological approach to reporting the development of city-regionalism in South East Wales. In writing up research findings, the coded data was constantly reviewed and in some cases additional codes were created, either from the already coded sentences and paragraphs or through further review of the raw text.

In addition to the raw data included in the qualitative data analysis, contextual richness was also provided through a review of newspapers and other website sources (BBC News for example) although these were not formally coded.

3.9 Positionality

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The close relationship I had with CC as a result of project funding and being situated within the organisation created three principal concerns that needed to be addressed. The first relates to my 'positionality' as part of the research experience, the second is my 'cultural positionality' (Herod 1999) as a Canadian studying British social processes, and the third is a reflection of the historical antagonism between the city of Cardiff and the surrounding region which relates to my funding from and relationship to CC.

To consider the effects of the researcher within their own research there must be some consideration for the

researcher's contribution to the construction of meanings through the research process and an acknowledgement of the impossibility of remaining 'outside' of one's subject matter when conducting research (Nightingale and Cromby 1999, 228).

As one of the methods used to generate knowledge was participant observation, in which the researcher is purposefully situated 'inside' the subject matter, it is important to reflect on how my involvement within the study influenced and informed the research (Nightingale and Cromby 1999). Willig (2001, 10) suggests that this involves reflecting how the researcher's 'values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments, wider aims in life and social identities' shaped the research. While each of these elements will not be discussed in great detail, it is clear that they have been reflected upon during the course of the research so it is logical that they will have had bearing on the research design and data interpretation.

In writing this section towards the end of the research process and following drafts of all empirical chapters, it is clear that two key characteristics which have had bearing on the research and warrant discussion are my interests and beliefs at the onset of the research and my wider aims in life. Although potentially important in some cases, I do not believe my values played a significant role in the research as these are still actively being developed and the subject matter and empirical focus do not represent areas in which the personal values of the research are likely to play a significant part.

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At the beginning of the research I viewed the city-region concept rather critically and the role of CC within city-region building process with scepticism. In fact, I was encouraged to apply for the research grant largely on the basis of reviewing the supplementary material within the application package which included Lovering's (1999) article critiquing new regionalism. At the same time I had little interest in applying to work within local government in South East Wales (i.e. for CC). The cumulative impacts of these two internal characteristics led me to focus more on the political aspects of the city-region process and to adopt a process-based analytical framework that would not directly result in significant policy recommendations. However, I must also acknowledge that as the research progressed I became more aware of CC's relatively weak position within the progression of the city-region narrative as I developed a greater appreciation for the contingent nature of city-regionalism. This led me to view the Council with less scepticism than I had previously. As this personal change partially occurred during the time in which I was situated within the Council, there is a possibility that my sympathies for the Council also increased. With this in mind I realise that the normative conclusions which emerge from this research are therefore influenced to some degree by my own shifting positionality.

The second element of positionality is what Herod refers to as the 'cultural positionality' (Herod 1999, 314) of the researcher. As a foreign-born researcher with a Canadian accent it is probable that as interviewees developed an initial impression of me it was heavily informed by my place of birth and my accent. However, it could plausibly be argued that had I been born and bred in South East Wales this would have had a more significant effect on the data generated through the interview process. The effects of this impression are discussed further below. In terms of positionality a more significant debate relates to how a Canadian researcher undertakes and interprets data relating to British social processes.

Herod (1999, 314) problematises the notion that

a researcher who conducts interviews with members of different nationalities is automatically at a disadvantage because they can never hope to understand the cultural complexities of that which they are not. In other

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words, the validity of one's research is seen to be a reflection of one's positionality.

Herod recognises that understanding the production of knowledge from a positivist perspective in which an 'insider' and 'outside' dichotomy is present creates certain problematic issues. Using this research as an example, this dichotomy would hold that a British citizen would be able to develop more accurate knowledge because they would have a greater ability to use appropriate cultural resources and skills. By contrast the Canadian 'outsider' would need to be able to remove 'greater quantities of cultural baggage to gain access to the true and correct knowledge about particular events and processes held by the interviewee' (Herod 1999, 314).

While providing some minor recognition that my positionality as a foreign-born researcher may have influenced the manner in which I undertook research and interpreted data, I do not believe that this played a significant factor in the outcomes that were generated. In part, this is due to the two years previously spent in the UK in Glasgow (2001-02) and Liverpool (2003-04) as well as the current the period (2005- to present) in which I have gained a better understanding of any 'cultural resources and skills' which may exist. More importantly, however is the recognition that the research process itself is a situation in which the interviewee and interviewer participate together in developing knowledge; As Herod (1999) claims, there is little purchase to an argument differentiating an 'insider' or 'outside' informed version as 'truer' in an absolute and objective sense.

The third element of my positionality partially relates to the above perspective of what may also be judged as an 'insider / outsider' concern. As has been highlighted in previously chapters and will be expanded upon significant in Chapter Four, there is a pervasive antagonistic relationship between Cardiff and some areas within its hinterland, particularly in some of the valleys of South East Wales. While I recognise that this statement is a crude simplification, there are nevertheless well documented parochial rivalries which can and do flare up between actors situated in the capital city and the

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surrounding area.⁴ Therefore, in addition to the fact that I am not Welsh, the nature of my funding arrangement with CC would mean that I could be viewed as something of an ‘outsider’ when conducting interviews with interviewees outside of Cardiff.

This did not however, appear to cause me any significant problems during interviews; if anything this may have worked in my favour as some interviewees, perhaps because I was not from the UK, went to some lengths to explain the politicised context in which the city-region agenda was unfolding. From these statements it was possible to derive a more informed understanding of the historical evolution and personal relationships which provide an important context to the city-region agenda as it unfolded. For example, one interviewee stated the following prior to commencing with any of the structured planned questions:

I think it’s very interesting about some of the language you’re using. You’re talking about city-regions. If you talk about that in a Welsh context I think you’ve got to look at the politics of Wales and where it’s coming from. We’ve got a coalition government which is made up of Labour which is traditionally the urban and Plaid Cymru whose heartland is in rural areas. So, if you start talking about city-regions you are creating at the political level, you could create a division between urban and rural and you could polarise issues.

However, it is not possible to conclusively state that the politically sensitive nature of the research and my partnership with CC as a funding body led to some potential interviewees to decline requests to participate. For example, the two Ministers that I contacted both declined my requests and there is no doubt that the body of evidence against which I drew conclusions from would have been strengthened by their participation. By including numerous documentary sources (e.g. minutes of meetings which they attended), these deficiencies were partially remedied.

3.10 Conclusion

Building on the research questions derived from the literature review presented in the preceding chapter, this chapter has described the approach and methodology adopted to answer them. A qualitative, single case study was identified as the most appropriate

⁴ These rivalries are well evidenced and referenced throughout this dissertation.

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approach and empirical data was collected through semi-structured interviews, documentary analysis and participant observation. Some limitations to the adopted approach are also discussed. The chapter has described the pilot study that was undertaken prior to the main field study stage and reflections have been provided on how this brief foray into the 'real world' led to some changes to be made in my overall research design. Detailed descriptions have been provided of the process through which interview participants were identified, approached and ultimately interviewed. A more in-depth discussion of the data analysis approach has been presented, including the reasons why a discourse-based approach was utilised and the specific benefits that it provided in terms of structuring the study and situating the work within the larger academic context. The chapter has finished with a three-pronged consideration of the researcher's positionality and the potential effects that this may have had on the research process and ultimately the conclusions that are made in Chapter 8. The next chapter provides a detailed account of the unique context of South East Wales in which the research was undertaken.

4. Case Study Context

4.1 Introduction

City-regionalism has become a legitimate policy driver of state intervention in the UK for a variety of reasons (as discussed in chapters one and two). However, the politics and associated processes through which city-region agendas are constructed and implemented are poorly understood. It is argued in this research that the form city-regions can take as the concept becomes a material reality is significantly dependent on the 'local' contexts in which they develop. Therefore, it is these local dynamics which are of particular interest in this study.

This study analyses city-regionalism through a case study of South East Wales. As such, the purpose of this chapter is to identify and describe the key elements of the case study area which provide the context in which the city-region agenda is progressed. This context subsequently helps to focus and connect the empirical evidence uncovered through the fieldwork.

For the sake of clarity the chapter is separated into two subsections: the first addresses the administrative changes to government and governance in South East Wales; and the second considers the socio-economic context of the region, highlighting key differences between Cardiff and the surrounding area. Considered cumulatively, the discussions around these two issues are important for setting the context for the later analysis and synthesis of information because they establish the historical contention of boundaries within the case study while highlighting the importance of their continuing morphology in terms of the inter-relationships between the different parts of South East Wales. These discussions also serve to calibrate the lens through which the social relations feeding into the city-region are viewed, particularly by identifying and describing the nature of the over-riding economic ambitions emanating from the Capital city and how these contrast with the concerns of the hinterland.

4.2 Government and governance

Over the last two decades there have been two key observable shifts that have impacted the roles, functions and politics of urban governance in South East Wales. These are:

- dramatic changes in government structures, jurisdictions and boundaries beginning in 1974 and continuing past devolution in 1998; and
- changes in strategic approach notably Cardiff Council's transition from a 'managerial' to an 'entrepreneurial' mode of governance (see: Harvey 1989).

Intimately connected with these changes are the injection of higher level discourses of globalisation, competitiveness and sustainable development into policy making. Through this discussion of the important administrative changes a contextual backdrop is presented against which various stakeholders develop and contest city-regionalism in South East Wales. It also helps provide a better understanding of the motivations and loyalties which inform the decision making of key stakeholders while also drawing out relationships, inter-dependencies and potential points of conflict which emerge during the implementation of the city-region concept.

4.2.1 Administrative reform

An obvious entry point to describe the context for urban and regional politics within Wales would be the establishment of the National Assembly for Wales (NAW) and the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) in 1999. There is no doubt that this important occasion invariably altered the governing functions and practice of politics within the Country, however, starting here would miss a raft of key institutional changes which preceded devolution and continued to impact governance processes during the study period.

Local government reform

Amongst the many changes to the administrative structures of government that have occurred in Wales over the past century, perhaps the most significant for the current study on city-regionalism was the restoration of unitary authorities in 1996. Yet this event came 22 years after the capital city of Cardiff lost its unitary status in what has

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been described as the most controversial local government reforms of the second half of the twentieth century (Morgan 2006b).

Prior to 1974, Glamorgan County Council (GCC), seated in Cardiff, was the largest local authority in Wales, encompassing roughly 750,000 people and stretching from Cardiff's eastern outskirts to the western tip of Gower (ibid) (see Figure 4-1). Physically, within the County sat three County Boroughs (de facto unitary authorities): Cardiff, Swansea and Merthyr Tydfil.

Figure 4-1: The traditional counties of Wales prior to 1974



(Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales 2002)

Following the UK general elections in 1970, reform was anticipated. Labour had planned to divide GCC into two unitary city-regions: East Glamorgan focused on Cardiff, and West Glamorgan focused on Swansea (Morgan 2006b). However, the Conservative party won the election and divided Glamorgan into three rather than two counties in the belief that South Glamorgan could be a Conservative-controlled authority (ibid).

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Between 1974 and 1996 South East Wales was governed by a two tiered system consisting of three counties: South Glamorgan (including the districts of Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan); Gwent (including the former administrative county of Monmouthshire and the county borough of Newport) and; Mid-Glamorgan (divided into the six districts of Cynon Valley, Ogwr, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda, Rhymney Valley, Taff-Ely) (see Figure 4-2). Under this system the counties were responsible for large spending functions such as education and social services, and strategic services such as strategic planning and transport planning, while districts were responsible for services such as housing, local planning and refuse collection.

Figure 4-2: Preserved Counties of Wales, 1974-1996 (AFHSW)



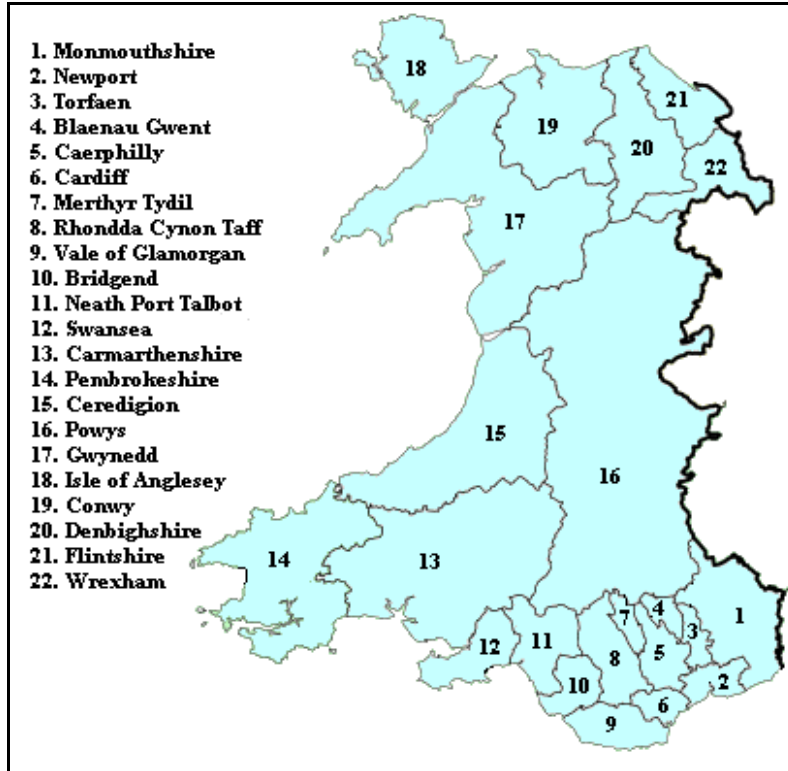
The relationships between the district authorities and overarching counties, particularly between Cardiff and South Glamorgan, were fractious (Morgan 2006b). Within South Glamorgan two distinct tensions emerged around service areas where responsibility was shared between the two tiers of government; economic development and the environment. Economic development was contentious for two primary reasons. First, it was not a formal responsibility of local authorities until well into the late 1980s and early 1990s.

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This meant that it was a function that was ‘up for grabs’. Secondly, economic development tended to be delivered by the South Glamorgan Council in a top-down manner with an emphasis on major development projects with little or no consultation with the districts of Cardiff or Vale of Glamorgan. It was politically influenced and tended to shape strategic planning policy. In terms of the environment, SGC was perceived as being dominated by a highways lobby which clashed with the ethos developing in Cardiff in which the city aimed to become an ‘environment-led’ city and even produced the first (self-proclaimed) UK green plan (ibid).

However, in 1996 this two-tier system of local government was abolished and replaced by 22 unitary authorities (see Figure 4-3). These reforms were based on the grounds that the two-tiered county system was not well understood (e.g. citizens did not know which authority was responsible for which services) and did not reflect local identities (Morgan 2006b).

Figure 4-3: Unitary Authorities of Wales, 1996 to present (National Gazetteer of Wales 2001)



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Prior to the legislation coming into force, debates emerged regarding what might constitute the appropriate number of unitary authorities and their borders (Hunt 1992). For example, Cardiff District Council (CDC) actively pursued a single new unitary authority based broadly on the same borders of South Glamorgan County Council. CDC felt that a separate unitary authority in the Vale would be too small to be viable and argued that ‘a “Greater Cardiff” made sense in terms of both governance structure and service delivery’ (Morgan 2006b, 34).

This argument was lost and the Vale of Glamorgan became a separate unitary authority in its own right when the 22 unitary authorities were created. Similar debates over the boundaries of unitary authorities also raged in the South Wales valleys. Then Secretary of State for Wales, Mr. David Hunt, stated in the House of Commons:

In the south Wales valleys I want as far as possible to take account of the intense local loyalties that are such a feature of the area. Taking account of demographic and other factors, however, I also consider it necessary for some of the present district councils in the valleys to come together to form new unitary authorities (Hunt 1992).

The transition from an eight county structure to 22 local unitary authorities significantly changed the institutional and political landscape of the Country. This change particularly affected South East Wales where three counties were replaced with 10 local authorities

This left South East Wales with very small local authorities by British standards with 10 local authorities for a population of 1.4 million people. It is difficult to gauge the impacts of these changes. However, there has been significant debate related to the high number of local authorities. Policy makers and government officials have complained about the inability to strategically coordinate service delivery as a result of the small geographical size of the authorities whilst politicians cite improved democratic accountability and a government that is ‘closer to the people’ as more positive impacts of the arrangement (case study interview observations). Business leaders and charitable organisations have come together to lament the significant amounts of bureaucratic red-

tape involved in conducting business while academics point out an increasingly parochial political environment (case study interviews and personal observations).

The debate over the number of local authorities remained a highly controversial and sensitive political issue during the period that this research was undertaken. Towards the end of the fieldwork stage, Welsh AM and Local Government Minister Brian Gibbons re-ignited the debate by threatening to cut the number of local authorities if they did not perform (James 2008). The overall effect of the 1996 government reforms remains unclear and largely unexamined. One reason accounting for this is that regional devolution, an even greater moment of constitutional change, followed just three years after the alterations to local government.

4.2.2 Devolution

The second significant change to the administrative architecture of Wales was the creation of a devolved Assembly for Wales in 1999. This followed a very narrow referendum in 1997 and was officially enacted through the Government of Wales Act 1998. When the Assembly was first created it lacked the power to initiate primary legislation however, through the Government of Wales Act 2006, the Assembly now has power to legislate in some areas. Currently, the NAW has the responsibility for ‘Assembly Measures’ across 20 sectors and governing remits⁵ (Great Britain 2006).

Previous to the establishment of the Welsh Assembly, Wales lacked a distinctive policy-making function. The under-resourced Welsh Office generally applied policies created in Westminster without very much modification (Loughlin and Sykes 2004). However, following devolution there was a significant change in policy development and the capacity of the civil service to meaningfully contribute towards distinctively Welsh policy debates (ibid). Significant departures from English policy-making have been noticed, particularly in the fields of education, health care and spatial planning. First

⁵ Agriculture, fisheries, forestry and rural development; ancient monuments and historic buildings; culture; economic development; education and training; environment; fire and rescue services and promotion of fire safety; food; health and health services; highways and transport; housing; local government; National Assembly for Wales; public administration; social welfare; sport and recreation; tourism; town and country planning; water and flood defence; Welsh language.

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Minister Rhodri Morgan famously described this as the ‘clear red water’ between Cardiff and Westminster policies (BBC News 2002a). More generally, a collaborative approach to service delivery has been adopted in contradistinction to the competitive mode encouraged across the border (Osmond 2001) which relies on a combination of targets, inspection, choice and contestability (Andrews and S Martin 2007).

As the WAG struggled to find its identity and proper place within an already convoluted UK state apparatus, the relationship to the newly created 22 unitary authorities of Wales was also being established. The Assembly was not in a position itself to implement many of its policy decisions so it relied on local government to achieve its objectives in practice (Osmond 2001). Sitting between Westminster and the unitary authority tier and lacking the power to enact primary legislation it was unclear what the role of NAW should and would be during this time. During the design phase of the National Assembly there was a desire for the new Assembly to be new, resembling neither the Westminster Parliament nor traditional local government (Loughlin and Sykes 2004). As such it was created as a corporate body rather than a parliament. This means that the distinction between executive and legislative functions is blurred (Laffin, G Taylor, and A Thomas 2002). As part of a procedural review in 2001, the Labour Group in the Assembly asked whether there was

a consensus that the Assembly should be a strategic/policy making institution with little role in direct delivery of services or should [it] take ever more direct responsibility for things currently dealt with by Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies or even by Local Authorities? (Osmond 2001)

The answer to this question remains unclear although it would appear that the Assembly has predominantly looked to enhance the role of the 22 Welsh authorities. Evidence to support this statement includes the creation of the Partnership Council for Wales in order to promote joint working and co-operation between Assembly Government and local government. The inclusion of this obligation on the Assembly in the Government of Wales Act created a unique statutory obligation on the Assembly to consult with the business sector, local government and voluntary organisations. For local government, this move represented an acknowledgement on the Assembly’s part that it would aim to

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‘safeguard’ its place at the top table of governance of Wales (Laffin, G Taylor, and A Thomas 2002).

Adopting a more collaborative approach to governance while also relying on local authorities for service delivery, allowed for policy agendas to be steered to a greater extent than in England by locally-based motivations and pressures, as well as political relationships between key stakeholders. Importantly, these relationships also include those between different local authorities as well as the relationship between the Assembly and local government.

The Assembly’s relationship with local government began well on rhetorical terms as articulated by the establishment of the Partnership Council between the Assembly and Welsh unitary authorities as a statutory part of the 1998 Wales Act (Osmond 2001). However, in reality relations had a shaky start (ibid). Despite these initial tensions and as mentioned above, the creation of a Partnership Council between the National Assembly and local government helped to mitigate many early problems. The Institute for Welsh Affairs (IWA 2006) writes that

[d]espite early suspicion there has been a maturing in the relationship between the centre and local government in Wales. On the surface therefore the changes devolution has brought to local government appear to have created a much stronger relationship and a clear distinction in roles. Not only has the reality of a separate system of Welsh local government been formalised but the Assembly Government is allowing local government to be understood as a maturing and separate tier of governance in its own right.

While this may be true for the relationship between the Assembly and unitary authorities at a general level, the history of relations between Cardiff and WAG is slightly different and at times has been characterised as openly antagonistic. Michael Parkinson’s report comprehensively summarises the nature of these tensions from CC’s perspective:

[R]elationships between the Welsh Assembly Government and Cardiff Council appear particularly complex and constitute a barrier to the long-term economic performance of the city. Many argued that the Assembly was dominated by rural interests and did not sufficiently appreciate the economic contribution that Cardiff makes. There were suggestions that the city was under-resourced by the Assembly and the particular costs and

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contribution it made were not recognised. [...] There were suggestions that there were political rivalries, almost sibling rivalries, between a city that had once been powerful and had to now deal with a recently established national government. There were suggestions that political relationships between the individual leaders of the previous Labour administration and the [WAG] were not very constructive. There were suggestions that a Labour controlled Assembly was not particularly sympathetic to the ambitions of a Liberal Democrat controlled council. There were views that there was not sufficient political talent in the Assembly to recognise or address the needs of Cardiff and that it was not a mature political organisation (Parkinson and Karecha 2006, 58)

Conventional wisdom indicates that it is not possible to have both strong intermediate (devolved) and local governments and that regionalisation tends to result in regional centrism (Laffin 2007). Jeffrey (1998), in a message to the Scottish Affairs Committee, suggested that ‘when formerly centralist states decentralise power to the regional level, local government can suffer from the “decentralisation of centralism’’. In light of this it is unsurprising that there may be some institutional ambivalence demonstrated on the part of CC towards the NAW and WAG. However, in Wales a number of factors contribute towards a fairly symmetrical balance of power between the Assembly and local government in relation to the situation in England. These include the prominence that Welsh Ministers place on local government as an important political constituency as well as the vital contributory role local government plays in policy development. This dependency of WAG on local government has been well recognised. The Assembly also has a statutory duty to promote local government and does so through the Partnership Council. Another key factor is that the Assembly has only limited legislative powers so Ministers are restricted in the extent to which they can intervene in local authorities. This is one reason why the WLGA has opposed the blanket extension of primary legislative powers to NAW since greater Assembly powers would potentially alter the power balance between the Assembly and local government (Laffin 2007).

To provide an even deeper understanding of the contextual background against which city-regionalism has developed in South East Wales, consideration must also be given to the higher level discourses which were also influencing patterns of administrative change in Wales. Two of the most important of these discourses are sustainable devel-

opment and competitiveness (played through the entrepreneurial city) because of the influence that they have had on how the role and function of governance has been perceived within South East Wales.

4.2.3 Sustainable development

While most countries in Europe are struggling to integrate the concept of sustainable development into government decision-making, the Government of Wales Act 1998 carried the proviso that the new legislative body must promote sustainable development in all of its work (Bishop and Flynn 2005). The duty to promote sustainable development is unique for a legislative body in Britain and one of only three governments in the world with such a responsibility (the others being Estonia and Tasmania, Australia).

The newly established WAG was thus set the challenging task of establishing new institutional structures and operational processes that would facilitate and promote sustainable development across all of its areas of responsibility (Bishop and Flynn 2005). This has led to systemic changes at all levels of governance activity – local, national, UK and European – and at every level involves public, private and voluntary agencies operating in a complex web of interrelationships (Williams 2007). First Minister Rhodri Morgan exemplifies the multiscalar influence of governance practices brought about by the commitment to sustainable development:

We have taken a major step forward towards preserving the riches of the earth for generations to come [...]. The new spirit of co-operation that exists between us in Wales and regional governments from countries as diverse as Australia, Brazil, India, South Africa and EC countries will serve us well in years to come. It is at the regional level that many of the most important actions take place. By working together [...] the legacy inherited by our children, and their children after them, is likely to be much more positive (BBC News 2002b).

Responsibility for managing sustainable development within the WAG was initially given to a very small dedicated staff resource located within the Environment department. Subsequently, however this responsibility was transferred to a central strategic policy unit, demonstrating an elevated profile within the government as it became ‘a cross-cutting agenda affecting all the activities of all departments’ (Williams 2007, 256).

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At a political level, a cross-party sub-committee was created and originally chaired by the First Minister to further cement sustainability's high profile. There exists an Assembly Coordinating Group that reviews every policy area and the NAW has established subject committees for all key policy areas, such as health, education, economic development and transport (Williams 2007). There was also a Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Housing whose responsibilities included planning, energy, water, waste and the promotion of walking and cycling. On behalf of the Cabinet, the Minister also led on Climate Change and Sustainability. Sue Essex, former Minister for the Environment and the Cabinet 'sustainable development champion' demonstrates the significant progress made in embedding sustainable development principles within the discourse of Assembly officials and politicians:

the legal duty has helped us to mainstream sustainable development. If we look at the policies of the Assembly it is apparent that section 121 has had a significant positive impact. Sustainable development is no longer seen as a fringe issue by Assembly officials or politicians but as a cornerstone of all our policies. I see my role as 'champion of sustainable development' as a particular opportunity [...]. In reality I thought it would be much harder to mainstream sustainable development than has proved to be the case. We've been able to get the concept understood and accepted in a comparatively short time. In general, no one wants to be seen as against it, although it has to be said that things are going better in some areas – such as waste management – than in others. Transport continues to be a difficult issue, and we still need to do more to convince traditional thinkers in economic development that there are opportunities in 'greener approaches (Bishop and Flynn 2005, 100).

It is clear from the above quote the extent to which sustainable development has become a high level discourse constructing the parameters through which Assembly policies are debated, designed and delivered. Yet sustainable development can be a slippery or 'wicked' (Williams 2007, 253) issue and despite the outward expression of consensus by Sue Essex, debate continued over the interpretation of the concept and its appropriate implementation. Policy approaches can be referred to as either 'weak' or 'strong' sustainability. The dominant approach within the industrialised world tends to be the former where sustainable development is based on materialisation, wealth and economic growth (Collins 2004). Differences also emerge with regard to the emphasis placed on particular 'pillars' (i.e. environment, society, economy) as policy formulation progresses

and leads to implementation. This is an important area of contestation for this study as there were serious concerns expressed over how a proposed territorial entity – the city-region – would be ‘expected to sustain its competitiveness at the same time as it reduces social and spatial inequalities’ (Morgan 2006a).

4.2.4 Competitiveness (and the entrepreneurial city)

At the height of Cardiff’s period of physical regeneration during the mid-1990s a ‘localised scalar imperialism’ was emerging. The naissance of this process began as an element of urban entrepreneurialism but was further stimulated by the intentions of the Conservative government to reorganise British local government. As mentioned previously, this entailed the abolition of South Glamorgan Council and the transfer of its duties to the (now) unitary authorities of the Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff County Council. Russell Goodway, a former leader of Cardiff Council (between 1996 and 2004) and a key driving force behind the city’s competitiveness strategy, had long been keen on ‘the idea of including the South Wales Valleys within Cardiff as a de facto ‘city-region’ to give the city considerably more weight economically [and] demographically’ (Bristow and Lovering 2006, 312). The Conservative reforms thus represented an opportunity to establish a formal political shape to accompany these ambitions. Ultimately, Cardiff was separated from the Vale of Glamorgan and the Valleys authorities were divided into several smaller unitary authorities however, the ‘emergent city-regional strategic thinking, together with its enthusiasts, transferred to the new Cardiff County Council (Bristow and Lovering 2006, 312).

While a range of cultural and political reasons have been presented for the territorial rescaling of governance in the UK (i.e. devolution), a fundamental driver prior to devolution in the late 1990s was the concern was to provide a spatial strategy which would help ‘secure economic prosperity through supply-side policies in order to create a competitive advantage under globalisation (Goodwin, M Jones, and R Jones 2005, 35). Whilst meta-discourses such as globalisation are argued to be one of the key operating principles structuring the modern world (R Atkinson 2000), the concept of the ‘entrepreneurial city’ was developed to better understand shifts unfolding at more localised

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spatial scales. Teasing out the schema of this urban-centric discourse and relating it to the case of South East Wales provides an important contextual layer for understanding the development of the city-region agenda and its progression during the study period.

The significant changes to the roles, functions and practices of local government over the past few decades provides the backdrop for the second series of governance changes in South East Wales. In the decade prior to devolution, a period characterised by heightened inter-area competitiveness, it became broadly accepted that cities needed to market themselves if they were to compete within global markets (see: Boland 2007). This imperative drives urban elites to promote existing local assets and develop new attractions to potential investors, tourists and (current and potential) residents (Boland 2007) and signifies a transition from urban managerialism to urban entrepreneurialism (see: Harvey 1989). Under the managerial mode local government concerns were primarily focused on the provision of public services, as well as administering decommodified components of welfare and 'collective consumption' to the local populace (MacLeod 2002). In contrast, the entrepreneurial mode focused on enhancing city competitiveness within international hierarchies through activities designed to 'unlock' private investment and the commodification of social and economic life (ibid).

According to Harvey (1989) (and summarised by MacLeod 2002) urban entrepreneurialism is characterised by three key features:

- i) a shift from government to governance – for example, new forms of political organisation incorporate a much wider range of partners including a stronger business presence in the form of public-private partnerships;
- ii) the governing agenda focuses more on the 'enabling' of economic enterprise which subsequently generates trickle down welfare enhancing effects rather than wealth distribution and welfare; and
- iii) urban entrepreneurialism is driven more by a political economy of place rather than territory, i.e. the benefits of initiatives are enjoyed more often by those living beyond the locality such as tourists and place-mobile capitalists.

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Public policies reflecting aspects of ‘urban entrepreneurialism’ (also referred to as ‘boosterism’) are heavily influenced and supported by groups such as local politicians, officials, property developers, and entrepreneurs who have a vested interest in certain forms of economic development. For example, commitments to ‘flagship’ projects designed to enhance the image of a city are a notable feature of these policies (Macleod 2002). Often consultants, academics and public relations experts are brought in to legitimise and smooth the progress of these projects and to help promote a common growth agenda (Boland 2007).

The governance of, and physical development within, Cardiff in the early 1990s (whilst still a district within South Glamorgan County) can be understood as an example of the transition to an entrepreneurial city. During this period

the city adopted a development strategy focussed on seeking to boost its competitiveness by improving the image of the city held by potential investors and in-migrants [...] the city changed remarkably, especially in visual terms (Bristow and Lovering 2006, 311).

There is no doubt that Cardiff experienced significant physical and economic transformations over the past two decades. However, the strategy adopted by the local government and the changes observed within the city are similar to many of medium to large cities within the UK and continental Western Europe. Bristow and Lovering (2006, 311) argue that the city’s competitiveness-oriented strategy was in actuality more of ‘an accompaniment to change rather than the driver of it.’ These authors claim that the city’s approach to governance and policy making have not been particularly instrumental in shaping the patterns of economic change or employment growth. These are argued to be beyond the control of local authorities. Instead, the local government has served to ‘sell’ a particular form of development to the populace and legitimise certain high profile projects such as an iconic new opera house, rugby stadium, and National Assembly building.

Establishing the main factors for the economic success of Cardiff during the 1990s and early 2000s is an important task but not one that is undertaken by this research. As described in Chapter Two, the focus within this study is on the key contextual character-

istics and processes through which city-regional agendas are developed and implemented. This recognises that new models of economic governance and the proactive policy-making roles of the city within an emerging knowledge economy must be considered recursively as part of the wider context of the political spaces in which they materialise.

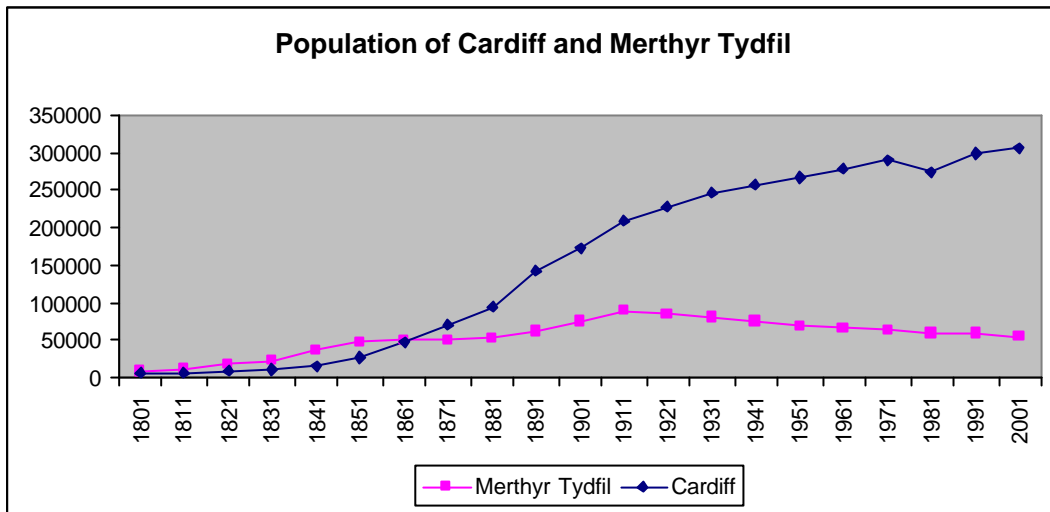
4.3 The socio-economic profile of South East Wales

The city-regional agenda South East Wales can be predominantly defined by the relationship between Cardiff and the WAG (Morgan 2006a). However, cities do not exist in isolation, rather they are intimately connected to their regional hinterlands – Cardiff’s relationship with the South Wales Valleys is an example of this interdependence. The socio-economic statistics provided in this section illustrate uneven patterns of growth and development across South East Wales during recent decades. Strong employment and physical growth within Cardiff, mirrored to some degree within other parts of the coastal belt, contrasts strongly with an economic situation in the South Wales valleys exhibiting high degrees of labour market distress (Gore and Fothergill 2007). Juxtaposing the economic success of the coastal areas, the South Wales Valleys faced large-scale social challenges including extremely high levels of long-term illness and rates of unemployment, and a large proportion of the population living within the most deprived communities in Wales (ibid). These socio-economic realities figure prominently in the analysis and interpretation of city-regionalism through the case study.

4.3.1 Historical relationships

The dramatic expansion of the coal fields of the South Wales Valleys allowed for the subsequent port development by the Bute family in Cardiff and the city’s emergence as a ‘coal metropolis’ in the early 20th century (Daunton 1977). Surprisingly, it was only in the latter half of the 19th century that Cardiff replaced Merthyr Tydfil as the biggest city in Wales (see Figure 4-4).

Figure 4-4: Historical populations of Cardiff and Merthyr Tydfil (EDINA)



As industry and mineral extraction flourished in the coal fields and port facilities expanded along the coast, the topography of the landscape played an important part in defining the urban-hinterland relationships:

For geographic reasons the ports of Swansea, Neath and Port Talbot became in due course the natural outlets of that part of Glamorganshire lying west of the Vale of Neath. For this reason the population of places lying in that part of the Glamorgan has not been included in the population of the natural hinterland of the Port of Cardiff. [...] For the intermediate region, which includes the Western Rhondda, Taff and Rhymney Valleys together with the Vale of Glamorgan, the Port of Cardiff can legitimately be considered as the natural outlet (Hodges 1947, 70).

Despite the mutual dependence between the Valleys as sites of extraction and manufacture and Cardiff providing the main export facilities, the nature of the relationship changed dramatically after employment in the coalfields peaked in 1920 (Morgan 2006a). Previously economic flows from the valleys to the city had been constituted by products in search of an export market but increasingly the dominant movements were of people to the coastal region in search of employment. As Cardiff developed into a larger and more dynamic centre within South East Wales, travel-to-work flows were augmented 'by travel-to-shop, travel-to-travel and travel-to-play flows' (Morgan 2006a, 401).

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As Morgan writes (2006a, 401), '[i]f the centre of economic gravity was shifting from the coalfield to the coast, politicians in the coalfield were loath to acknowledge the fact, still less accept it'. The increasing economic divergence between Cardiff and the Valleys contributed towards a deep seated animosity between the two regions. In particular, regional economic interventions was conceived as a 'zero-sum' game in which the benefits accrued in Cardiff resulted in losses in the valleys, irrespective of the inter-connected labour markets.

The antipathy between the coast and the Valleys, particularly the northern Heads of the Valleys region, can partially explain the objections towards the re-development of Cardiff Bay which began in the late 1980s. Political representation from some of the Valleys communities felt that the large endowments of public money poured into the project should have been directed towards the deprived communities in the upper valleys (Morgan 2006a). At times these feelings have been masked by political rhetoric:

Members who represent valley constituencies feel no resentment about the development in Cardiff. The area desperately needs development. My objection as the Member of Parliament for Rhondda is that I do not see the value of spending hundreds of millions of pounds on creating a lake that does not add one square inch of land for industrial development. If I could be convinced otherwise, I would support the Bill. I support everything in the Bill except the construction of a barrage (Rogers 1991).

At other times, as in the case of former Blaenau Gwent MP Llew Smith speaking directly about Cardiff Bay, they were not:

With the Assembly we were told that we were going to have new politics of a new Wales. In fact, the new politics is we will continue to rob the poor and continue to give to the rich not just for this year or next year but every other year (BBC News 2000).

These tensions then can be expected to have had a significant influence on the development of the city-regional agenda because as Morgan (2006a, 400) writes, '[r]escalating a city is a profoundly political exercise because spatial scale is both a medium for, and the outcome of power struggles'. As mentioned in Chapter 2, one of the potential reasons why previous incarnations of the city-region concept within the UK failed to advance

past the stages of academic theorising and research is because they did not deal with the issue of urban-hinterland relationships. The remainder of this chapter describes seeks to contextualise the development of the city-region concept through an exploration of the socio-economic characteristics and key differences which define the South East Wales.

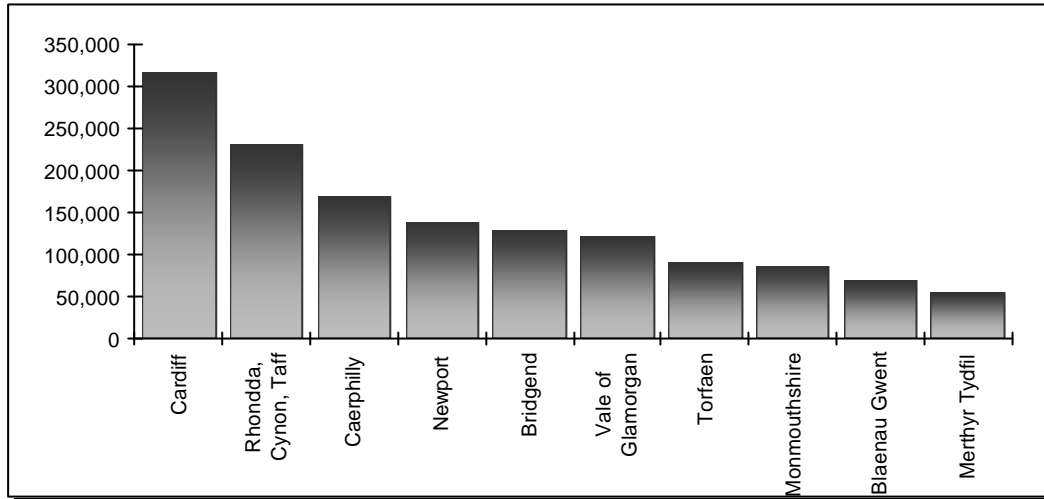
4.3.2 Transformation and uneven development

The unique socio-economic context pervades the politics of South East Wales at every level. Broadly this reads as a distinction between prosperity along the coast and deprivation in the former coalfields of the south Wales valleys. The following section illuminates this distinction but also highlights a more nuanced picture of the region, one that is usually obscured by statistical idiosyncrasies. The data presented in this section portrays a socio-economic snapshot of South East Wales as the city-region debates were intensely unfolding.

As of 2004, 1,413,000 people lived in the 10 unitary authorities in South East Wales, importantly representing almost half (47.9%) of the total population of Wales (Parkinson and Karecha 2006). As shown in Figure 4-5, Cardiff by far had the largest population at 316,800 – 22% of the regional total. Merthyr Tydfil is the smallest, with 55,100 (4%) (ibid).

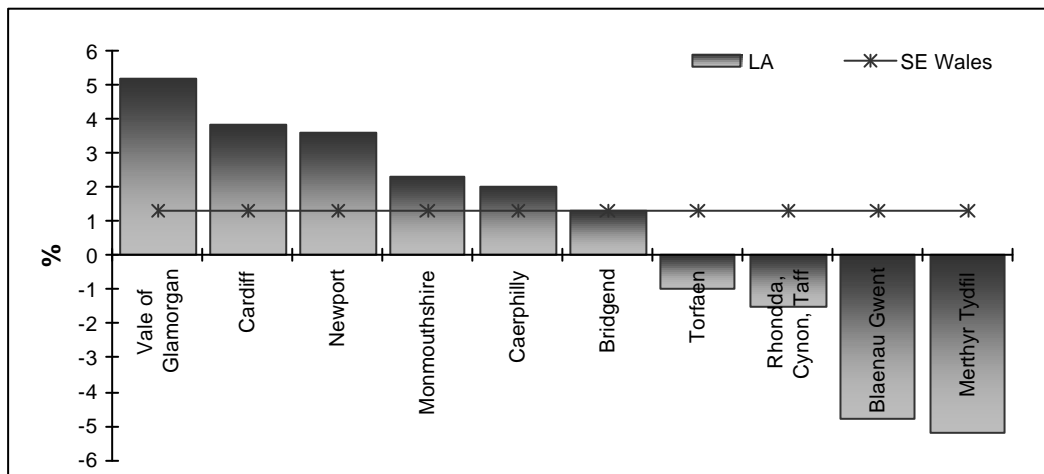
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Figure 4-5: Population of Local Authorities of South East Wales, 2004 (Parkinson and Karecha 2006)



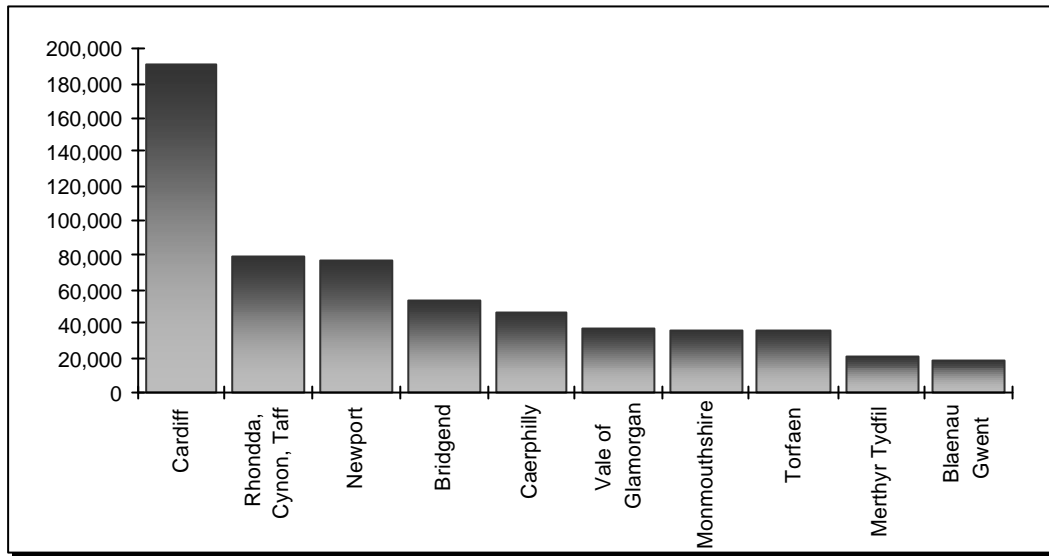
Overall the region's population grew by 1.3% between 1996 and 2004. However, while the four authorities in the coastal belt grew, the smallest authorities at the heads of the valleys, Merthyr Tydfil, Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen, experienced population decline (ibid) (see Figure 4-6).

Figure 4-6: Population change by Local Authority in South East Wales, 1996-2004 (Ibid)



It was widely recognised that Cardiff dominated employment within South East Wales. Of the nearly 600,000 full and part-time jobs within the region, 190,000 (32%) were in the capital (Parkinson and Karecha 2006) (see Figure 4-7).

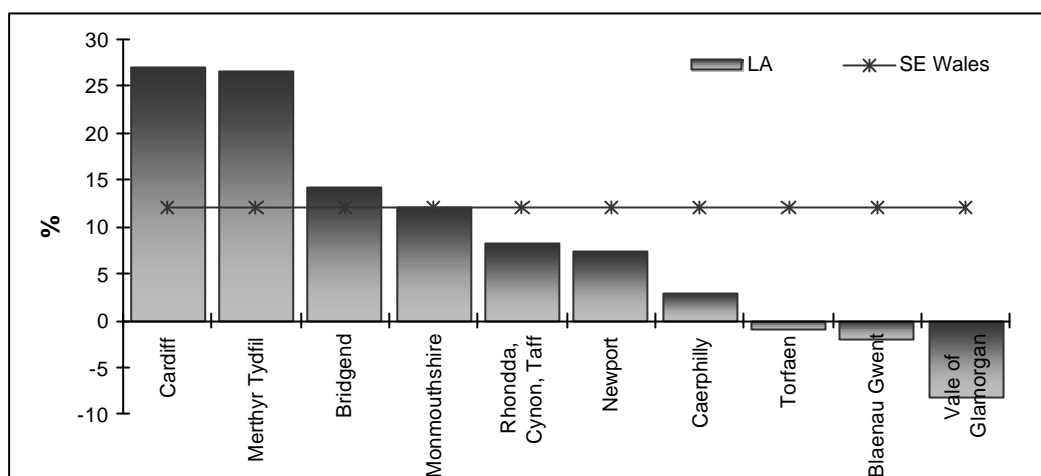
Figure 4-7: Total employment by Local Authority in South East Wales (ibid)



Prior to the recession in 2008/9, the economic situation in Cardiff had been characterised as ‘strong and buoyant’ (Cardiff County Council 2006a). It was the capital city of Wales, the seat of the WAG and the dominant regional centre for South East Wales. In 2005, the number of jobs had grown by roughly a third since 1991 (ibid), including a 16% rise between 2001 and 2005 which far outstripped growth in the other nine local authorities in South East Wales (ibid).

An important aspect of the area’s employment dynamics was that employment grew faster and concentrated more in Cardiff than anywhere else in South East Wales. Here the battle between processes of dispersion and agglomeration the latter appeared to be winning. While the region overall experienced a 12% increase in employment between 1998 and 2004, Figure 4-8 illustrates that the highest percentage increases were found in Cardiff (+26.9%) and Merthyr Tydfil (+26.6%) (ibid).

Figure 4-8: Percentage change in total employment, 1998-2004 (Parkinson and Karecha 2006)



Employment prospects for the city were regarded positively with job growth increases of 10.7% (23,200 jobs) anticipated between 2006 and 2021. Certain sectors of the economy were identified by Cardiff’s strategic thinking as vital for the competitiveness of the wider area within an international economy and were therefore favoured - through targeted forms of public sector support - over other areas of employment. These included knowledge intensive businesses, creative industries, higher education, medium high-tech industries, and high-tech industries’ (Cardiff County Council 2008a). Of these sectors Cardiff had higher rates of employment in comparison to the nine other unitary authorities in South East Wales (Parkinson and Karecha 2006).

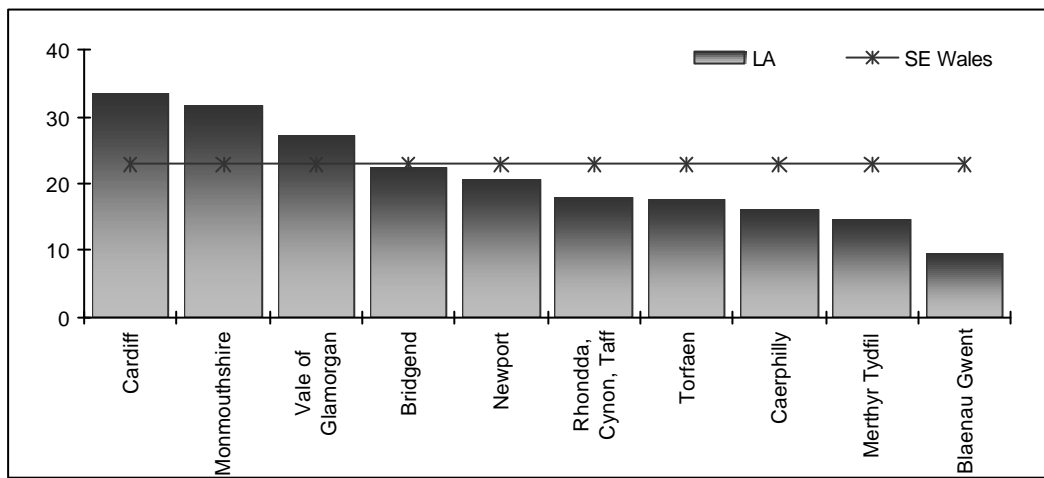
Cardiff was further distinguished in two ways from its surrounding hinterland by the employment structure. First, Cardiff had a very low proportion of employment in manufacturing and second, it had a comparatively high proportion of employment in banking, finance and insurance as well as in other services. Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly had comparatively high proportions employed in manufacturing and Merthyr Tydfil a high proportion of public administration, education and health employment (Parkinson and Karecha 2006).

Not surprisingly, as shown in Figure 4-9, Cardiff had the most qualified workforce within South East Wales with one third educated to degree level or above. This com-

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pared to a regional average of 22.9% (Parkinson and Karecha 2006). There was also a noticeable divide within the region between the valleys areas with relatively few people qualified to this level compared to the unitary authorities in the coastal area where qualifications are significantly higher. This trend was mirrored in terms of the distribution of population with no formal qualifications as well as in the percentages of income support claimants.

Figure 4-9: The proportion of persons educated to NVQ level 4 or above, 2003 (Parkinson and Karecha 2006)



One of the more common economic indicators used to measure the performance of an area or sector is Gross Value Added (GVA). Put simply, GVA refers to the value of goods and services produced by an area, sector or producer minus the cost of the raw materials and other inputs used to produce them. It was suggested (Parkinson and Karecha 2006) that more than others, this indicator clearly demonstrated the centrality of the Cardiff economy to South East Wales. South East Wales as a whole accounts for 55.7% of all Welsh GVA however, certain parts of this region grew much quicker than others (Parkinson and Karecha 2006). As shown in Table 4-1, Cardiff, the Vale of Glamorgan, and Monmouthshire and Newport, both experienced high percentage growth rates in total GVA, far exceeding the Welsh average (ib id).

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Table 4-1: Total GVA in the NUTS 3 areas of South East Wales, 1995-2003 (Parkinson and Karecha 2006)

	1995 £million	2003 £million	1995-2003 % change	% share South East Wales GVA 2003	% share all of Wales GVA 2003
Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan	4,753	8,201	72.5	39.4	22.0
Monmouthshire and Newport	2,162	3,496	61.7	16.8	9.4
Central Valleys	2,230	3,009	34.9	14.5	8.1
Gwent Valleys	2,465	3,144	27.5	15.1	8.4
Bridgend and Neath Port Talbot	2,455	2,942	19.8	14.1	7.9
Total	14,065	20,792	47.8	100.0	55.7
Wales	26,072	37,359	43.3	N/a	100.0

Income data at the local level also underlines the economic importance of Cardiff to the region. Although partially misrepresented because of the high levels of in-commuting, Cardiff has the highest per capita income per head out of all authorities in South East Wales and significantly, as shown in the Table 4-1 (above), the percentage change suggests that the concentration of wealth generating activities in Cardiff was further increasing. The disparities between the unitary authorities are made stark by the figures shown in Table 4-4 from 2002. Cardiff placed in 46th position out of 434 local authorities in England and Wales whereas Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly appear at the bottom of the table, in 424th and 426th place respectively.

Table 4-2: GVA per capita, 2002 (Cardiff County Council 2006b)

2002	GVA per capita £ per head	Rank (out of 434)
Cardiff	£19,904.17	46
Newport	£16,102.26	96
Monmouthshire	£12,679.29	206
Torfaen	£12,149.63	229
Bridgend	£11,278.41	266
Vale of Glamorgan	£10,744.20	302
Merthyr Tydfil	£10,511.14	316
Rhondda, Cynon, Taff	£9,782.74	359
Blaenau Gwent	£8,041.47	424
Caerphilly	£7,966.93	426
UK	£15,614.00	-

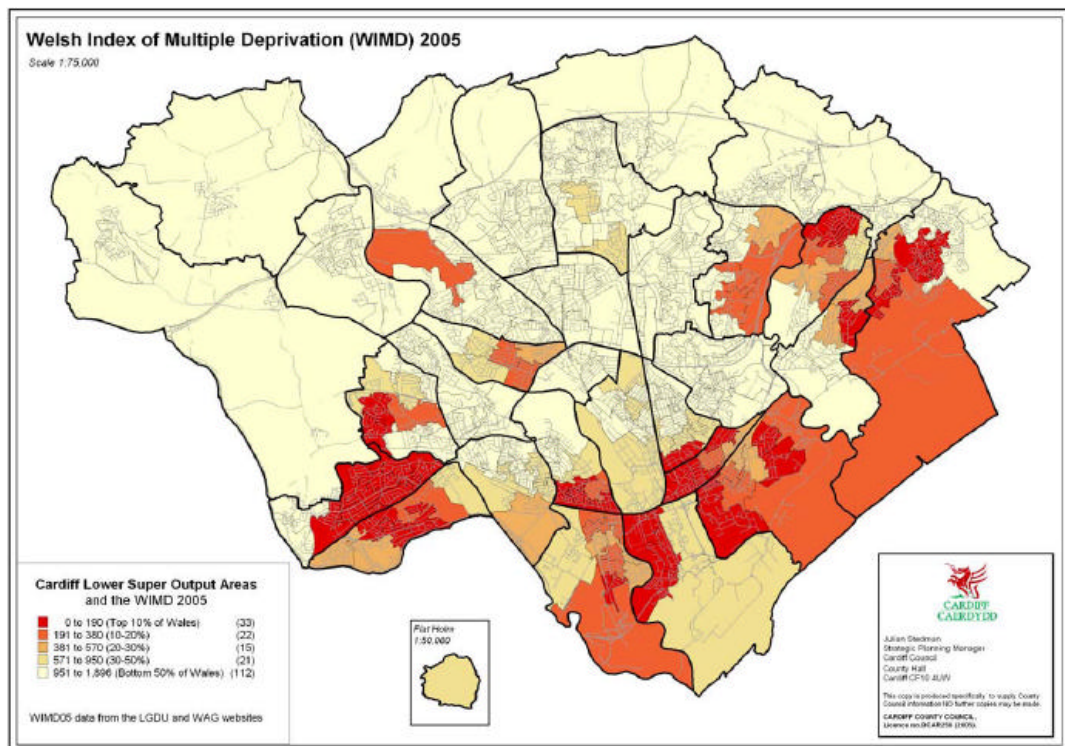
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The distribution of GVA mirrors trends across the UK where the larger urban conurbations also experienced an economic ‘boom’ during the study period. However, in line with Kipfer and Keil’s (2002) conceptualisation of world cities as sites of remarkable disparity, Jonas and Ward (2007b, 651) write

[t]he biggest GVA gainers – the most economically successful areas – area also those where residents have an unhealthy balance of too much of some things (crime, environmental pollution, ill-health, etc.) and not enough of others (income, education, employment, good air quality, etc.).

This is not only the case within South East Wales but also within Cardiff itself. Indeed, Cardiff contained some of the most deprived areas in Wales within a geographic concentration known as the ‘southern arc’ (although other ‘hotspots’ exist elsewhere). Of the 10% most deprived areas in Wales, 17% (33 out of 190) were found within Cardiff, higher than any other Welsh unitary authority (see Figure 4-10) (Cardiff County Council 2007a).

Figure 4-10: Cardiff Welsh Index of Deprivation, 2005



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Despite these inequalities, employees in Cardiff earned higher wages in comparison to the other unitary authorities in South East Wales, and the gap was growing. The largest growth in median wages (Table 4.3) was found in Monmouthshire (39.6%), Cardiff (32.6%), and the Vale of Glamorgan (32.3%) (Parkinson and Karecha 2006).

Table 4-3: Gross weekly median earnings (£) for full-time employees, 1998-2004 (Parkinson and Karecha 2006)

Local Authority	1998 Median	2004 Median	% change
The Vale of Glamorgan	321	425	32.3
Cardiff	317	420	32.6
Newport	345	410	18.9
Monmouthshire	272	380	39.6
Bridgend	299	374	25.2
Torfaen	313	373	19.3
Merthyr Tydfil	311	368	18.1
Rhondda, Cynon, Taff	288	367	27.5
Caerphilly	311	359	15.6
Blaenau Gwent	285	355	24.4
Wales	309	387	25.2

4.3.3 Socio-economic inequality

While the statistical indicator tables on jobs the economy in South East Wales are generally topped by Cardiff and the other authorities located in the coastal belt, the opposite is true for socio-economic statistics on unemployment, skill levels and deprivation. Here the former coalfields of the South Wales valleys tend to occupy the upper statistical tiers while the coastal areas assume positions lower down in the tables. Cardiff and Merthyr Tydfil represent particularly polar positions.

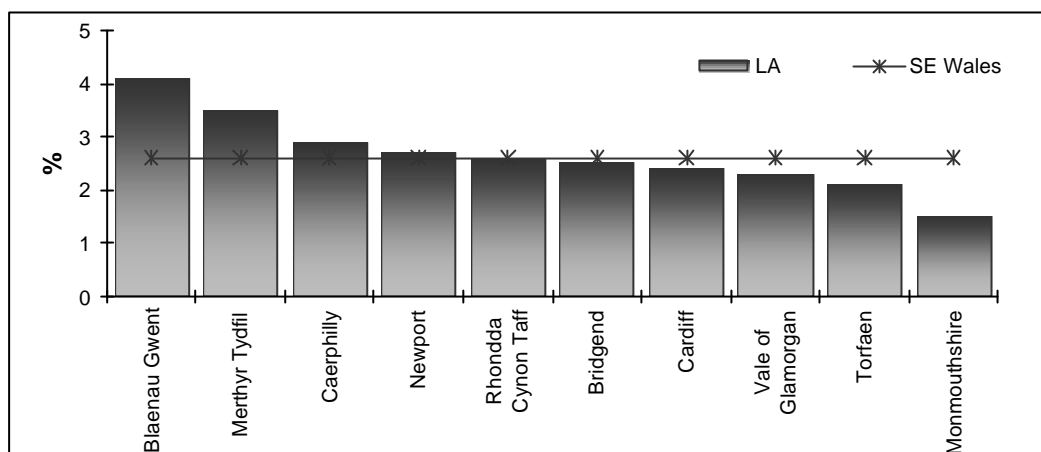
Unemployment and illness

The highest claimant count unemployment rates in 2005 (see Figure 4-11) were found in Blaenau Gwent (4.1%) and Merthyr Tydfil (3.5%), more than a full percentage point above the regional rate of 2.6% and the rate in Cardiff at 2.4% (Parkinson and Karecha 2006). The lowest rates were found in Monmouthshire (1.5%) and Torfaen (2.1%)

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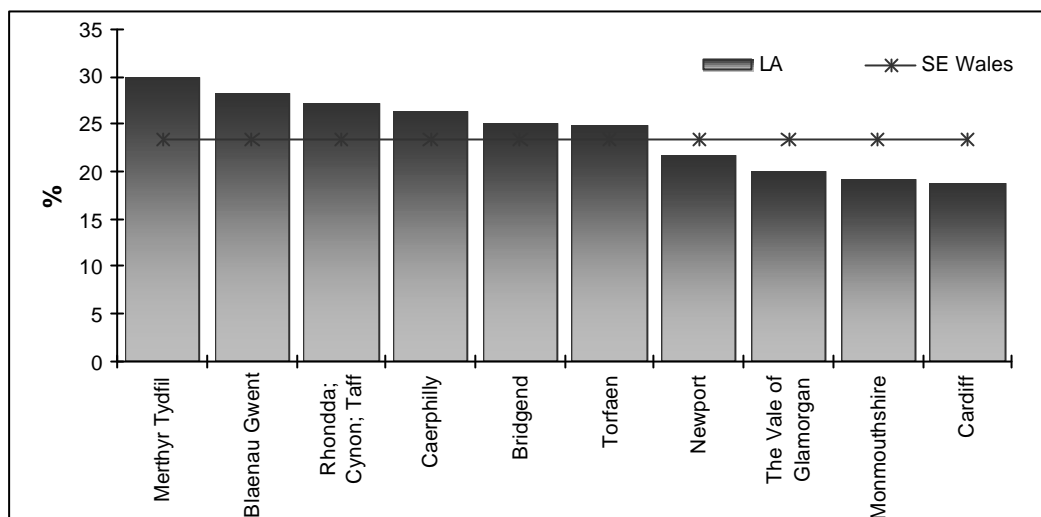
(ibid). The employment rate mirrors these trends with the highest rates found in the coastal areas and the heads of the valleys with the lowest.

Figure 4-11: Claimant county by Local Authority in South East Wales (2005) (Parkinson and Karecha 2006)



Statistics showing the proportion of the population which experienced limiting long-term illness (see Figure 4-12) provides an illuminating picture of the disparity within South East Wales. While Cardiff had the lowest proportion at 18.8%, within Merthyr Tydfil the figure soars to 30% (Parkinson and Karecha 2006). Within the northern valley areas the high levels of long-term illness has been associated both with the area's industrial past and persistently high level of worklessness. A problem which is then compounded by limited referral options in terms of specialist health facilities (Gore and Fothergill 2007).

Figure 4-12: The proportion of persons with a limiting long-term illness, 2001 (Parkinson and Karecha 2006)



Deprivation

Within South East Wales there were areas experiencing significant levels of deprivation. The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) ranks the 1,896 lower tier super output areas (LSOAs) for Wales in terms of deprivation in income, employment, health, education, housing, access to services, and physical environment. Table 4-4 shows the populations that fall within the ‘most deprived 10%’ category in Wales. Merthyr Tydfil had 35% of its population in this category, Blaenau Gwent 25%, and Rhondda-Cynon-Taf 19%, (Parkinson and Karecha 2006). In contrast, the lowest figures could be found in Monmouthshire (0%), the Vale of Glamorgan (3%) and Torfaen (4%) (ibid). The overall figure for South East Wales was 13% and Cardiff had slightly higher than this with 16% of its population falling within the most deprived 10% category (ibid).

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Table 4-4: Proportion of LSOAs in the 10% most deprived in Wales (2005) (Parkinson and Karecha 2006)

	Number of persons living in LSOAs that are in Wales' '10% most deprived'	Percentage of Local Authority's population living in LSOAs in Wales' '10% most deprived'
Merthyr Tydfil	19,400	35
Blaenau Gwent	17,200	25
Rhondda Cynon Taff	43,100	19
Cardiff	50,200	16
Bridgend	13,700	11
Caerphilly	18,700	11
Newport	15,100	11
Torfaen	3,400	4
Vale of Glamorgan	3,000	3
Monmouthshire	0	0
South East Wales	183,900	13

While Merthyr Tydfil had a greater proportion of its residents living in the most deprived 10% category, Cardiff had roughly 50,000 residents living in these communities. Therefore, in absolute terms Cardiff had more people living in multiple deprivation than any other unitary authority in Wales (Cardiff Research Centre 2006).

An untold story?

Based on GVA and employment data it may appear as though Cardiff and adjacent coastal areas successfully made the transition towards a competitive post-industrial economy. However, Cardiff had not escaped difficult periods of economic, social, physical, and political restructuring. While the city originally developed due to an expanding coal industry it also had to cope with this industry's subsequent demise and reposition itself as a service-oriented city. Contrary to the experience of many other British cities which had to struggle with a second round of massive economic restructuring following the demise of manufacturing industries, Cardiff was never truly a manufacturing city. In 1971, the city had only 20% of the working population employed in manufacturing in contrast to 35% in the UK and 30% in Wales (Parkinson and Karecha 2006). In 2001, it had only 9% in manufacturing compared to 14% in the UK and 17% in Wales (ibid). Still, the transition to a 'post-industrial' economy had not been

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overly emphatic. Financial services developed in the city in the 1980s but their growth slowed in the 1990s and as of the first decade of the 2000s, the city retained relatively few foreign banks and regional office headquarters (ibid). The city did have one of the largest concentrations of call and contact centre activity within the UK yet the sustainability of these jobs had been questioned in light of potential outsourcing threats (ibid).

Lovering (1999) points out that the 'renaissance' of Cardiff has not actually been driven by the successful transition towards a competitive post-industrial society. He writes (1999, 382):

If one factor has to be singled out as the key influence on Wales' recent economic development and the maintenance of reasonable average standards of living, it is not foreign investment, the new-found flexibility of the labour force, the development of clusters and networks of interdependencies or any of the other features so often seized upon as an indication that the Welsh economy has successfully 'globalized' [...] It is the national (British) state.

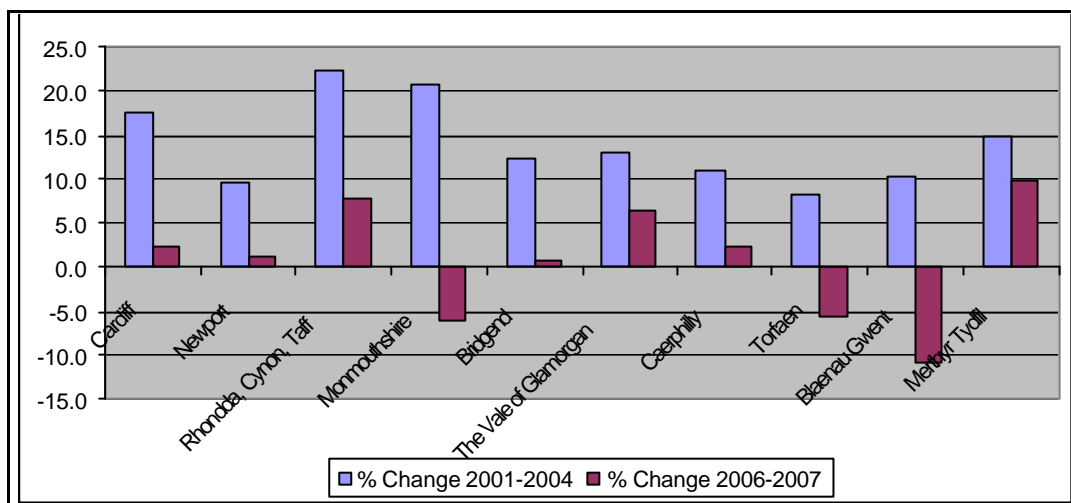
Lovering points out that in the mid-1990s UK public spending in Wales accounted for a higher proportion of employment and GDP than in any UK region apart from Northern Ireland. Between 1981 and 1995 public sector employers in Defence, Health, Social Services and Education created roughly 50,000 new jobs in Wales (ibid). To put this in perspective, 66% of GDP in Wales relies on the state, higher even than China at 62% which is a communist, totalitarian regime (Barnes 2006). Public spending is also well above former Soviet republics such as Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia (ibid). Even in the late 90s first half of 00s, there had been a steady growth in public jobs within Cardiff itself and 30% of the employment was in the public sector (Parkinson and Karecha 2006). With approximately 18,000 employees, CC was the single largest employer in Wales (ibid).

Additionally, there had been signs that the dynamism which Cardiff's economy exhibited in the late 1990s and into the early years of the 21st century might not have been as particularly robust GVA and employment figures suggest. Unfortunately, the methodology used for the ASHE changed after 2005 so it is no longer possible to make direct comparisons with data before this time. Nevertheless, an update of the figures does

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cautiously suggest some changes in trends. For example, Figure 4-13 shows the percentage change in gross weekly median earnings for full-time employees. Growth between 2006 and 2007 significantly slowed in the coastal cities of Cardiff (2.3%), Newport (1.1%) and Bridgend (0.7%) while it decreased in Monmouthshire (-6.2%), Torfaen (-5.8%) and Blaenau Gwent (-10.8%) (ONS 2008a).

Figure 4-13: Percentage change in Gross weekly median earnings (£s) for full-time employees (ONS 2008a)



Additionally, Table 4-5 shows total employment figures for the ten local authorities of South East Wales. Significantly, Cardiff's and Newport's total employment numbers actually decreased between 2004 and 2006, as did several other local authorities. The largest increases were experienced in Caerphilly (7.7%) and Vale of Glamorgan (3.0%). The largest decreases were in the upper valley areas of Torfaen (-7.4%) and Blaenau Gwent (-5%) (ONS 2008b).

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Table 4-5: Total employment numbers in South East Wales, 2004-2006 (ONS 2008b)

	2004	2005	2006	% Change
Cardiff	191,224	195,052	190,702	-0.3
Rhondda-Cynon-Taf	78,431	78,460	77,643	-1.0
Newport	75,181	72,619	74,853	-0.4
Bridgend	54,089	54,673	54,334	0.5
Caerphilly	45,986	48,341	48,533	7.7
Vale of Glamorgan	37,183	37,357	38,292	3.0
Torfaen	38,036	34,204	35,227	-7.4
Monmouthshire	35,842	35,514	35,157	-1.9
Merthyr Tydfil	21,383	21,654	21,868	2.3
Blaenau Gwent	19,282	19,472	18,323	-5.0

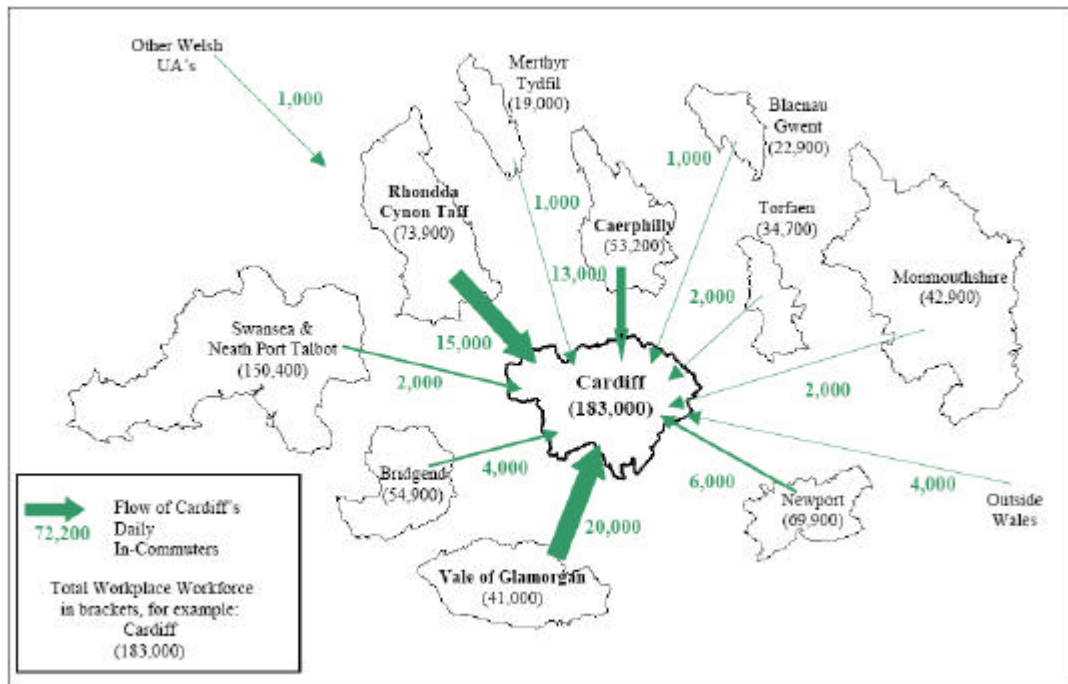
(ONS 2008b)

These figures also call into question the assumption that economic activity was concentrating in Cardiff at a faster rate than anywhere else within the city-region.

Regardless of the drivers of Cardiff's resurgence, one consequence of the strong employment growth in Cardiff over a longer-term period and the comparatively slow progression of the labour market in the Valleys had been increased levels of commuting to Cardiff from its surrounding hinterland. As shown in Figure 4-14, in 2005, there were approximately 72,200 daily in-commuters to Cardiff from South East Wales and beyond (Cardiff Research Centre 2007). The highest proportion of in-commuters to Cardiff was from the central valley areas in Rhondda-Cynon-Taf and Caerphilly as well as the Vale of Glamorgan. However, only a small minority of workers from the heads of the Valleys (cf: Gore and Fothergill 2007), Newport, and Monmouthshire commute into Cardiff. It has been argued that the increasing levels of in-commuting to Cardiff from the Valleys are more a symptom of the economic failure in the valleys rather than the dominance of Cardiff within the area (Gore and Fothergill 2007).

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Figure 4-14: Daily in-commuters to Cardiff, 2005 (Cardiff Research Centre 2007)



However, high levels of inter-authority commuting are not confined to Cardiff. As Table 4.6 illustrates, the entire coastal areas of Bridgend, Cardiff, Newport, and the Vale of Glamorgan, provide a very high number of jobs for the resident population in the valleys with gross-outflows of over 53,000 people and net flows of nearly 35,000 (SEWEF 2005).

Table 4-6: Commuting flow patterns in South East Wales, 2001 (SEWEF 2005)

	Commuting flow
Gross flows from valleys to coastal	53,467
Gross flows from coast to valleys	18,510
<u>Net flows from valleys to coastal</u>	<u>34,957</u>
Gross flows from rest of Wales to South East Wales	13,921
Gross flows from South East Wales to rest of Wales	9,407
<u>Net flows from rest of Wales to South East Wales</u>	<u>4,515</u>
Gross flows from England to South East Wales	10,416
Gross flows from South East Wales to England	20,216
<u>Net flows from South East Wales to England</u>	<u>9,800</u>

As will be demonstrated, the travel-to-work patterns played an instrumental role in the development of city-regional economic development strategising. However, serious questions have been asked over the ability for Cardiff as an economic growth pole to

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become the dominant source of economic activity serving the mid and upper valleys areas (Gore and Fothergill 2007). In part this is because of the small size of Cardiff in relation to the rest of the region. Roughly 320,000 people live in Cardiff while 435,000 live in the Central Valleys coalfield (ibid) and 1.1 million in the rest of South East Wales. This is a theme that will resurface repeatedly in this research. Out of the 260,000 people of working age within the Central Valleys it is not feasible to expect the majority to commute to jobs in nearby cities and other neighbouring areas – ‘for a start, there would not be enough jobs in these other places to absorb them all’ (Gore and Fothergill 2007, 22). Additionally, the relationship between Cardiff and the surrounding former coalfield is different than that between urban centres and surrounding coalfields in other parts of the UK (e.g. Edinburgh/Lothian, Sheffield/South Yorkshire) because within South East Wales there is a more of a reluctance for coalfield residents to include Cardiff within their job search area (ibid). Gore et al (2007, 30-1) write:

In the Central Valleys, there was a stark contrast between those living in the northern parts, all of whom were looking just for local work. Most of these were young, which is another important factor in the equation. The small minority who were searching beyond the coalfield all lived in the southern or middle sections, and did not confine their attention to Cardiff, but included Bridgend, Cwmbran and Newport within their compass.

4.4 Conclusion

The enduring legacy of previous rounds of local government reform continued to influence the political climate of South East Wales during the study period. The effects of these changes manifested themselves in various ways including informal networking at an officer level as a residual effect stemming from the pre-1996 County structure, increasingly parochial politics, and debates over future rounds of administrative reform. Devolution and the establishment of the WAG led to new sets of inter- and intra-governmental relations, working practices, political imperatives, and administrative strategies. The converging and potentially contrasting imperatives of competitiveness and sustainable development within such a fluid and rapidly changing institutional and administrative environment only expanded the scope of potential development pathways.

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Economic globalisation and sustainable development constitute the types of higher level discourses identified by Atkinson (R Atkinson 2000) which define the parameters through which lower tiered narratives are articulated. However, the spatialisation of state intervention through city-regionalism provides the arena in which localised narratives are contested and reconfigured. This is congruent with Healey's (1999, 27) argument that

policy agendas are reinterpreted and remoulded, to create different discourses which have the potential to maintain alternative sources of power and act recursively on the original frames of reference to transform them.

The dynamic socio-economic characteristics and structures of governance in places such as South East Wales provide a fertile medium through which these narratives are altered to fit specific contexts and embedded (or institutionalised) (see: Perkmann 2006). Harris and Hooper (2006) - echoing Swyngedouw's (1997; 2000) point that scale operates as a political arena and the connections Marston (2000) makes between space and power - note that one of the most significant effects of the establishment of the Welsh Assembly is that it politicised the Welsh territory, or 'the space that is Wales' (Harris and Hooper 2006, 141) in to a degree not possible through successive local reforms.

To link this context to the theoretical framework established in Chapter Two, the development of the city-region agenda can be seen as emerging within a fluid administrative context whereby appropriate forms of governance and public policies are required. Simultaneously these were being framed by the global discourse of competitiveness and sustainable development whilst being reshaped to both define and respond to the particular context in South East Wales. As this research uncovers the key components to this active politics of scale, references will be constantly made to the characteristics of the study area as various social actors attempt to present different versions of reality as truth; as an established city-region narrative emerges and becomes embedded within organisational and institutional practices; and a material landscape is re-defined according to a localised hegemonic conception of the city-region.

5. The Narrative Construction of City-Regionalism in South East Wales

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is the first of three which present empirical evidence obtained through the field work and the analysis of it within the context of the three-fold framework developed in Chapter Two.

Chapter Five (this chapter) primarily focuses on the narrative construction of the city-regional agenda in South East Wales. The evidence considered here is consistent with the understanding that important insights can be derived from viewing the drivers for city-region emergence not as pre-existing ‘givens’ but rather as ‘constructed’ social issues (Hastings 1998). As such, empirical evidence is presented and analysed in this chapter on the societal processes of construction and selection through which particular policy issues are defined in an attempt to better understand how the city-regional agenda was constructed in South East Wales.

The social mobilisation around the city-region concept and the development of city-regional policy is not a straightforward linear process; rather, it is highly contested. As discussed in Chapter Two, narratives are a key element within processes of region-building (A Jones 2006), or the creation of new state spaces (Brenner 2004). This section begins to explore the emergence of several city-region narratives within South East Wales, including the variegated construction of the problems the region is facing. In accordance with the understanding of scale adopted in this research, the focus is on both activities centered within the spatially defined political arena of South East Wales, and events and networked relationships emerging between key actors external to the region. However, the interplay between CC, the local authorities of South East Wales and WAG receives most of the analytical attention. The narrative construction of the various city-regional viewpoints and their failure to assume hegemonic status and lead to material change is explained through consideration of the paucity of regional institutional architecture as well as the relationships – both between key individuals as well as the relationships between public sector organisations - amongst in South East Wales.

The nascence and development of regional administrative bodies is also considered as this aspect has been identified as the second key component of city-region building.

The empirical evidence presented in this chapter is largely concerned with events unfolding between 1992 and 2002. This has been termed Phase I. Phase II is concerned with events between 2002 and 2008 and is presented in Chapter 6. The primary reason for this division is due to the entrance of the WAG into the debate; an action which fundamentally altered the course of subsequent rescaling processes because of the effect it had on the institutional thickness of the South East Wales as a political and regulatory space.

5.2 The narrative construction city-regionalism in South East Wales

The first phase of city-regionalism in South East Wales is defined as the period between 1992 when a strategic rescaling of Cardiff's ambitions were outlined in a high profile report and 2002 when WAG forcefully entered the debate. This phase reviews evidence of engagement and contestation of the city-region concept by a number of key actors including CC, Newport City Council (NCC), elected members and officers from the south Wales valleys and WAG.

5.2.1 The positioning of Cardiff

At around the same time as the European Union was developing its Competitiveness White Paper (European Commission 1993), South Glamorgan County Council (SGCC) commissioned a report from local academic Phil Cooke entitled *Cardiff: Making a European City of the Future* (Cooke 1992). This report marks the emergence of the city-region agenda within South East Wales and was to have a substantial impact on economic development strategies within South Glamorgan and the subsequent body of CC (Boland 2006). In laying out a case for the growth of Cardiff the report heralds the important economic role cities - and particularly capital cities - play within their surrounding regions. It states that

in many cases capital cities [...] have a "locomotive" effect, pulling their neighbours in a particular direction if and when they achieve the compli-

ance of the neighbours that the chosen direction is the correct one (Cooke 1992, 2).

The report attempts to reposition Cardiff within a hierarchy of European cities while creating an imperative for action because peer cities such as Amsterdam and Barcelona were more globally competitive. It was claimed that these cities had embraced a more entrepreneurial spirit and were more successful at marketing their assets within this environment (Boland 2006). However, it was not just the city of Cardiff which was situated within the European hierarchy. Rather the argument promoted was that Cardiff needed to present itself in its regional context because as a city alone it lacked the critical mass required to match the 'European city' image it was trying to present. The report (Cooke 1992, 49-50) suggests that Cardiff's relatively small size meant that it was insignificant in European terms. In addition to expanding to at least 400,000 it also must

promot[e] itself and its Metro-area as an urban complex of 1.4 million people. This should be done in all marketing, presentation, bidding and ranking exercises, especially with the European community, international business and the UK government. Agreement on the benefits of this to all involved in administration of the Metro-area must be secured and the benefits of such partnership shared (ibid).

This quote establishes two key points. The first is that it establishes the territorial extent of the political arena as the 1.4 million people who at the time were democratically represented by local politicians within the counties of Gwent, South Glamorgan and Mid Glamorgan.⁶ The second is that in defining the problems which the city-region agenda was intended to address it also begins to provide a framework for solutions to be advanced (see R Atkinson 2000). That is, in order to become more competitive in a global knowledge economy the city-region should be defined in ostensibly urban terms rather reflecting the villages and rurality which comprise the majority of South East Wales. In accordance with this world-view, policy attention should be directed towards driving improvements in long-term and youth unemployment (which may deter business relocation), wage levels, innovation capacity, research income and average earnings.

⁶ Cardiff had already been established as the focal point for South East Wales by stating this position in the very first bullet point in the Report's executive summary.

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Interestingly, the report also suggested that the presence of a large public sector might stifle private sector development (Cooke 1992, 22) and that previous decades of government economic intervention had been ineffective in countering economic weakness.

While not explicitly expressed, the author and commissioners of the report appear to have been very much aware that the newly emerging city-region concept offered a means through which an urban-centric pro-growth agenda could be advanced. As Boland (2007, 1029) writes,

[a]ccording to local officials, [Cooke's] research was 'bought into' by influential figures in the local business and political community and quickly became the 'narrative of the city'.

However, while the city's new narrative might have been bought into by these influential figures, it required a much wider buy-in from stakeholders within the surrounding hinterland. The report's conclusion acknowledges this stating that,

agreement on the benefits of this [strategy] to all involved in administration of the Metro-area must be secured and the benefits of such partnership shared (Cooke 1992, 50).

There are several historical and contingent elements of the developing city-region narrative which suggest this would be a difficult task. First, the historically antagonistic relationships between Cardiff and its neighbours in South East Wales (as described in Chapter Four) mean that one of the main barriers to the development of a city-regional agenda (at least from Cardiff's perspective) would be persuading those outside the city that Cardiff-based development would have wider benefits for them. Unfortunately, what these benefits might be is not spelled out in the report. Second, the report countered prevailing logic on regional policy making at the time. As Lagendijk (2005, 79) observed, one of the oddities of the new regional policies developed during the 1990s was that regions were afforded a prominent position as a key site within global economic areas and encouraged to develop "a strategic capacity to improve their economic cohesiveness, specialization and identity" at the same time as central government market

intervention was being discouraged. However, the genesis of the Cardiff city-region agenda suggests that the initial strategic emphasis was towards limiting government intervention while also suggesting that government was also contributing towards economic misfortunes. Demonstrating the changing nature of narratives as they develop, these arguments were subsequently jettisoned from later stages of Cardiff's city-regional arguments. Third, the rescaling of Cardiff in two important ways through the city-region narrative cumulatively resulted in quantitatively defined political problems. The report argued for the demographic expansion of Cardiff itself from approximately 310,000 to 400,000 (roughly a 30% increase and presumably within the city's boundaries as defined while part of SGCC) as well as the external presentation of Cardiff as a city-region of 1.4 million. The effect of both could have important political ramifications for the principality. For example, in terms of the former scenario there could possibly have been concerns raised from rural parts of (particularly Welsh-speaking) Wales over how and where the higher population would be drawn from. In terms of the latter scenario, a Cardiff city-region of 1.4 million would represent almost half of the entire country and significantly changing the existing power structures under the current political arrangements and future arrangements under devolution.

However, the narrative and content of the report did align well with the prevailing 'scalar turn' underway within economic development theory whereby the region begins to replace the nation as the most appropriate scale of economic intervention for managing the transition to a new knowledge-based economy. It also reflected a growing consensus of policy changes elsewhere in the UK and Europe and established the city-regional narrative within South East Wales as a spatial policy framework designed to develop Cardiff into a 'European class capital city'. This early development of the concept within South East Wales could be closely associated with 'competitive city-regionalism' inasmuch as it was boosterist in orientation.

5.2.2 Addressing the 'urban concern'

The Cooke report established the initial terms of the city-region narrative in South East Wales yet in contrast to England and several other European countries (such as Germany

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and the Netherlands) there was no higher tier government engagement with the debate for several years. When New Labour came to power in 1997 an Urban Task Force was set up to address the issue of urban decline in England. The Task Force published *Towards an Urban Renaissance* (1999) which analysed in detail the problems of urban England and suggested how the country's big cities and towns could develop more effectively in terms of realising their full economic potential and enhancing overall quality of life. This resulted in an Urban White Paper (DETR 2000a), specific measures in the Chancellor's pre-budget speech in 2000 and a specifically commissioned piece entitled *The State of English Cities* (Parkinson 2006). Central to this work was a general recognition that modern cities play an increasingly important role within society as engines of economic growth and contribute to the quality of life for all a nation's citizens.

These high profile attempts to address the urban issue came post-devolution and thus the studies, response measures and budgetary proposals were exclusively focused on England, thereby leaving Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to develop their own approaches to urban concerns. Within Wales, SGCC's earlier Cooke report had attempted to fill this strategic vacuum but the absent political space ensured that there was no solid policy making platform through which any of the recommendations from the report could be developed and implemented. Caerphilly planner Roger Tanner (2001, 1) effectively summarised this context:

Alas, the Welsh response has been abysmal. Neither the Welsh Office, nor the National Assembly [...] have made any attempt whatsoever to address specifically urban issues in Wales. No studies have been carried out into the nature of urban Wales, despite the fact that one of the most significant differences between Wales and England is in the scale and distribution of their respective urban areas. No Welsh Urban Task Force has been set up and therefore no reports received and no debate engendered.

A significant opportunity to redress this deficiency was provided from 1999 by the Objective 1 strategy – the *Single Programme Document* – which came to dominate public policy in Wales. However, this was characterised by a rural rather than an urban

priority (Tanner 2001).⁷ The effect of WAG's failure to address the urban issue from 'above' opened up the political space for a variety of city-regional arguments to emerge from 'below'. Within South East Wales several different perspectives were presented during the early part of the 2000s containing different interpretations of and suggestions for managing the interactions and dynamic relationships between urban cores and surrounding areas. These include: Cardiff Council's *Economic Development Strategy 2001-2006* (2001) which presents a functional argument for city-regionalism in South East Wales; the *City of the Valleys* (2001) report by Caerphilly planner Roger Tanner which advocates the dispersion of urban facilities through the South East Wales valleys and; the *Five Counties Regeneration Framework* (Shared Intelligence 2002) for Torfaen, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Blaenau Gwent as prompted by the reduction in steel manufacturing at the Corus works at Llanwern and the closure at Ebbw Vale.

5.2.3 Competitive city-regionalism in South East Wales

The first distinct narrative that was identified emanated from CC and represented a more sophisticated extension on the earlier city-regional ideas contained within the Cooke report. In developing this narrative the Council began to define the key terms and purpose of the city-region concept within South East Wales and continued to position the city as the focal point for city-regional policy making and public intervention.

A key document through which this narrative was presented is Cardiff Council's *Economic Development Strategy 2001-2006*. In developing a sectoral approach through which to consider the development of the local economy, the non-statutory strategy document focused on the promotion of clusters within certain sectors that are seen as "engine[s] of economic growth and sustainability in successful regional economies" (2001, 9). Silicon Valley in the United States is cited as an example of such a region and in Cardiff nine key sectors were identified for support.

⁷ It could be argued however, that this is more because the Objective One area included west Wales and the Valleys. As such, the area it was concerned with was largely rural with the only city included being Swansea.

From the perspective of this research the strategy is important for two primary reasons. First, it firmly established the overall context in which the city-regional agenda was to be progressed as one which determined by the imperatives of globalisation and international competitiveness. The strategy states that,

[k]nowledge has become a key asset for the more advanced economies in the world. There is little question about the increasing importance of knowledge in the economy, or about its consequences for the way in which economic activity is organised and for the way policy makers developing thinking about economic and industrial policy. [...] The increasing importance of knowledge, creativity and skills is changing the way firms compete and the source of competitive advantage between regions and localities (Cardiff County Council 2001, 5).

This sentiment is later reinforced with the assertion that '[t]he globalisation of economic interchange means that Cardiff must develop a competitive advantage' (2001, 5). These statements represent an attempt by the Council to secure legitimate support for a series of supply-led economic policy initiatives whilst establishing the direction for future public policy. Additionally, this imperative is traced back to abstract economic concepts such as the 'globalisation of economic interchange'. This approach serves to effectively close off alternative narratives whilst laying down the terms of the city-region debate. The association of the city-region concept with globalisation (which represents an agenda which cannot be challenged (cf R Atkinson 2000)) makes it more difficult to undermine and contest it.

Second, the strategy builds on the Cooke report and begins to make a case for a more sophisticated form of city-regionalism within South East Wales. The important relationship between economic development and transport is recognised through a dedicated section on transport infrastructure⁸. This section encourages the development of local and regional transport links in order to improve the economic performance of firms. It notes that 'the deterioration of both local, regional and national rail services presents a

⁸ It is actually called 'transport and infrastructure' however, it only deals with transport-related issues.

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major problem for Cardiff, whose economy is depending upon a large percentage of in-commuters' (2001, 5).

From this perspective the document serves to extend the nascent city-regionalism to include a conceptual rescaling of the 'reach' of economic activities within Cardiff i.e. it firmly establishes the co-dependent relationship between economic success in the capital and the communities of South East Wales. Cooke's concerns over the restrictive size of Cardiff appear once more as it is suggested that a key impediment to the achievement of a successful knowledge-based economy is that the city is 'smaller than competitor cities such as Leeds, Birmingham and Bristol' (2001, 5). This argument is then extended and the city-region concept becomes linked to the functional economic geography of South East Wales which is centred on Cardiff:

As the Capital City for Wales, Cardiff is also the engine for economic growth in the south-east Wales sub-region, and conveys economic and social benefits far beyond its administrative boundaries (Cardiff County Council 2001, 2).

This narrative echoed previous incarnations of the city-region concept in the 1960s and early 1970s whereby the urban core assumed a dominant position while assigning secondary (and supportive) roles to Newport and the towns and villages of the hinterland. Stating that the city of Cardiff is the only appropriate location for many of the companies and services associated with a knowledge-based economy is one example. This is reinforced by the threat that if Cardiff is not adequately supported then mobile international investment will head elsewhere in the UK or Europe, and not elsewhere in Wales. Yet, reflecting the nuances of how these narratives are embedded within site-specific and politically-defined contexts and an awareness of the need to achieve buy-in from key stakeholders across the city-region, the concept is conceptualised as a dynamic, two-way process. As the report reads,

[t]he importance of a successful Cardiff to achieve economic and, particularly GDP growth in the Valleys, cannot be overestimated. The economies in Cardiff and its hinterland are mutually dependent and growth is reciprocally beneficial (Cardiff County Council 2001, 2).

To summarise, the city-region concept as promoted by CC can be characterised as a monocentric competitive city-region driven by the need to appear larger on the international stage. This was deemed essential to help attract mobile capital investment, to develop a more integrated transport infrastructure to support economic clusters, to provide the labour demands of the service economy and to provide a mechanism through which wealth could be transferred to the valleys hinterland (in the form of both employees living in the valleys and the growth and spread of jobs).

5.2.4 The ‘City of the Valleys’

Released during the same year, the *City of the Valleys* report (Tanner 2001) offered a starkly different interpretation of how the city-region concept should be interpreted and applied in South East Wales and was the first direct challenge to the competitive city-regional agenda emanating from CC. As shown in Figure 5-1, the City of the Valleys report promoted a polycentric city-region rather than a monocentric strategy based on the growth of Cardiff.

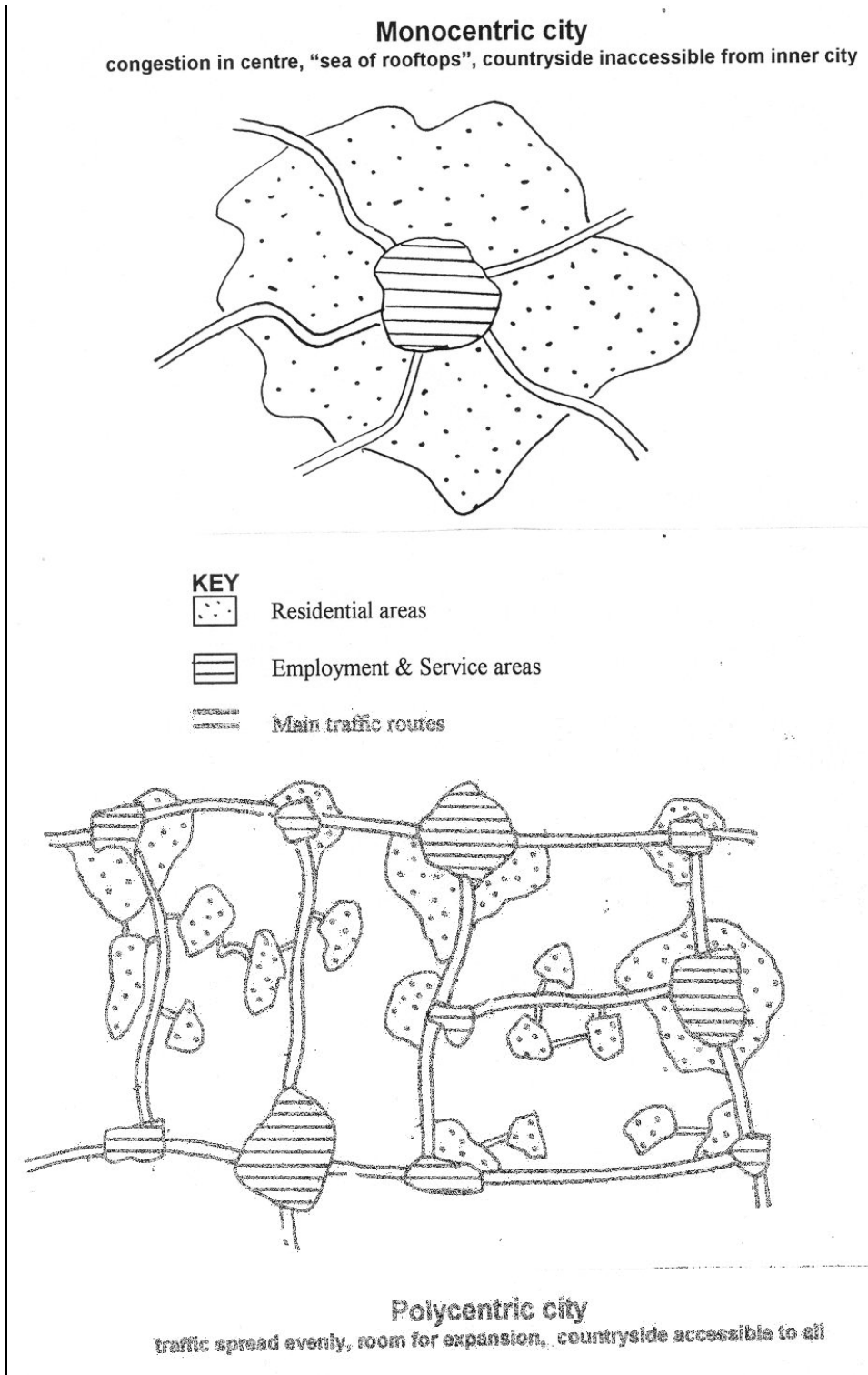
In this report the socio-economic problems within the valleys communities are depicted as largely structural products of the replacement of relatively well paid jobs in coal mining and steel with lower paid or part-time employment. The report welcomed the previously voiced suggestions (as found in the Cooke report and CC’s Economic Development Strategy 2001-2006) of conceiving of South East Wales as a unified socio-economic space. However, it argued that the materialisation of this new mental territory must go further than international marketing and improved transport links to the city and between the other settlements in the area. Rather, it boldly suggested that if it is possible to view the entire South East Wales as a city-region then it is equally feasible to conceive that large scale facilities – such as concert halls, museums, sports stadia, art galleries, leisure facilities, and shopping centres – could be located within the smaller valleys communities rather than concentrated within Cardiff. In essence, this argument maintained a consistent purpose to the city-region narrative but leverages the notion of a

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unified political arena as set out in the Cooke report by suggesting an alternative pattern of development. While this notion can be interpreted as radical as it is not reinforced by a rich body of theory (in particular understandings on the economic benefits accrued through agglomeration and density) and goes against conventional economic policy⁹, the report does identify several problems with the monocentric competitive city-region model proposed by Cardiff.

⁹ Although one notable exception being the notion of polycentric development put forward in the Europe-wide Spatial Planning Guidance, the *European Spatial Development Perspective*. However, this applies the concept of polycentricism to the European scale of settlement structure.

Figure 5-1: Comparison between the monocentric and polycentric city-region (Tanner 2001)



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This includes recognition of a poor regional transport network and a hinterland which is neither entirely rural nor affluent as is the case in many other more developed city-regions. Additionally, while Cardiff's *Economic Development Strategy* aligned itself with EC white papers and UK Government policy on economic competitiveness, the Valleys report looked towards the National Assembly for Wales' constitutional commitment to sustainable development to secure legitimacy and wider social support. The report presents Cardiff's competitive city-region model as unsustainable because:

- It increases the prosperity gap between the Valleys and the coastal towns. A situation which will become politically unsustainable;
- Traffic congestion along the M4 corridor and within Cardiff and Newport – as a result of their rapidly expanding economies with broadly uni-directional traffic flows – will eventually approach gridlock; and
- The people who live in the valleys of South East Wales who are empowered, trained and inspired by social inclusion programmes will leave the valleys for more attractive areas and subsequently leave behind even more dysfunctional communities.

The report makes a powerful ethical point with respect to the spatially selective priority granted to the already wealthier coastal area and the rapid development of highly paid service sector jobs which in turn lead to high levels of in-commuting from the valleys. Whereas the city-region model presented by Cardiff presented this latter aspect as one of the primary mechanisms for the distribution of wealth, some valleys stakeholders interpreted this as part of an ongoing policy approach which has failed to deliver. As a local government officer from a valleys authority stated,

I've often argued that this sort of unspoken economic model that WLGA have followed for the last 20 years - of developing the M4 corridor and then people in the valleys will commute down - is asking the poorest and least motivated people, part of the population, to travel the furthest and at the most cost to work (Local Authority K, personal communication, 14 September 2007).

Adding weight to the ethical argument for a polycentric city-region, the report cited two reports which examine the nature of deprivation and inequality in South East Wales. First, the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000 which revealed that 66 out of the

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100 most deprived wards in Wales were located in the South Wales coalfield and second, a Joseph Rowntree report which concluded:

that areas such as the Rhondda had the worst of both worlds – the social problems associated with decaying inner city areas combined with the isolation of rural communities, unable to access the facilities city dwellers take for granted (as cited in Tanner 2001, 4-5).

This line of argumentation is significant for the development of the city-region debate in South East Wales because it infuses the discourses of sustainable development and social justice into the debate; in effect extending and challenging the predominantly economic focus with which the debate had previously been framed.

It must be noted that the *City of the Valleys* report was a non-commissioned product of one public servant and does not reflect broad organisational consensus – unlike Cooke’s report which was commissioned, approved and published by SGCC. However, the local authorities of Caerphilly, Torfaen, Blanaau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil did agree to fund a feasibility study into the c. £500m proposal, reflecting a certain degree of buy-in from stakeholders in the South East Wales valleys. This study was ultimately never conducted because it failed to achieve support from RCT and Bridgend and conflicted with several alternative spatial proposals that at the time were being discussed by local authorities and WAG (see South Wales Argus 2002).

While the proposals in the report were not carried through, it is argued that the report did have a significant effect on the discursive construction of the city-region concept in South East Wales. It offered a rhetorical counter to the suggestion that mobile, international capital would only consider Cardiff as a potential investment site and argued that the competitive city-regionalism promoted by actors in the capital city failed to deliver on environmental sustainability grounds. However, potentially its most significant impact was to introduce the discourse of social inequality into the debate. The primary aim of city-regional policy making as expounded by the traditional logic is to attract and create material wealth. A secondary consideration is the transmission of wealth to less affluent areas outside of the core city, eventually raising the overall average standard of

living in the city-region. What the *City of the Valleys* did was directly link the city-region concept to the alleviation of deprivation and inequality by eliminating the requirement of a wealth transmission mechanism. Within the context of South East Wales¹⁰ where the population predominantly lives outside of core urban areas and experience greater relative levels of deprivation, these ideas could potentially gain a significant amount of social support.

5.2.5 The ‘Five Counties Regeneration Framework’

Following the reduction in steel manufacturing at the Corus works at Llanwern, the closure at Ebbw Vale and other reductions in the manufacturing sector, the *Five Counties Regeneration Framework* (herein referred to as the ‘Framework’) was published as a sub-regional spatial development strategy covering the unitary authorities of Newport, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent. Funding was provided by WAG on behalf of the five councils, the Welsh Development Agency (WDA), and Education and Learning Wales (ELWa), and the main aim of the strategy was to give direction “for a new future if the sub-region is to flourish” (Shared Intelligence 2002, 1) through the achievement of objectives designed to increase prosperity and reduce inequality. While blame for the shifting economic landscape was placed on the easy movement of capital, people and technology, the Framework situated the Five Counties within a global market environment where it is competing with communities in Eastern Europe, the Far East and the rest of Western Europe (Shared Intelligence 2002, 20). In this context the ‘preferred vision’ set out by the Framework rested with the knowledge-based service economy¹¹ and was set against a sub-regional backdrop characterised by

¹⁰ According to an article in Rural Wales Magazine (Tanner 2003) while 58% of people in England live in cities of 100,000 or more only 24% of the Welsh do so: “The typical Welsh person, by contrast, lives in a small town or village.”

¹¹ including a skilled and knowledgeable workforce, high SME start up rates, reduced traffic congestion, several business parks within the region close to key transport nodes, an international logistics and distribution centre, data storage and processing centres, expanding endogenous business, rising rental and capital values, an improved tourism offer which correlates to an ‘explosion of visitors’, a high quality public transport network, Newport city centre as a major office and retail location, mixed-use riverfront developments and the physical regeneration of much of Newport, a vibrant cultural and café quarter, a national technology centre, an increasing population and a high quality of life.

severe levels of deprivation, poor rates of educational attainment, and high levels of youth and long-term unemployment.

There are two particularly interesting aspects of the city-region debate which the Framework highlights. The first is that the report directly challenged the position of Cardiff within the South East Wales hierarchy and the second relates to the importance of personal relationships in construction of city-regions.

Despite constant comparisons to the dominance of Cardiff relative to the performance of Newport across numerous economic indicators, the Framework did not seriously consider the relationship between the Five Counties city-region framework and the South East Wales-wide city-region framework progressed by Cardiff. Rather, it attempted to position itself as a more dominant entity in population terms than Cardiff, stating that, “the [Five Counties] sub-region’s population accounts for approximately 19% (557,500) of the Wales total compared to 11% in Cardiff” (Shared Intelligence 2002, 3). Interestingly, the Framework includes very little recognition for Cardiff’s role, complementary or otherwise, in the achievement of the framework’s vision. One possible explanation for this is the poor political relationships which existed between CC and its neighbouring authorities and between CC and WAG at the time. However, it is likely that the Framework also implicitly supported the development of two city-regional frameworks within South East Wales (and three in South Wales with a western city-region centered around Swansea), a model which would correspond to the voluntary institutions that were responsible for the strategic delivery of transportation with South East Wales. In South East Wales this included TIGER (Transport Integration in the Gwent Economic Region) which comprised the five local authorities of Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen, and SWIFT (South Wales Integrated Fast Transit) which comprised various transport operators and the six local authorities of Bridgend, Caerphilly, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taff and the Vale of Glamorgan.

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The group of actors that were involved in the development¹² of the Framework for the Five Counties sub-region – i.e. those who defined the problems facing the area and how they should be addressed (see Hajer 1995) – consisted of elected members and officers from the included local authorities, WAG members, officials from the WDA, ELWa and additional local stakeholders. Following the draft publication of the Report the First Minister for Wales drew on the Report as part of an ‘Anniversary’ statement to identify the top priorities for action and to provide the funding to meet them (Shared Intelligence 2002). This statement of support and the approach taken in developing the Framework are in stark contrast to the paucity of national-level support provided for the city-region concept as presented by Cardiff. While this point will be discussed in greater detail below, what is also interesting is that despite the existence of a strong coalition of supporters involved in the production and endorsement of the Framework, it did not prove to be particularly influential or robust within the tension-filled and rapidly changing institutional landscape of South East Wales. Aligning with Morgan’s (2006c) argument that rescaling is a politically sensitive exercise, one interview respondent who participated in the Framework’s development stated that,

[s]ince that report’s come out, Newport’s taken it up and completely ripped up their old development plan and there is a new one based on Newport as the centre of the universe with you know, massive increase in population, housing and everything else. Bit of consternation from its neighbouring authorities about this, but Monmouth is quite happy with that because it wants Newport to have its growth but the valleys see it as taking investment away from them (Local Authority K, personal communication, 14 September 2007).

This may suggest that Newport failed to learn earlier lessons from the city-region literature regarding the consequences of ignoring the maintenance of relationships between core cities and the surrounding hinterland. Nevertheless, as the three radically different city-regional strategies demonstrate, the lack of national guidance on this important urban issue allowed for a series of competing narratives to develop take their respective places within the city-region discourse of South East Wales; A newly formed

¹² Although the Report was produced by a consortium of private consultancies the scope and terms of reference for the Report were defined by the five local authorities and representatives from these and other regional bodies were active in the progressing the Report and informing its content.

political space which noticeably lacked a sufficient thickness of regional or sub-regional institutional architecture.

5.2.6 WAG's engagement with the city-region debates

In 2001, the WAG entered the city-region debate in South East Wales articulated, albeit tentatively, through *A Winning Wales: The National Economic Development Strategy* (WAG 2001). This publication marked the next state in the development of the city-region narrative by setting out its terms including the problems to be addressed, the potential role and scope of government (national and local) in addressing them, and the key policy realms to be included in developing solutions.

The aim of this strategy was to 'transform [] the economy of Wales, while promoting sustainable development' and although the newly devolved Assembly had responsibility for economic development, the publication clearly established that the role of WAG was somewhat constrained:

The Welsh Economy is highly dependent on conditions elsewhere in the world, particularly the rest of the UK and Europe. Many of the measures which influence the business environment, such as fiscal policy, interest rates and regulation are decided at a UK level (WAG 2001, 5)

The report identified additional issues to be addressed including a weaker economy in relation to most other UK regions, lower earnings and GDP, an uncompetitive employment rate, low levels of R&D expenditure, poor entrepreneurial spirit, a lack of skills and 'brain drain'. Nevertheless, with devolved responsibility for key areas such as planning, transport and education the strategy clearly recognised a need to address the challenges associated with economic development from a spatial perspective. WAG stated that the focus is on

both [] the creation of increased prosperity and to its wider distribution across Wales. We [WAG] must provide a clear framework for the spatial **implications** of economic development – ensuring that people benefit from economic growth virtually wherever they live or work (WAG 2001, 9 emphasis in original).

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Thus an imperative for action was created. However, in terms of the city-region debate as it was developing in South East Wales at the time, *A Winning Wales* is more important for what it *did not* say. Although this was the nation's key economic development strategy there was no discussion of city-regionalism either as a means of driving forward development or for spreading prosperity. This is surprising given the ongoing debates in South East Wales and across the border in England. So why was the concept all but ignored in this publication and what effect did this have on the debate in South East Wales?

As several local academics have alluded to (Morgan 2007b; Boland 2007), the omission of the city-region concept within *A Winning Wales* was important because it demonstrates the important role that personal relationships play within the development of city-regionalism. This is an element of city-regionalism that has not figured prominently within the city-region literature. Additionally, the omission also provides insights into the development of the city-region narrative itself. Each aspect is discussed below.

The antagonistic relationships between the Labour-led CC headed by Russell Goodway and other local authorities in South East Wales as well between CC and WAG help to explain why the city-region concept was not explicitly incorporated into the nation's economic development strategy. There is evidence to support this position¹³. The *Lyons Report on the Governance of Cardiff Council* (2004, 108) found that,

Cardiff Council is not seen as a 'joiner' in Welsh affairs. Members and Officers are not generally encouraged to share platforms at national or UK-wide events. Active membership of professional groups, benchmarking clubs, and the like, is patchy with no systematic approach to developing opportunities for staff to 'sell' Cardiff and its success. Other Welsh local authorities and the Welsh Assembly Government consequently view Cardiff Council in a less positive light than might otherwise be the case.

The report then concluded that

¹³ However, the strength of this evidence must be considered against similar events occurring within other institutional spheres. For example, Cardiff University left the University of Wales and Cardiff City FC has long been in the English football leagues. This suggests that structural forces are also at work within the context of CC's relationships with other local authorities in Wales.

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Cardiff Council has chosen a ‘strong leader’ model of governance and there is little doubt that the focus of this leadership has been to seek to create a modern European capital city. This vision has been pursued relentlessly, possibly at the expense of relations with some key partners, such as service users (2004, 106). [...] There is a danger for Cardiff in continuing to work from an isolated perspective and it could end up unwanted in Wales and unwelcome in England (2004, 106).

A later economic study¹⁴ (Parkinson and Karecha 2006) which interviewed key regional and national stakeholders found that:

- there were political rivalries, almost sibling rivalries, between a city [Cardiff] that had once been powerful but had to now deal with a recently established national government; and
- that political relationships between the individual leaders of the previous [Goodway-led] Labour administration and the WAG were not very constructive.

Similar sentiments were also expressed during interviews conducted as part of this study. A senior local authority officer - hinting that structural governance models as well as personal relationships were holding back the delivery of the city-region - felt that while Cardiff could act as a powerful driver for the local economies and the region,

it hasn't sort of, you know, done what I think it should have done because there have been real tensions and difficulties in working together with Cardiff both politically and otherwise because of the way that local governments are actually set up (Local Authority J, personal communication, 30 November 2007).

These examples strongly suggest that political relationships as defined by historical and contemporary factors played an important role in structuring the nature of the national government's engagement with the city-region concept in South East Wales. From a narrative perspective the omission also suggests that the city-region concept as a region-building narrative tool had not yet been able to secure widespread social support. Or in other words, it indicated that the capital city's strategic development ambitions, as encapsulated within the city-region narrative, did not align with those of the national government or of surrounding local authorities. In short, the narrative promoted by CC

¹⁴ Commissioned by Cardiff Council's Policy and Economic Development department

had failed to secure hegemonic status at sub-regional, regional and national levels. *A Winning Wales* in this respect marks an important point in the development of the city-region agenda because the omission forced CC to adjust its narrative in order to gain the broader social consensus necessary for its implementation (as will be shown in Chapter 6).

Before the publication of *A Winning Wales*, the city-region narrative was ostensibly an academic concept in that it had not directly contributed towards a rescaling or establishment of new territorial institutions. Neither had it altered power structures or spatially realigned policy interventions and government spending. As a partial function of WAG's inability to address the 'urban concern' as had been attempted in England, several city-region narratives were developed from the 'bottom-up' in South East Wales. Yet none were able to secure widespread social support as would have been exhibited through, for example, the development of a coherent narrative in future policy making, high-level statements of support for a particular policy direction, or institutional / administrative restructuring. Widespread support for one particular narrative would also have been revealed during the stakeholder interviews that were conducted as part of this research.

To a certain extent this has been explained by the poor relationships Cardiff maintained with neighbouring local authorities and the national government but what of the other two city-regional narratives that emerged at this time? The *City of the Valleys* did not progress due in large part to a disharmony with city-region rhetoric at the UK level, a lack of empirical and theoretical support for the idea, and because of other competing initiatives currently underway in South East Wales. Meanwhile, Newport's *Five Counties Regeneration Framework* implicitly supported a South East Wales defined by two city-regions, a notion which has been entirely absent from the debate, and failed to secure the support of internal partners located outside of the core city. It is within this context that the importance of Jessop's (2002a) argument - that new scales can only be operationalised as a means to a strategic end if they can achieve a certain degree of institutional thickness - can be seen. A significant reason why all three bottom-up narratives failed to achieve any material effect was the lack of any powerful regional or

sub-regional bodies into which these arguments could be embedded. A further examination of the rapidly (d)evolving institutional architecture of South East Wales provides an additional level of explanation for the failure of any of the three city-region narratives to gain policy traction and achieve widespread social support.

5.3 Institutional experimentation in South East Wales

Additional to narrative construction, the institutionalisation of new scales represents the second key component in the processes of region-building. In the above section the narrative construction of city-regionalism in South East Wales is examined as a key component of the city-region building process, however, they developed within an institutional vacuum and therefore failed to gain any effective policy purchase. This section begins to chart the restructuring of governance functions within the policy spheres of economic development, transport and waste for several purposes. First, the rapidly evolving nature of the processes and lack of executive power within the newly created structures provides additional evidence to help explain why the city-region debate presented above had not significantly progressed within South East Wales. Second, it begins to show how the institutionalisation of new scales began to alter existing power geometries by creating new political arenas and arrangements. Third, it provides a platform to explore the progression of the city-region narrative during the second key phase of the debate - between 2002 and 2008 – and within this context to arrive at a better understanding of the role that narrative institutionalisation and territorial scale play within rescaling processes.

5.3.1 South East Wales Economic Forum

The formation of the South East Wales Economic Forum (SEWEF) in 1998 provided an important building block for the rescaling of state space in South East Wales because it served as a key site in which the city-regional narrative became ‘institutionalised’. This is a function of the organisation’s remit and its compositional structure. Thus the formation of the organisation provided a forum (or arena) in which the concepts and terms of the debate could be contested and developed by key stakeholders. These

discussions were then provided with an outlet to demonstrate consensus in the form of non-statutory strategy publications.

The main aims of SEWEF were to foster a strategic view of the regional economy, reduce unproductive rivalry among the ten local authorities and to develop a common marketing programme for South East Wales (in line with the messages emanating from the Cooke report) (Morgan 2006c). Membership of the newly created organisation comprised representatives from all ten local authorities (at both officer and elected official level) as well as other regional stakeholders within South East Wales, and marked the first time that economic development was debated as a policy issue at this particular scale. Perhaps the most prominent outcome of these debates over economic development and the role of the city-region concept are to be found within *Enter the Dragon Economy* (SEWEF 2005) where a collective agreement was produced for the area which recognised that it constituted an interdependent but unplanned urban region (Morgan 2006c). However, politics was never far from the surface and while the strategy set out a platform for development within a South East Wales city-region, it also identified some key high level and historically rooted challenges that would need to be addressed prior to further substantive policy making. The strategy recognised that ‘South East Wales is complex, involving a multiplicity of players and interwoven strands. The primary duty of the 10 unitary authorities is toward their constituents and therefore their key focus is within their boundaries.’ These political issues highlight a fundamental issue of governance and the lack of power within SEWEF. In doing so it confirms the evidence from the previous section which noted how structural governance issues were compounded by personality clashes to impede the development of a coherent city-regional agenda. Participation in SEWEF existed on an entirely voluntary basis and the organisation lacked executive power over local authority budgets. Morgan (2006c) noted that while SEWEF played an important role in building a social consensus towards an agreed upon future course of economic action, it did not have the institutional capacity to deliver on its regional economic vision. Stakeholder evidence gathered during interviews also suggested that the collective agreement outwardly exhibited by the organisation masked important internal differences. For example, *Enter the Dragon*

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Economy (SEWEF 2005, 9) stated that in light of evidence provided which suggests successful European regions will become more successful while those with more difficulties will comparatively lose ground

there is a clear need for a strategic economic framework for South East Wales. Without it, the region and many of its communities will gradually lose ground relative to more dynamic and progressive locations elsewhere.

However, a local authority officer from the HOV questioned whether the idea of a strategic economic framework fitted in with the underlying cultural geography of the region:

Part of this stems from Cardiff is not, for most people in the heads of the valleys, their natural ally. Its actually over decades been a place that has, as far as they would see, prospered while this region has declined economically and its not therefore helped developed, helped foster a sense that Cardiff and the valleys belong together in some form of descriptor of you know, our future is locked in together (Local Authority A, personal communication, 26 September 2007).

It is interesting to note that following the publication of *Enter the Dragon Economy* and as the debate over the city-region agenda progressed, SEWEF did begin to promote a slightly different approach from an all-inclusive strategic framework. Rather, in a 2007 publication it suggested

It was important to have a balance between a framework and encouraging appropriate arrangements to develop on the ground. It was considered some issues may best be taken forward on a sub-regional collaborative basis, e.g. skills development, on a travel-to-work area (SEWEF 2007).

While the development of the city-region concept along sub-regional thematic grounds will be analysed further in Chapter 6, the emergence of SEWEF played an important role in progressing the city-region agenda by providing a forum for the key actors to discuss and debate the terms through which the city-region concept should be interpreted. Through these discussions and with the publication of strategic documents, the bottom-up city-regional narratives were provided with a political space and hook upon which their content could become institutionalised. However, the body's lack of executive power and the non-statutory nature of their publications meant that whilst representing an important stage in the city-region process, the agenda could not be sufficiently

addressed through this type of organisation if material changes were to be experienced across South East Wales.

5.3.2 South East Wales Waste Group

There have been significant changes within the policy and institutional context of strategic planning for waste management in the UK over the last 15 years and part of this process involves increasing political and public interest in the regionalisation of waste management (Davoudi and N Evans 2005). These trends have been observed in South East Wales and the reconfiguration of institutional arrangements can be associated with the increasing institutionalisation of South East Wales as new scale of governance. Waste has been described as the most serious environmental problem in Wales and the inability for local authorities to cope with this problem independently is commonly presented as a rationale for new forms of state intervention at the regional or sub-regional scale (Morgan 2006c). Planners, government officials and politicians have argued that individual local authorities simply do not have the capacity to meet nationally imposed landfill targets or to finance the large investments needed for a new generation of waste management technologies (ibid). A senior local authority officer stated in an interview that

most authorities are hitting their [recycling] targets at the moment but regionally we've got to work together on things like residual, things like landfill...So I think now we're beginning to wake up to the whole business of working together...but there's a long way to go but at some stage the assembly is probably going to say well perhaps we need to re-organise local government again, dare I say it, and try to have bigger authorities rather than these 22 smaller authorities throughout Wales which probably can't deal properly with some of these strategic issues (Local Authority J, personal communication, 30 November 2007).

Also referring to waste, another local authority officer commented that

bearing in mind the European targets, what is the point of the 22 authorities in Wales developing their own technology and their individual investments. It makes a lot of sense for there to be effective collaboration, joint procurement, joint sharing of costs and benefits which is what we're doing on the waste agenda (Local Authority C, personal communication, 19 September 2007).

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These two examples demonstrate the common recognition that the small scale of Welsh unitary authorities is detrimental to the development of strategic responses to common issues and is playing an important role in creating an institutionally thicker South East Wales.

In 2004, the first *Regional Waste Plan* was published for South East Wales. This was prepared by the South East Wales Waste Group (SEWWG), one of three such bodies set up by the national government in Wales to provide regional coordination and a strategic, integrated approach to the management of waste in Wales¹⁵. The group is comprised of the South East Wales Waste Forum; a steering group of local authority councillors in the region¹⁶ (see Figure 5-2) with a technical group of officers from local government, WAG, Environment Agency Wales and other government bodies, and representatives from the waste industry and other interested groups (SEWRWG 2009).

¹⁵ Following the publication of Technical Advice Note (TAN) 21: Waste (2001)

¹⁶ This includes Powys County Council and the Brecon Beacons National Park Area. Bridgend CBC has 'observer status' within SEWWG because it is part of the South West Wales Regional Waste Group

Figure 5-2: The 11 Local Authorities comprising SEWWG



Within Wales, waste management is considered to be one of the best examples of regionalised joint working amongst local authorities. However, despite the development of the three regional waste groups, executive responsibility has remained with local authorities and each authority prepares its own detailed plans for managing municipal wastes in line with the national strategy (*Wise About Waste 2001*). Absent from the development of regional waste groups in Wales was a regional implementation mechanism. According to Morgan (2006c, 25),

the most difficult problem with waste strategies comes at the implementation stage, when locations for landfill sites and incinerators have to be agreed. The city-region scale may be the best technical scale at which to design sustainable waste management strategies but the greater the distance between the generation and disposal of waste, the greater the political problem of local resistance to the transfer of waste from one area to another.

Residents of Merthyr Tydfil emphasised this point by protesting when their local landfill tip (at Trecatti) began importing waste from Cardiff. This small example highlights that voluntary city-regional associations lack the capacity to deliver and implement strategies despite the involvement of democratically elected politicians and high level, senior government officials. Subsequent institutional changes within waste management in South East Wales (discussed in Chapter Six) reveal that the lack of executive power contributed towards the regional instability in the design and delivery of this aspect of collective consumption.

5.3.3 South East Wales Transport Alliance

One of the most important institutional developments in South East Wales was the formation of the South East Wales Transport Alliance (SEWTA) on 1 April 2003. This is because its origins perhaps best highlight the organisational flux which serves as the backdrop to the development of the city-region narrative and the way that the institutionalisation of new scales of governance alters existing power structures.

SEWTA is a consortium of the 10 local authorities of South East Wales and also includes Arriva Trains Wales (representing train operators), Confederation of Passenger Transport (representing bus operators), Network Rail, Bus Users UK, Rail Passengers Committee Wales and Sustrans. SEWTA's board is formally constituted as a joint committee of local authorities which means that each is an equal partner in terms of strategy development and decision making. While these arrangements were officially enacted by the Transport Act 2005 Wales, which required authorities to form a regional transport consortium, SEWTA as an organisation had been formed two years previously

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and regional and sub-regional transport collaboration has existed in South East Wales for approximately 25 years. However, highlighting bottom-up responses to top-down stimuli, the arrangements for SEWTA prior to the 2005 act were formalised following local government reorganisation in 1996. Prior to this re-organisation, the County tier of government maintained responsibility for highways and transport planning thereby allowing for a level of strategic capacity. However, following reorganisation this capacity was significantly eroded when the unitary authorities assumed responsibility for transport. As a WAG civil servant noted, 'in '96 when the counties were reformed and the unitary authorities were put in place such transport planning as there had been pretty much disappeared over night' (Civil Servant A, personal communication, 14 November 2007). The same civil servant provided an excellent summarisation of the events during this period:

Now people who were working in local authorities were aware that that was a bad situation and they set up a kind of informal partnerships and in South East Wales there was one called TIGER which was transport in the Gwent valleys so that was the former Gwent authorities and they worked together on, there was a public transport section and there was a kind of consultancy arm which did road planning etc. and in the former Glamorgans there was SWIFT [...] and those have both merged, eventually, to become SEWTA. So after devolution, the WAG began to encourage that development more because obviously they could see that 22 unitary authorities couldn't really do transport planning, especially somewhere like Cardiff and Newport where everybody is crossing boundaries to get to work and things like that so it needed sensible planning and SWIFT and TIGER had done some very good work on public transport planning [...]. So the Assembly decided to encourage them really so its been a partnership really all the way along working on that. We've encouraged them with money and money to set up their constitutions and to do research and studies and employ staff (Civil Servant A, personal communication, 14 November 2007).

The Assembly's decision to move away from two sub-regional transport authorities marks an important stage in the institutionalisation of South East Wales as a more robust internal region. It also provided an additional arena through which the concept of the city-region could be promoted, debated and progressed. Importantly, the move also undermined the city-region agenda put forward by Newport in the *Five Counties Regeneration Framework* which implicitly advocated two city-regional governance

arrangements within South East Wales. The Framework linked much of its delivery capacity to TIGER which, following the formation of SEWTA, ceased to exist.

The shift towards regional transport planning was important in terms of providing a key site in which to progress city-regionalism for two further reasons. First, the revenue system for transport is different in Wales in comparison to England where authorities there receive much more hypothecated grants. In contrast, local authorities in Wales received direct revenue support with near full autonomy over how (and where) it was spent. This meant that the shift to regional transport planning significantly reduced the power that individual authorities had over this policy domain. Second, this shifting power dynamic was re-enforced by devolution which, in the views of a local authority officer, had given 'Wales as a country a much stronger political say about its transport whereas before it was determined by interpretation by officers of local government statutes basically' (Local Authority F, personal communication, 2 November 2011). Thus previous to devolution some direction had been provided to local authorities as to how their transport grants should be spent by central Government. Nevertheless, these instructions were subject to open interpretation by local government. However, as a result of devolution the WAG became responsible for transport planning and therefore took a much greater interest in the development of policy for this sector and on how and where public investment took place. These events and their impact on the city-region debate within South East Wales will be explored further as additional evidence is provided in Chapters 6 and 7.

5.4 Conclusion

The first phase of city-regionalism in South East Wales was characterised by the emergence of several arguments for specific spatial variants from 'below' i.e. led from the local authority tier of government. One vision of city-regionalism emerged from Cardiff whereby the capital city of Wales is simultaneously positioned within an international hierarchy of competing cities and as the focal point of a functional South East Wales city-region. This can be considered analogous to the concept of competitive city-regionalism outlined in Chapter Two. A second vision emerged from the valleys calling

for a polycentric city-regional spatial strategy whereby the roles and functions of the smaller valleys communities are promoted leading towards more balanced patterns of development. This can be described as a convoy approach to city-regionalism where every part of the region progresses at approximately the same pace. This is in contrast to competitive city-regionalism where the development of the core city is prioritized and wealth is subsequently transferred throughout the rest of the city-region via a range of mechanisms. A third sub-regional vision as promoted by the city of Newport which places itself as the focal point within the five county boroughs of south eastern Wales. The unwritten implication is that Cardiff would perform an identical role for the western communities of South East Wales and the city-region as a whole would operate as a bi-centric city-region with two main growth poles.

Although competing claims were made for the spatial organisation of economic development and public sector investment within South East Wales all three visions were strongly structured by the higher level discourses of globalisation and international competitiveness. The blame for social and economic problems was presented as structural, resulting from adjustments in the international division of labour. The market was assigned responsibility for what were previously key state functions, such as employment creation. Therefore the state's role within these city-regional visions became one of assisting in facilitating economic development through supply-side interventions. As such, the strategies originating from Cardiff, the Five Counties, and the valleys concentrated on improving the skills of the workforce, the physical development of facilities to improve business, leisure, and tourist opportunities, the creation of a high standard residential offer and providing areas of collective consumption such as transport and waste. Additionally, the key documents served to connect the city-region with a shift towards a service-based economy within a global market place, thus ingraining the city-region concept as part of an acceptable economically-focused policy response to a certain set of problems.

However, closer examination of the emerging city-regional narratives within South East Wales reveals that important shifts occurred as the concept developed and additional

stakeholders became engaged with the debate. In essence, although three distinct forms of city-regionalism were presented (competitive, polycentric and bi-centric), a variety of discourses can be discerned from the language of policy referents to the concept made between 1992 and 2002. This began with the strong economic and marketing focus found in the Cardiff-centric interpretation promoted by the Cooke report and quickly absorbed as part of CC's organisational ethos.¹⁷ Following this the *City of the Valleys* significantly added to the conversation discourses of sustainability and social equality as new functional rationales for state intervention at the city-region scale. The *Five Counties Framework* questioned the dominant role of Cardiff within the South East Wales while reinforcing the *Valleys Framework's* consideration for the city-region concept foremost as a tool for addressing economic deprivation and regional inequality.

The political space enabling the various city-regional interpretations to emerge and circulate within South East Wales' policy making circles stemmed from the inaction on the part of WAG to address the 'urban concern' either through targeted funding initiatives as had been carried out in England or through the Objective One programme. This political space or 'vacuum' became more apparent following its absence from *A Winning Wales*. An examination of the existing political relationships between CC - the primary promoter of the concept in Wales - and other local authorities and WAG demonstrate the fundamental role that personal relationships play in the progression of city-regional policies. However, the development of city-regionalism elsewhere within the UK and Europe and implicit nod it had received by WAG both in *A Winning Wales* and through its support of the *Five Counties Regeneration Framework* suggests that the city-region narrative in South East Wales needed altering rather than abandonment.

The constantly changing institutional architecture and weakness of the organisations emerging at the South East Wales scale also contributed towards the inability of the city-region concept to gain any significant policy traction and delivery material change. If anything, the prominence of the city-region debate within South East Wales as well as England directed attention to a significant delivery deficit. However, the evolution of

¹⁷ Following the administrative changes in 1996 and the disbanding of SGCC.

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these organisations does provide important empirical evidence for this case study because they show how multiple drivers can lie behind single examples of city-regionalism. SEWEF was created following the Cooke report in 1992 and a widespread acceptance of the economic theories forming part of the new regionalism – this world-view is dominated by the pursuit of global economic competitiveness and characterised by practices such as international benchmarking. Interviews suggest that the European Directive on the Landfill of Waste (1999/31/EC) – driven by the need to create sustainable patterns of development in the European Union – played a key role in prompting the development of a regional body responsible for waste. While the complexities of modern functional economies, demonstrated by travel-to-work patterns, business supply chains and shifting housing markets demanded the strategic management of transport at the South East Wales scale rather than leaving responsibility with individual local authorities.

From this basis the next chapter begins to explore in greater depth the role of the national state in driving forward the city-region agenda in South East Wales, the response by CC and the key strategies and technologies both organisations employ to establish a hegemonic interpretation of city-regionalism within South East Wales.

6. The Institutionalisation of City-regionalism in South East Wales

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored what has been defined as the first phase of the city-region debate in South East Wales by primarily analysing the narrative construction of the agenda. The purpose of Chapter Six is to chart the second phase of city-regionalism within South East Wales by drawing analytical attention primarily towards the processes through which the city-region narrative becomes institutionalised across South East Wales. This is predominantly a result of activities by the WG as it becomes an active participant in the debate and the response of Cardiff Council. As discussed in Chapter Two, this attention is an empirical response to calls for greater attention to the specific mechanics and operation of state institutions (see R Martin 2000), towards the nature and role of institutions in economies (see O'Neill and McGuirk 2005), and to the specific omission of the role of the national state within new regionalism (see Lovering 1999; L Ward and Jonas 2004) and related uncertainties over the role of the state within the city-regional literature (see: Harding 2007a).

The chapter begins by considering the processes through which the WAG discursively reconstructed the city-region concept. As part of the institutionalisation of this narrative, it then analyses the region building strategies and techniques invoked by the WAG as it seeks to break down the implementation barriers which stood in the way of its strategic city-regional objectives for South East Wales. The second substantive element of the chapter examines CC's repositioning of city-regionalism in response to the actions of the WAG. This includes attempts at rescaling both the role of Cardiff within South East Wales in relation to its position within a wider global economy as well as the territorial rescaling of the city-region concept as a political project. It then reflects on the approach CC adopts to secure legitimacy for its strategic growth ambitions.

6.2 Exploring the role of the Welsh National State

The most significant shift in the development of the city-region debate in South East Wales was brought about by the instrumental development of spatial planning for Wales through the Wales Spatial Plan (WSP). For the WAG, spatial planning offered an effective means through which the newly created scale of government could reconcile the 'different policy and activity strands which impact upon our various geographic areas' (WAG 2004a, 4). The act / process of devolution provided this opportunity for creating new functional rationales for state intervention (see Keating 1997) whilst also allowing for the reconceptualisation of urban issues (see Tewdwr-Jones and McNeill 2000). As stated in the WSP (WAG 2004a, 4), '[d]evolution has given us the opportunity to shape distinctly Welsh answers to Welsh questions.' It will be shown how this sentiment played an important role in reconceptualising the city-region concept in South East Wales.

As Harris and Hooper observe (2006), the WSP represented an objectives-led approach to spatial planning which was quite different from an extensive and technical analysis of processes within Wales. By taking this approach the WSP thus became an effective mechanism for the design and delivery of particular visions for the territory. Importantly, it was through the WSP that Wales was able to address the 'urban concern' as had been done in England five years prior and to counter the strategic capacity gap left following the creation of 22 unitary authorities in 1996. This case study demonstrates how the Welsh 'National State' (that is, the National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Assembly Government) played a vital role in the development of city-regionalism within South East Wales.

6.2.1 Discursively reconstructing the city - region narrative

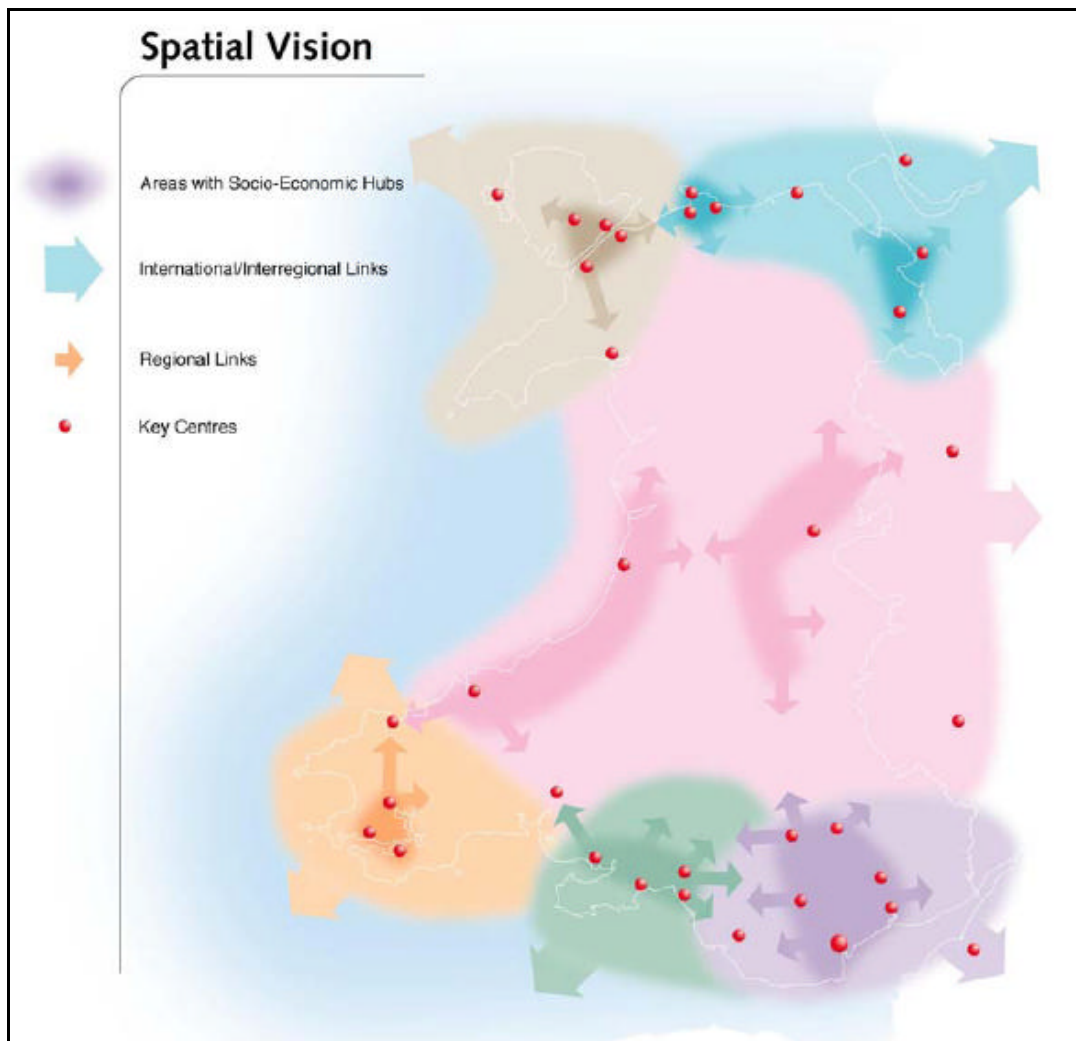
The development of the WSP followed the publication of the *European Spatial Development Perspective* (ESDP) in 1999 which was signed by the Ministers responsible for regional planning in EU Member States. Although the ESPD carried no binding status and the European Union has no formal powers for spatial planning activities within

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Member States, the document influenced policy in many countries, including Wales (WAG 2007a). Alden (2003) notes that in terms of the South East Wales city-region debate the ESPD concepts of polycentric development, corridors of growth, and more balanced competitiveness of the European territory resonated particularly powerfully with the newly established Government body. The amenable concepts with the ESPD and the tool of spatial planning provided the WAG with an opportunity to address the 'difficult' or 'wicked' issues within the country (Alden 2003, 87). Within an overall economic context defined by a need to raise GDP per capital for Wales as a whole as well as for its poorer areas, the WSP allowed for the first time an explicit debate over how this could be achieved and which geographical areas should be targeted for policy support and investment. Should the WAG help spread prosperity to the communities of the south east valleys while discouraging growth in the coastal 'hot spots'?

A fundamental territorialising device within the WSP was the identification and characterisation of different functional areas across Wales. The WSP defined six geographical sub-areas (Figure 6-1) which set the framework for sub-national collaboration and were used to develop individual strategies for each sub-area including specific local and nationally-led delivery actions (Harris and Hooper 2006).

Figure 6-1: The six geographical sub-areas defined in the WSP (WAG 2004a)



The sub-area of interest for this research was South East Wales. The WSP defined the South East Wales sub-area as the 'Capital Network' and the vision for this area was:

An innovative skilled area offering a high quality of life – international yet distinctively Welsh. It will compete internationally by increasing its global visibility through stronger links between the Valleys and the coast and with the UK and Europe, helping to spread prosperity within the area and benefiting other parts of Wales (WAG 2004a, 49).

The terminology employed by the WSP is significant for two reasons. At first glance it appears to align well with the strategic ambitions emanating from the capital city encapsulated by the concept of competitive city-regionalism. Secondly, it marks an important

narrative shift as evidenced through the use of metaphor. By referring to South East Wales as the 'Capital Network' two ambitions were realised.¹⁸ First, the word 'network' established a tangible link between the settlements. Previously the promotion of the city-region concept lacked a clarity that could be provided by a powerful metaphor to help explain how the benefits arising from such a strategy would be transferred throughout the region. As mentioned previously, the benefits of a successful and wealthy capital city would be transmitted throughout the wider hinterland via labour market dynamics supported by integrated transport and housing policies. For example, consider the statement from CC's 2001 *Economic Development Strategy*:

As the Capital City for Wales, Cardiff is also the engine for economic growth in the south-east Wales sub-region, and conveys economic and social benefits far beyond its administrative boundaries (Cardiff County Council 2001, 2).

Here the transmission of the economic and social benefits from Cardiff to the rest of the region remains vague and therefore unconvincing. Partially this may be because it subliminally reinforces historical identities rooted in specific territorial institutional constructs. By positioning South East Wales as an integrated 'network' it becomes easier to accept the interconnected nature of a regional or sub-regional economy and imagine the transmission of 'economic and social benefits'. In addition, networks are not necessarily hierarchical so this idea does not carry an implicit ordering of importance or power within South East Wales. In so doing it is also able to transcend parochial attitudes which are reinforced by administrative boundaries. It also begins to establish the foundations for a narrative invention which becomes instrumental in the materialisation of the city-region agenda, namely, that improving internal and external connectivity becomes a primary goal.

Secondly, by referring to the area as the 'Capital Network' the WAG was able to ameliorate possible tensions emerging from outside Cardiff while being able to insert elements of the competitiveness discourse which CC had been promoting for years. A key dilemma within the city-region debate relates to the urban-centric nature of the concept.

¹⁸ The Oxford English Dictionary defines *network* as "[a] chain or system of interconnected immaterial things".

This issue arises from the privileged position awarded to the core city not only in the way that the concept is interpreted or promoted but more fundamentally, from the wording alone. As one WAG civil servant astutely pointed out,

I think it's very interesting about some of the language you're using. You're talking about city-regions. If you talk about that in a Welsh context I think you've got to look at the politics of Wales and where it's coming from. We've got a coalition government which is made up of Labour which is traditionally the urban and Plaid Cymru whose heartland is in rural areas. So, if you start talking about city-regions you are creating at the political level, you could create a division between urban and rural and you could polarise issues (Civil Servant C, personal communication, 28 November 2007).

While city-leaders in Cardiff were delighted with the recognition of the city-region within the WSP (Morgan 2006a), a closer reading of the text¹⁹ strongly indicates that the city-region story in South East Wales would therefore read very differently compared to elsewhere in the UK. The WSP states:

South East Wales is Wales' most populous area. It is characterised by major economic and social disparities. The coastal zone is now the main economic driver, and its competitiveness needs to be sustained to help raise the economic potential of Wales as a nation [...]. Cardiff is a relatively small capital city. It is important for Wales as a whole that Cardiff becomes significant internationally, but to do this requires a much greater 'mass' of population and activity. Already, Cardiff has a close functional relationship with its immediate neighbouring towns, particularly Barry, Pontypridd and Caerphilly. This needs to be built on constructively, making Cardiff the focal point of a coherent and successful urban network in South East Wales, enabling it to share its prosperity [...]. The area will function as a single networked city-region on a scale to realise its international potential, its national role and to reduce inequalities (WAG 2004a, 49).

This paragraph actively constructs the context in which policies and public sector investment patterns for South East Wales will be developed and delivered. The city-region concept is firmly established as an organising principle in terms of economic development and its interpretation in many respects aligns with the growth ambitions of Cardiff and with the 'Capital City' metaphor central to the planning doctrine of Cardiff

¹⁹ Which offers an interpretation which is confirmed through an examination of various other documents, interviews with stakeholders and subsequent policy implementation.

for almost forty years (Coop and H Thomas 2007). However, the paragraph also refers to Cardiff as a ‘relatively small capital city’, the coastal zone as a whole as the ‘main economic driver’, and the entire South East Wales as an ‘urban network’. From these three brief extracts it becomes apparent that the context for South East Wales as described by the WSP has been drawn from all three of the ‘bottom-up’ city-region visions that were presented in the first phase of the concept’s development. As mentioned in Chapter Two, much of the critical literature on this topic stresses the deployment of the competitive city-region discourse as part of local and national accumulation strategies where the emphasis remains on the core city. However, as the city-region narrative of South East Wales developed it became clear that this understanding of sub-national rescaling does not accurately reflect the situation within this specific case study. Indeed, a range of options were considered as reasonable options for delivering the vision for the Capital Network. That is, different strategic means were considered for achieving ‘[a]n innovative, competitive Cardiff in a strong and sustainable city-region’ (WAG 2007b, 6). The options developed (shown Box 6-1) ranged from balanced growth across South East Wales to concentrating growth in Cardiff however, reflecting a tendency towards compromise, the preferred option emerged as a hybrid between Option 1 and Option 2.

Box 6-1: Strategic options considered for delivering the WSP's vision for South East Wales

Option 1 – “economic corridors growth” – focused on the potential of the M4 corridor in the south and the A465 corridor in the north as drivers for growing and attracting economic and housing investment.

Option 2 – “networked and balanced communities” – involved a mix of employment sites throughout the region with growth focused in this option around public transport nodes.

Option 3 – “independent and competitive development” – allowed for the uncoordinated development of individual organisations where the regional vision emerges without national government intervention.

Option 4 – “growing Cardiff for wider sub-regional benefit” – suggested that the urban core must be the starting point for a spatial strategy in South East Wales. Public sector investment under this scenario would be primarily focused on providing infrastructure with the private sector exploiting the emerging market opportunities.

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The politics of South East Wales in response to the variegated socio-economic conditions in Cardiff and the surrounding hinterland played a significant role in determining the hybrid option and thus in shaping the evolution of the city-region debate in South East Wales as a whole. A senior WAG civil servant confirmed that the preferred option would encourage investment away from Cardiff, Newport and the coastal area for these reasons, stating that

the idea of networked and balanced communities leads [...] to disinvestment potentially from those areas because you know, the prosperity here proportionally is greater - So great, there's no work to do, there's no problem really. Its not as simple as that but that's the principle - that by networking these communities and trying to balance your approach, making them self-sustaining in their own right that's quite a significant emphasis towards a collection of settlements working together (Civil Servant B, personal communication, 4 October 2007).

The politics of inequality within South East Wales continued to provide a significant input to reshaping the city-region debate. This represented a nuanced but significant shift from previous conceptualisations where reductions in deprivation and inequality were often considered a secondary result of city-regional policies driven by the need for competitiveness. The WSP (2004a, 8) states:

The first challenge is tackling deprivation and particularly concentrations of poverty and worklessness. Although deprivation exists to some degree across all parts of Wales, including rural areas, the largest concentrations of deprivation are found in the upper South Wales Valleys, in parts of our major cities and towns, and in port and (former) industrial communities.

and followed with the claim that

[r]ecent economic research shows that, across developed countries, differences in people's economic outcomes are driven most strongly by variations in their personal characteristics (especially skill levels). The next most important influence is proximity to major concentrations of population. South East Wales taken as a whole approaches the scale required, but has not so far gained the benefits commensurate with its population (2004a, 8).

Since the Thatcher years the (contested) underlying assumption traditionally underpinning government social policy responses to deprivation is that the benefits of economic and employment growth within the wider economy 'trickle down' to provide opportunities for those living in deprivation (North, Syrett, and Etherington 2007). However, the

narrative elements encapsulated by city-regional debates suggest a spatial policy shift towards tackling deprivation within the area. Competitive city-regional policies would suggest promoting growth within the core urban centres and the accumulation of wealth would be subsequently transmitted through to the rest of the area. This approach can be termed ‘follow-the-leader’ as the city is encouraged to flourish in terms of development and as a site of wealth accumulation relative to its surrounding hinterland. In contrast the form of development promoted by the WAG through the WSP reflected a ‘convoy approach’ (Roberts 2007) where the emphasis was on maintaining a balanced approach to development and not allowing any particular part of the region, such as Cardiff and the coastal zone, to develop at a quicker pace than the surrounding hinterland. This approach specifically encapsulated concerns over city-regional inequality.

Redefining the city-region concept as the ‘Capital Network’ provided a useful spatial metaphor through which the WAG could simultaneously claim to address both policy issues of deprivation, inequality and competitiveness. However, it became clear through interviews and documentary analysis that the more mainstream and evidence-rich ‘follow-the-leader’ approach would have been politically unacceptable within the context of South East Wales. Therefore, as the WAG forcefully entered the city-region debate, rather than simply adopting an in-vogue economic development concept, it reconceptualised the term to reflect the unique socio-political context and imperatives of South East Wales. Evidence that this was a conscious decision and not simply an assumption on behalf of the researcher, a WAG civil servant involved in the WSP process reflected that

what we tried to do is really adjust, in terms of what we’re proposing, adjust the primary focus of literature on city-regions to reflect the Welsh situation, to reflect the South East Wales situation, to reflect the valleys situation (Civil Servant B, personal communication, 4 October 2007).

Earlier in the interview the same WAG civil servant confirmed that the WAG was actively changing how city-regionalism was understood, commenting that they

were using the terminology of city-regions but were actually setting it in the context of what we were trying to do which was to try and spread prosperity from our metropolitan areas to our semi-rural semi-urban deprived communities and to do that we needed to tackle the structural

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problems of those communities as much as the economic structural issues in relation to the cities (Civil Servant B, personal communication, 4 October 2007).

From a region-building perspective another significant impact stemming from WAG's recognition of the city-region concept within the WSP was that it altered the political arena of South East Wales by adding a formalised territorial structure through which social contestation could occur and a through which the development trajectory for the sub-area could be influenced and defined. The three city-regional narratives identified during phase one of the concept's development (Chapter 5) were pragmatically constrained because the politics of scale through which they were deployed lacked two important elements which were provided by the WSP. First, the development of regional spatial planning areas provided a concrete political arena/forum in which arguments could then be presented. Secondly, by dividing Wales into six sub-areas a territorial dimension for the rescaling of sub-national state space was established. This is important within processes of region-building because it allows certain actors to act on behalf of a given territory and 'whose constitutive legitimacy lies in their capacity to exert relative control over a spatially bounded area' (Perkmann 2006, 256).

However, while formally accepting the concept of the city-region within regional spatial development planning, it was not yet clear to stakeholders how the concept should be interpreted, what if any influence it would have in shaping policy decisions, or how such a strategy would actually be delivered given the degree of intra-territorial conflict within South East Wales and the lack of regional implementation mechanisms (Morgan 2006a). The significance of its influence would rest to a certain degree on how successful the WAG would be at overcoming implementation barriers such poor historical cooperation between stakeholders across South East Wales and parochial attitudes towards development.

6.2.2 Breaking down barriers to implementing strategic objectives

The rescaling of governance around the notion of the city-region is an overtly politicised process driven by a number of potentially competing logics, including an often overarch-

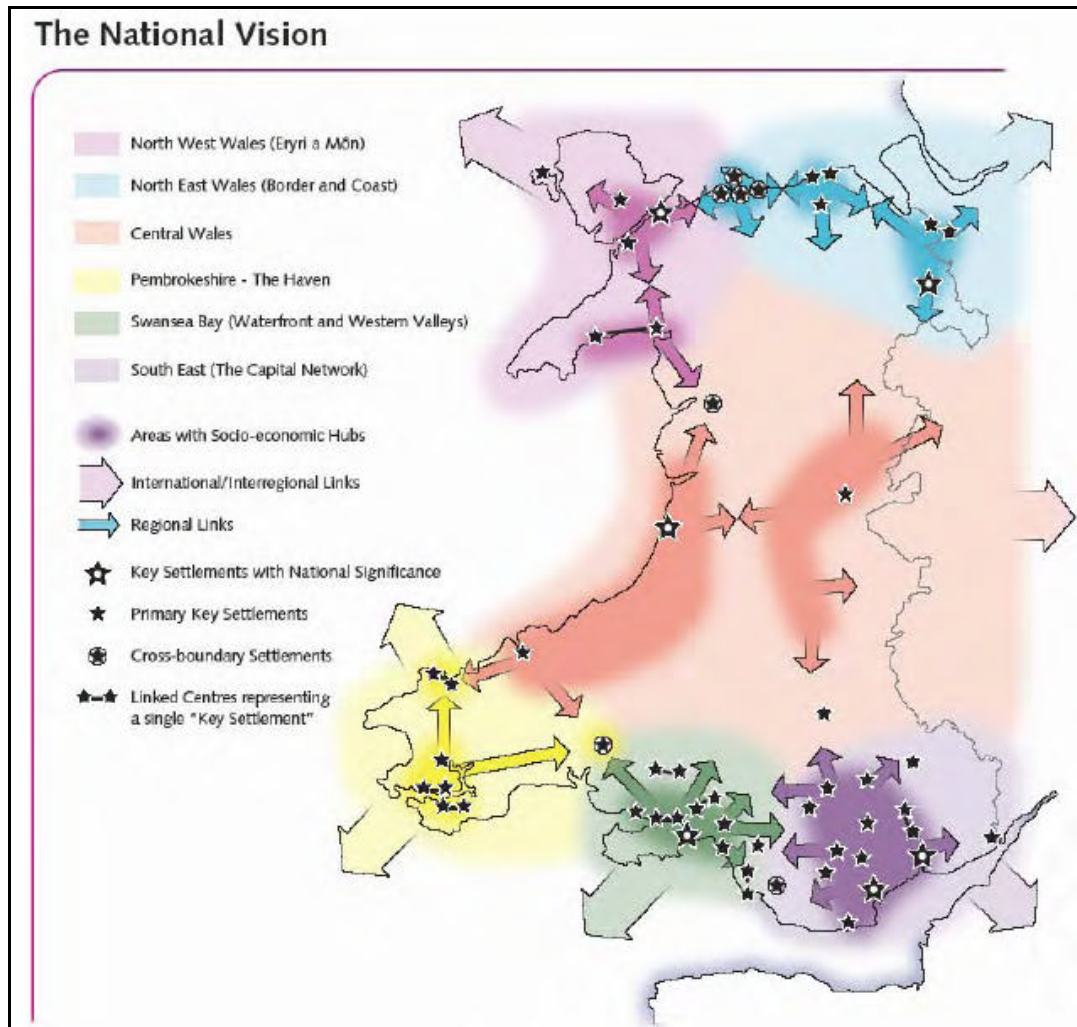
ing imperative to enhance territorial competitiveness within a global economic space. Attuned to these possibilities, this research uncovered several particular strategies (or techniques) employed by the WAG to alleviate the historical and seemingly intractable issue of intra-regional rivalry, manifesting as political parochialism.

The creation of ‘fuzzy borders’

Through the WSP, the city-region as a newly created scale of governance offered a useful concept through which the WAG could further its strategic ambitions. To some degree this is because literature underlining the concept emphasised networked relationships between people and their surrounding environment. More specifically, the relational perspective advocated by Amin (2002; 2004), Massey (2005) and Allen et al. (1998) has been helpful in directing attention to the fact that city-regions are not simply constituted as clearly demarcated entities but operate in ‘multiple ways in which urban practices are shaped, across spatial scales, sectoral boundaries and groups within society’ (Haughton and Counsell 2007). This understanding is reflected in the WSP as it established six spatial areas which did not necessarily coincide with local authority boundaries (See Figure 6-2). While these boundaries ‘enable partners to work together on common issues in a flexible way’ (WAG 2008a, 28-9) the institutional organisation also disrupted ongoing examples of local authority cooperation. For example, Ceredigion was split between two spatial areas and Carmarthenshire fell into three Spatial Plan areas. A WAG civil servant explained that they

kept them fuzzy though because we recognized that if you look where people live, which is what some of this debate forges, is that people look in different directions for services...So it’s a set, we’ve got another pattern along the coastal belts, so it was said deliberately, let’s create some grit in the system according to fuzzy boundaries. It says, don’t sit in with comfortable administrative boundaries; find ways that say how do we look outside that? (Civil Servant D, personal communication, 9 December 2007)

Figure 6-2: WSP geographical sub-areas demonstrating the creation of ‘fuzzy’ boundaries (WAG 2008a)



However, for South East Wales, the WSP’s ‘Capital Network’ area was contiguous with the 10 local authorities which historically form this region. As previously discussed, while this area demonstrates a history of informal collaborative working amongst the local authorities, it is also the site of significant political tensions (Morgan 2006c). Recent examples include the redevelopment of Cardiff Bay which reignited coastal valleys feuds, and the privileging of Merthyr Tydfil and Ebbw Vale as investment sites within the HOV programme (Morgan 2006a). Therefore, and in light of these tensions, the first technique deployed by the WAG to help achieve its strategic objectives for

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South East Wales was designed to remove the artificial boundaries of local authority administrative borders which reinforce parochial political tensions.

In several senses a north-south orientation characterises South East Wales:

- Physically, the valleys of this area run along a north-south axis;
- Historical patterns of resource-intensive economic development inscribed a north-south relationship between the valleys and core coastal communities across most of south Wales. The eastern valleys concentrated on Newport, the mid-valleys to Cardiff and the western valleys to Swansea; and
- Local authority administrative boundaries also demonstrate a north-south axis, particularly in the mid-valley areas of South East Wales.

These three factors help to effectively ingrain political parochialism, thus frustrating collaborative efforts required to rescale state space.

In response, the WSP sought to ameliorate the ingrained effects of the north-south orientation within the region by creating three new sub-areas: the 'City and Coast', 'Heads of the Valleys Plus' and the 'Connections Corridor (see Box 6-2 for a more detailed description). Importantly, these new zones ran along an east-west axis (shown in Figure 6-3) cutting across the predominant north-south axis of local authority boundaries as shown in Figure 6-4.

Box 6-2: Three new sub-areas of South East Wales

City and Coast: An area including the two main cities of Cardiff and Newport as well as smaller distinct communities offering a high quality of life located in rural, coastal locations;

Heads of the Valleys Plus: An area set in superb natural surroundings, comprising the upper valleys of the Capital region facing very considerable social challenges created by economic restructuring of the late 20th century;

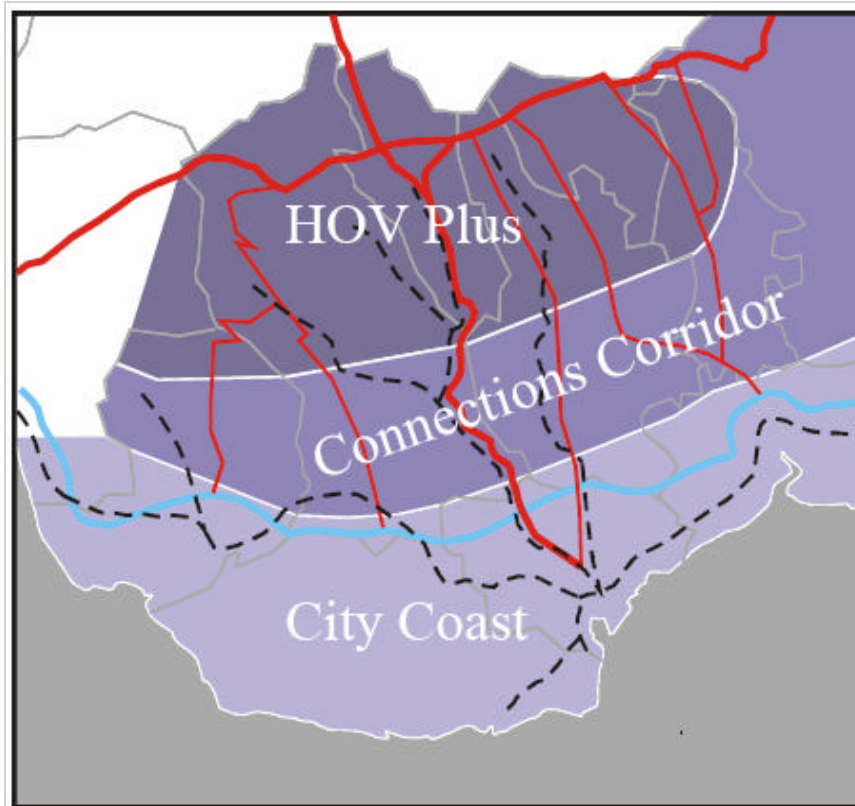
Connections Corridor: The mid valleys and rural areas increasingly under pressure for economic and housing development spilling out of the cities and city fringes. While some areas of deprivation remain in this sub-region, this connecting strip between coastal city growth and the restructuring area in the Heads of the Valleys Plus zone is

generally increasing in prosperity.

Figure 6-3: Three new sub-areas of South East Wales (WAG 2008a, 127)



Figure 6-4: Map of the three new subzones created in South East Wales by the WSP



Devolution presented the WAG with the opportunity and power structures to guide action through both direct and indirect means (WAG 2004a). However, to achieve the strategic objectives set by the WAG to govern the new nation, the organisation realised that it needed to ‘co-operate across traditional boundaries and compartmentalised thinking – whether sectoral or geographic’ (WAG 2004a, 3). As previously highlighted, many of the political problems in South East Wales emerge because of the bounded nature of political spaces and territorially demarcated processes of identity formation. Morgan notes that, ‘one needs to recognize that political space is bounded *and* porous’ (2007a, 1248) and this is precisely what the national state has done in this instance. The WAG exploited the porous (and even malleable) nature of political space and through the creation of new sub-areas running along east-west axes sought to infuse multiple identities within sub-national spaces based not only upon the north-south local authority boundaries but also the new east-west sub-areas. A WAG civil servant summarises the logic behind these actions:

[w]ell the conflict is people look at it as winners and losers, you know, investing in my area. People tend to look at maps and assess it on a map and say, I don't live there, what are you doing for me? What we're trying to say is it doesn't say there's nothing in it for you, we're kind of saying its kind of a wider pattern that moves towards that and everywhere can't have everything. (Civil Servant D, personal communication, 9 December 2007)

Therefore, by exploiting the bounded, porous and malleable nature of space and territorial identity connections within South East Wales, the WAG were able to partially remove some of the obstacles to achieving its strategic ambitions.

Ensuring legitimacy through extensive consultation

Any organisation wishing to rescale state space must secure legitimacy for the narrative or discourses through which it employs to achieve this strategic project. It has already been shown that the preferred option for delivering the vision for South East Wales as found in the WSP included an assemblage of elements from earlier city-regional narratives. However, in some senses the preferred option contrasted starkly with the viewpoints of relatively important actors in South East Wales including those representing interests in Cardiff, Newport, some elements of valleys authorities. As a partial means of addressing these lingering differences and achieving stakeholder 'buy-in' to the new city-region narrative, an important element of the WAG's progression of the WSP was extensive engagement with these (and other) key actors.

The extensive engagement that fed into the narrative development of the city-region concept in South East Wales as found in the WSP can be viewed as a state mechanism for securing the legitimacy to govern at the city-regional scale. As a corollary it also helps explain how a balanced and equitable interpretation of city-regionalism has been adopted rather than an overtly urban-focused programme. This is because unpacking the process through which the dominant territorial vision has achieved primacy helps to reveal some of the underlying power dynamics contributing towards the politics of scale within this context.

From its initial conception the WSP was developed, and progressed through its 2008 refresh, in a collaborative manner. As an interviewee from an organisation that represents business interests in Wales stated during an interview, '[n]ow the good thing about the Spatial Plan process has been this pre-consultation process and I think that's the first time I've experienced that in such a solid way, a substantial way' (Business Representative B, personal communication, 23 October 2007). A WAG civil servant later explained that this was part of the more traditional 'Welsh approach' to governance that represents a slight ideological difference to the more competitive nature of spatial development in England and reflects the history of corporatism within Welsh governance. Specifically, the Welsh approach developed by the WAG

is more about getting actors together, setting visions and then acting towards those visions rather than a detailed Stalinist type structural plan of who what where when why. It's about moving in that direction (Civil Servant D, personal communication, 9 December 2007).

Within this engagement process of 'getting actors together [and] setting visions' the role steering role played by the Welsh state in setting the agenda and driving it forward should not be underestimated. This approach represents a deliberate attempt by the state to establish legitimacy for a spatial approach to development which it has acknowledged is grounded in neither evidence nor theory. A WAG civil servant explained that

from the earliest stages there was a kind of steering group, a core group attached to this project, primarily, again to account for the political buy-in. So we had people from the environmental organisations, we had people from the valleys authorities, from coastal authorities [...] and all the way down the track we've been validating, discussing and identifying common understanding about what we mean and where we're going you know (Civil Servant B, personal communication, 4 October 2007).

The core group mentioned in the above quote was comprised of the Chief Executives of the ten local authorities and marks an important arena in which the different options for the delivery of the Capital Network's vision were contested. With this organisational structure it is not surprising that the 'preferred option' was a balanced hybrid choice reflecting elements of all bottom-up city-region narratives discussed in the city-region chapter. The inclusive institutional / governance setup as dictated by the territorial extents of the South East Wales 'Capital Network' also help to explain why this hybrid

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approach to city-regionalism was adopted in lieu of a traditional interpretation of the city-region concept. Within this arrangement, Cardiff represents just one of ten local authorities and was not able to assert its strategic economic objectives which are more aligned with traditional competitive city-regionalism. As a local authority officer observed,

I think that's what they've been grappling with. To be fair that's the sort of conventional idea of a city-region and I think people in the Assembly cottoned early on that it just wasn't realistic in the South East Wales context and because although Cardiff is by far the major growth point for certainly expanding job areas and job creation you know, it's a relatively small part of the whole sub-region. (Local Authority K, personal communication, 14 September 2007)

This caused particular consternation amongst the business community as one set of stakeholders with strategic aims more closely matched to CC's. In response to the hybrid option put forward in the WSP, Russell Goodway - in his capacity as the Chief Executive of the now defunct Cardiff Chamber of Commerce – stated during an interview carried out during this research,

I don't think the Assembly are serious about city-regions are they? I mean they identify regional sort of areas but they don't acknowledge necessarily that the city is the economic dynamo, the real driver of the region, ummm where the investment needs to take place and then you get the ripple effect (Business Representative C, personal communication, 25 November 2007).

The representatives from the business community interviewed for this research strongly favoured the competitive interpretation of city-regionalism where the core cities of Cardiff and Newport become the focus for investment and growth and the ensuing economic dividends transmit through the wider city-region through a variety of secondary mechanisms. Evidence for this assertion comes from a paper written by the Chamber of Commerce and Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) on behalf of Business Wales²⁰ to the Business Partnership Council (BPC)²¹ that

²⁰ Business Wales provides a reflection of private sector interests throughout Wales.

²¹ The BPC is a forum that was set up by the Welsh Assembly to facilitate dialogue between the Assembly and the business community on certain policy issues. The council is comprised by ten Assembly Members of all parties and the Council is chaired by the First Minister; Two members from the Social Economy and

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Cardiff as a capital city has a strong generative affect on its region, although across Wales, there is often a reluctance to acknowledge this factor...A strategy for further development of Wales' city-regions must be adopted and delivered at all levels of government, by focusing on the capacity of these regions to drive the success of the Nation. Success in this context is competitiveness. Failure to do so could result in our cities being at a major disadvantage vis-à-vis cities in England and Scotland, where support for cities and city-regionalism is prevalent (BPC 2006).

Another representative of the business community re-iterated these points, arguing that policy efforts should be targeted towards

the South East Wales coastal belt [because] that's where you get the mass of population, the density of population, the transport links - which all begs the question: what do you do about the stuff further north in the region? You know, you can do two things. You can try to pay, or incentivise economic activity to go there or you can put in place the infrastructure and remove the barriers for people in those regions to access the economic activity which is actually happening on the coastal belt (Business Representative A, personal communication, 25 September 2007).

However, contrary to city-regional movements elsewhere in the UK and Western Europe, arguably the business community in South East Wales is perceived (as stated by one interviewee²²) as being relatively weak,²³ thus providing the WAG more flexibility to determine its own city-region narrative whilst also allowing the business community the opportunity to participate to a certain extent within the political arena. The relative power structures demonstrated by the evolution of the city-region within this case study suggest an important factor in determining the potential outcomes of city-regional debates within particular contexts. It also helps to explain why city-regionalism in South East Wales was developing according to the structures of various, non-competitive discourses. The WAG's actions appear to be part of a systematic approach of encouraging inclusive stakeholder engagement yet the relative weakness of independent parties such as the business community allowed the WAG to disregard viewpoints which radically differed from the balanced city-regional interpretation the organisation discus-

at least five representatives from each of the Wales TUC and Business Wales (an umbrella body comprising of business representative organisations).

²² To avoid any tensions which may emerge as a result of this comment the organisational affiliation has been removed.

²³ A characteristic also demonstrated in early 2008 when the Cardiff Chamber of Commerce went into liquidation because of an inability to repay old debts

sively advanced. A member of the BPC highlights this by commenting how in meetings between the business community and the WAG,

initially there was a civil servant on the business panel who was chairing and taking notes, nodded and put down everything we said and who knows what happened to it. And it became obvious in his notes that he was softening this, he was watering down this as time went by so nothing was being said, it was getting lost [...]. We said enough is enough; you're not hearing us [...]. If you want a city-region than your model just doesn't have the competence to deliver that (Business Representative B, personal communication, 23 October 2007).

The quote above highlights many points. Importantly it shows the dominant role that the WAG has played in driving forward the city-region agenda in South East Wales as it was able to re-articulate the messages put forward by the private sector. This action counters assertions that the city-region as a concept is inherently socially regressive and should be interpreted primarily as a response to neoliberalism and international capital logics. The business community's rejection of the WAG's city-region model – on the basis that it did not accurately reflect more traditional, competitive approaches to city-regionalism – further demonstrates that it is necessary to understand city-regionalism as a contingent concept more responsive to the localised context in which it is being transcribed.

Coercion and co-operation within the city-region

In addition to removing some of the socio-political barriers which hindered the delivery of a networked city-region, the WAG also took steps to actively encourage collaboration between local authorities at both the political and an officer level. Allmendinger and Haughton (2009, 621) note that (UK) Central Government has actively set up new ways for organisations to work together whilst also seeking to influence the process and outcomes. In progressing this agenda, the national state has demonstrated a capability to create multiple mechanisms at different spatial scales in order to achieve specific objectives. This was through the 'Making the Connections' (MTC) agenda and the incorporation of organically emerging groups of public authority professionals into the WSP process.

Making the connections

An important impediment to the development of the city-region concept as an effective spatial mechanism for the delivery of nationally-derived aims and objectives related to the coordination of governance within the region. As discussed in Chapter Four, there are widely acknowledged reasons for these barriers, including historical tensions and rivalries. However, it became clear during fieldwork that many key actors in South East Wales also considered the existing public sector governance structures to be an equally, if not more, significant barrier to the delivery of an effective city-regional. A local authority officer stated that

there have been real tensions and difficulties in working together with Cardiff both politically and otherwise because of the way that local governments are actually set up. Which is a great pity because I think that Cardiff could have been a far more successful capital city if there had been a proper sub-regional basis, a capital region basis on which to actually develop (Local Authority J, personal communication, 30 November 2007).

While it could be argued that a further round of local government re-organisation may be required, even towards the end of fieldwork in 2007 the topic remained a highly sensitive political issue that was not openly discussed.²⁴ The four quotes shown in Box 6-3 demonstrate a widespread recognition of the problem associated with the existing governance arrangements in South East Wales while also underlining the sensitivity of the issue.

Box 6-3: The sensitive issue of local government reform

‘Because if you look at city-region you know, throughout other locations, you know, to make them work they need to work politically. That to me is vitally important because you get a group of officials and officers together but until you get the members, the councillors, whatever, the AMs, working as a proper body, you’re never going to get the proper functioning, democratic, city-region. The governance issue is huge, its probably bigger than the technical issue to be honest with you, the governance issue is huge.’ (Local Authority J, personal communication, 30 November 2007)

‘You’ve got an interesting issue further down the line of local government re-

²⁴ Arguably this remains the case at the time of publication in 2011.

organization which could cut across these issues quite substantially in time.’ (Local Authority I, personal communication, 5 November 2007)

‘If you have a private conversation with the 22 Chief Executives of the local authorities they’ll all tell you the existing system does not make sense. We need to have a smaller number of more strategic and better resourced authorities and it is clear that some of the authorities are finding it very difficult to cope, deliver, find it difficult to deliver because they basically are not resourced adequately to be able to enable them to undertake the agenda.’ (Local Authority C, personal communication, 19 September 2007)

‘And I think that everyone knows in the South East region the local authority issues is a problem. I mean, it’s a problem across Wales because of the you know, 22 local authorities, lack of critical mass, waste of money. It means that across the valleys say, in this area, you know, the South East area, you can have 5 local authorities all looking at similar kinds of social economic need, doing it slightly differently, increasingly trying to cooperate over various you know, cross sector themes or whatever. All very good but the structural problem you know, no one wants to tackle the structural problem, its too time consuming, too expensive, whose got the courage?’ (Business Representative B, personal communication, 23 October 2007)

In addition to the upfront costs associated with planning and delivering a programme of local government re-organisation, evidence also emerged from the fieldwork that the topic had been avoided not only because of political sensitivities but also because of the detrimental impact such action could have on the strategic delivery of the Capital Network. A local authority officer observed that

there are some real costs and difficulties and downside issues if you embark upon a route leading to mergers of local authorities. All authorities become very inward looking. They all seek to compete for space and advantage and you will not see improved services²⁵ (Local Authority C, personal communication, 19 September 2007).

As such, it is interesting that alongside the development of the WSP, in 2004 the WAG embarked on a modernisation agenda, designing a programme of improving public service delivery in Wales. As part of the action plan for implementing the *Making the Connections* (MTC) strategy the WAG commissioned a report from Sir Jeremy Beecham. Within his report - *Delivering Beyond Boundaries: Transforming Public Services in Wales* – Beecham gave local authorities in Wales five years to achieve significant efficiency savings by collaborating across a range of service areas and

²⁵ Despite the sensitivities, in 2008, Local Government Minister Dr. Brian Gibbons AM re-opened the debate over the future of Wales’ 22 unitary authorities, threatening to reduce their number (James 2008).

through purchasing agreements. However, if councils were unable to achieve the necessary results the report carried with it an implication that reorganisation could be imposed by the 2012 council elections (Shipton 2007).

Interestingly, an obscure paragraph in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 allows for this, granting the NAW the right to abolish and amalgamate all 22 unitary councils in Wales (Shipton 2007).²⁶ Although the government denied any plans for local government reorganisation the clandestine moves contributed towards frosty relations between national and local tiers of government. These led Rhondda-Cynon-Taf councillor Mike Powell to ask whether the NAW were

planning a secret reorganisation of local authorities? Certainly that is hinted at in the Wales Spatial Plan. It is a shadow in the background of Making the Connections [...]. It is the policy that dare not speak its name. [First Minister] Rhodri [Morgan] and his Plaid sidekicks should 'fess up. Are they planning a massive reorganisation of councils in Wales? (Shipton 2007)

The development of the MTC agenda radically altered the politics of city-regionalism within South East Wales and it also highlights how multiple approaches can be taken by the State as part of the region building process. By promoting collaboration in the provision of back office services such as human resources and accounting the WAG surreptitiously engaged with the idea of local government reorganisation while demonstrating that it also possessed a powerful lever in terms of the rescaling of state space. One senior local authority officer states that

with the introduction of the Spatial Plan and Making the Connections I think there has been a significant step forward to try to break down some of the barriers that have existed between local authorities and between Cardiff and some of the other parts of South East Wales (Local Authority I, personal communication, 5 November 2007).

Previous to and during this research, the city-regional debate in the UK had not featured discussions over local government reform. This marks another key difference of the Welsh context. With the development of the MTC agenda, in combination with the

²⁶ Recently this Act has been used in England to advance a programme of local government restructuring. An example of this is the planned division of Cheshire County Council along a north-south axis.

WSP and the National Assembly's gradual accumulation of power (as evidenced by the right to abolish and amalgamate the unitary structure in Wales), the city-region narrative assumed additional importance as it became linked with the potential for local government reform. Additionally, the MTC's efficiencies imperatives provide a unique capacity through which both top-down and bottom-up agendas have fused together the multiple city-regional agendas within this area.

Incorporating organically emergent public sector organisations

A noted challenge to the achievement of a successful city-region in South East Wales has been termed the 'delivery deficit' (Morgan 2006a) and reflects the lack of adequate mechanisms to implement strategic solutions to issues of collective consumption such as transport, waste, housing and economic development. While the WSP was a key means through which the deficit could be remedied, WAG as a young organisation did not possess the sufficient resources by itself to develop robust, integrated spatial policies and it lacked the executive power to deliver them. In response, and providing further evidence of the WAG's incremental approach to its region-building agenda in South East Wales, the WAG sought to utilise many of the existing professional officer-level groups in order to fill recognised strategic policy vacuums.

In addition to the wide range of organisations from different sectors the WAG consulted with as part of the WSP's development, pre-existing groupings of public sector local authority officers and elected councillors played an important role in developing the detailed policies through which the objectives of the WSP would be delivered. As the 2008 refresh document states, the policies and strategies within the WSP 'will be delivered through a number of partners and mechanisms at the national, regional and local levels. In most cases, delivery will be through existing mechanisms, working towards a common strategy' (WAG 2008a, 17).

Key delivery partners in South East Wales included the South East Wales Regional Housing Forum (SEWRHF), SEWTA, SEWRWG, SEWEF, and South East Wales

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Strategic Planning Group (SEWSPG). In particular, the following examples help to demonstrate how the WAG utilised the existing institutional geography of South East Wales to promote vertical and cross-sectoral policy integration and to implement the organisation's vision for South East Wales.

In terms of vertical and cross-sectoral integration the regionally-based groups provided evidence to the WAG through their representation at WSP Ministerial Meetings and were subsequently employed to help refine and deliver the objectives of the WSP itself. In this sense vertical integration refers to the presence of WAG and local authority representatives at these meetings alongside representatives from key area stakeholders such as the Institute of Directors and the Home Builders Federation. Cross-sectoral integration refers to the fact that these meetings also included attendees representing regional bodies such as SEWTA, SEWEF, SEWRHG, and SEWRWG.

In one example, SEWRWG provided evidence to the WAG for the development of the WSP but also assisted in the delivery of its objectives. At a regional Wales Spatial Plan Ministerial Area Group meeting on 7 December 2005, Andrew Davies, the Lead Minister, supported the Regional Waste Groups proposed a study on the economic benefits and spatial dimensions of the future growth in the resource recover / recycle reprocessing industries in the region (SEWRWG 2006). This information would then be used to achieve the objective of the WSP to help create jobs in South East Wales in recycling and waste (WAG 2008a). The involvement of SEWRWG would help ensure that the National Waste Strategy for Wales and regional waste plans inform, and are informed by, the Wales Spatial Plan Area Strategies (WAG 2008a).

In another example, SEWSPG were relied upon to apportion the WAG's household projections to local authorities within South East Wales. This was in line with WAG guidance that required Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) within each Welsh region to work together with appropriate stakeholders to apportion the Assembly's projections or to agree their own regional projections. However, no statutory arrangements were in place for the development of binding regional housing plans and each LPA was still

required to determine what level of future household growth it should seek to accommodate through its own Local Development Plan (LDP) process. The WSP refresh (WAG 2008a, 131) notes that SEWSPG

has carried out a regional apportionment exercise [...] based on the policy statements above [i.e. found in the WSP] and the upward population trends for the region. This will feed into the preparation of local development plans, and will be tested through the local development plan process.

This shows that whilst the SEWSPG lacked the power to enforce housing delivery targets, the vision and subsequent objectives found within the WSP for the different areas could potentially play a crucial role in determining the direction for the region. In a similar example SEWTA also assumed an important role in the development and delivery of the WSP. The 2008 WSP Refresh explicitly states that the Regional Transport Plan developed by SEWTA ‘will be the main instrument for meeting [the] challenges’ of achieving sustainable transport (WAG 2008a, 131). The WAG requires²⁷ each of the four transport consortia in Wales to produce an RTP which must integrate fully with both the WSP and the Wales Transport Strategy (WTS).

However, important debates emerged over the appropriateness of using this institutional model to drive forward spatial development in South East Wales. A senior Local Authority officer described it as a

sort of hybrid model where things have developed organically and suddenly something glared over the top of it which is new, which doesn’t have particularly clear connections with all those groups and that’s not the best way of running anything, driving anything (Local Authority A, personal communication, 26 September 2007).

And while the process served to further institutionalise the WAG’s territorial vision for South East Wales, the inclusion of these groups complicated the institutional landscape, demonstrating the messy nature of rescaling activities. A local authority officer caricatured the process through which these groups develop and then become immersed in the WSP process:

²⁷ Through the Transport (Wales) Act 2006

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There's been a proliferation of those groups, and they tend to develop out of issues and you know, we have an issue and it might be a big issue, so we might have an issue about working effectively [and] [t]here's a tendency for these things to just come out of issues, important ones, and develop this life way beyond their remit and suddenly they're on the landscape and other groups start saying 'oh we'd better include them, better copy them in on it' and you know, the classic sort of hybrid of supporting something that's new within the public sector, copying them in, giving them some involvement, it all starts happening and they're suddenly, they get the oxygen, they get the connections and they're there suddenly and you suddenly have to say we need to take them in the context then (Local Authority A, personal communication, 26 September 2007).

No definitive answers emerged through the fieldwork as to why this approach was adopted in developing the WSP however, two perspectives can be advanced. The first is that the institutional capacity of the WAG would be improved through minimal resources by tapping into existing organisational structures. It has been noted that the ability to actually deliver city-regionalism has been a key missing ingredient associated with the development of the WSP (Morgan 2006a) because the voluntary partnership organisations between local authorities lacked the power to influence budgets (with the possible exception of SEWTA) and make the difficult decisions (i.e. create 'winners' and 'losers'). The advent of spatial planning only served to highlight this deficiency (ibid). However, with the leverage that the WAG is able to exert over the voluntary partnerships through the *Making The Connections* agenda and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, the decision-making ability and delivery capacity of these organisations could be improved. Second, the incorporation of these organisations into the spatial planning process provided a mechanism for further institutionalising the hybrid city-region options for South East Wales. With the WSP serving as a 'material consideration' for local and national investment decisions, the participation of the organic organisations allow the WAG to harness buy-in at both the political and officer level of local government. For example, this can be evidenced through the strategic processes by which regional housing allocations were agreed at the local authority level.

6.3 Contestation from the capital city

While the WAG was actively constructing and beginning to implement the organisation's vision for the 'Capital Network', no actor within South East Wales was subsequently as active in contesting this interpretation of the city-region as Cardiff Council. As Kevin Morgan (2006a, 309) writes, 'no stakeholder in south east Wales stands to gain more from a successful city-region than Cardiff itself [...].' Despite the acknowledgement of the city-region concept within the WSP, key actors within CC were dissatisfied with the interpretation of city-regionalism apparent within the 'capital network'. As one local authority officer stated:

What currently exists however is a discrepancy and a mismatch between the city-region policy, or the absence of a city-region policy and what's actually happening on the ground. So the territorial dimensions of policy making in South East Wales really don't reflect the realities of an integrated space where, in which Cardiff is playing a very pivotal role in terms of the future of the region. And one of the difficulties it seems to me is that the region, part of the approach that has been taken by the Assembly on spatial planning and shared services as well, is that it's regionalism by another name, it's not city-regionalism it's just a manifestation of a regional approach which you could actually apply to the rest of Wales in terms of its other regions. The crucial thing is, are we, in South East Wales from a local government and an Assembly perspective prepared to think through the consequences of a city like Cardiff in and, what that means for the wider region (Local Authority I, personal communication, 5 November 2007).

This quote strikes at the heart of the city-region debate as it unfolded in South East Wales and in particular highlights the sense of discord between the WAG and CC. In response to this the Council embarked on an ambitious attempt to promote a more competitive understanding of the city-region concept. To secure the political support necessary for this vision of city-regionalism to assume dominance over the WAG's interpretation, CC actively sought to enhance the profile of city-region concept and to force others to 'think through the consequences of a city like Cardiff and what that means for the wider region' (see above quote). These efforts most visibly manifest themselves within subsequent policy documents and specially commissioned reports. Through these documents and interviews with key regional decision-makers a substan-

tial shift in the CC's approach to the city-region debate can be observed. In narrative terms there is a subtle rescaling of CC's territorial ambitions where the focus of a city-regional agenda shifts from the entirety of South East Wales to one more closely in tune with the functional economic geography of the city. This is matched by new institutional arrangements whereby Cardiff begins to enter into selective partnerships with the surrounding local authorities in initiatives that are expressly designed to help secure the social reproduction of the core city (for further information see 6.3.2).

6.3.1 Further re-scaling of the city-region concept

Following the initial publication of the WSP in 2004, a raft of policy documents emerged from CC to actively constructing and promoting city-regionalism within South East Wales. One document which provides a particularly vivid description of the strategic ambitions of CC and contributes significantly to the narrative development of the city-region agenda was the Council's economic strategy, *Competitive Capital: the Cardiff Economic Strategy 2007-2012*. The city-region concept as a powerful spatial metaphor provides an overarching structure from which the strategy unfolds. Indeed, the first section of the strategy is entitled "*Cities, City Regions and Cardiff*" and the second section is entitled "*Competitive City Regions*". Within these sections the argument for the successful economic development of cities within a global knowledge-based market place is reinforced in terms of their regional and national importance. Amongst references to Jane Jacobs and E.F. Schumacher, Danuta Hübner, European Commissioner for Regional Policy, is quoted stating that '[a] region can only be successful if its cities are successful' (Cardiff County Council 2007b, 6). Demonstrating the interplay between competing narratives as their proponents seek a dominant position, it is possible to detect signs that the WAG's promotion of deprivation and inequality within the city-region debate began to influence the presentation of the concept by CC. For example, the argument for a strong core city is bolstered by the citation of a UK Government report claiming that 'cities provide an opportunity to narrow the economic gap between our regions and tackle deprivation at the local and neighbourhood levels' (HM Treasury,

DTI and ODPM 2006, i cited in; Cardiff County Council 2007b, 6). However, a closer reading also reveals a slightly chaotic narrative shift emerging with respect to the city-region agenda as the Council began to rescale the city's growth ambitions. This narrative shift would then translate in material terms as is shown below.

In the forward to *Competitive Capital*, Cllr Mark Stephens lays the foundation for this shift by explaining the transition of the city away from traditional evidence-based policy-making towards more objectives-based planning similar to that of the WSP:

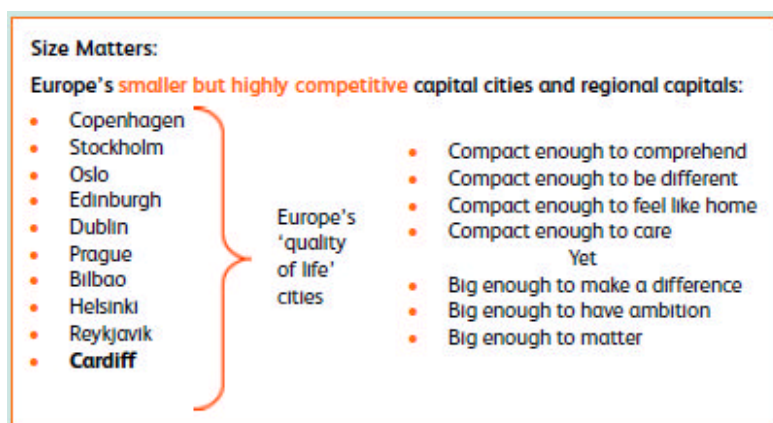
[w]hilst conventional strategies have extolled the virtues of agglomeration, scale and critical mass, this is inadequate on a number of levels, not least because it tends to concentrate on the narrow economic benefits of 'world cities'. Cardiff is exploring a more sophisticated approach: one that recognises the multi-dimensional nature of the relationship between cities and their regions...[d]eveloping the economy does not recognise political boundaries [and] this strategy will play a fundamental part in capturing significant economic benefits for the city and its region in the future.

In one sense Cllr. Stephens' statement can be interpreted as a response to the WAG's position on the city-region debate that Cardiff's small size hinders its ability to provide economic dividends for the entire region. It is in this context that CC questions the underlining logic behind a city-regional approach to development where the city-region in fact relates to all of South East Wales. An important prompt for further investigation emerges in the last sentence where Cllr Stephens refers to 'capturing significant economic benefits for the city and *its* region in the future' (emphasis added). This begs the questions as to what CC considers 'its' region to be and what the 'more sophisticated approach' will entail.

First, the narrative shift points towards the evolutionary nature of the politics of scales and suggests that while the 'scale at which a particular project should take place' (Gonzalez 2006, 838) will be subject to 'collaboration, negotiation, exchange, contestation or struggle' (ibid), individual actors may themselves adjust their own position as a response to certain events. While Cardiff's economic strategy continues to territorially represent the city-region as the 10 local authorities of South East Wales and refers to the

positive effects of a ‘critical mass’ (p. 6) of 1.4 million residents, it begins to reject the idea that larger cities are better – cynically this could be argued to be a response to the WAG’s position of the city as small and reliant on a much greater mass of population and activity (from the surrounding area) to become significant internationally. In a section entitled, ‘Achieving the Balance - Size Matters’, it is argued that ‘the successful cities of the future will be the smaller cities...these cities will perform where bigger, and less personal, cities may not’ (p. 8). This is based on ‘growing evidence’ (p. 8) which is neither provided nor referenced and seemingly contradicts empirical economic accounts suggesting that ‘there are increasing returns of scale deriving from localisation and urbanization effects, and that larger cities experience greater competitive advantage than smaller ones’ (Parkinson 2004, 12); a point which CC later demonstrates it is aware of. However, from the document it would appear that the growing evidence is anecdotally derived from the fact that there are a number of European cities which are considered successful – a hierarchy which Cardiff positions itself in (see Figure 6-5) and through which policies are to be developed.

Figure 6-5: Cardiff’s positioning within a European hierarchy of ‘smaller but highly competitive cities’ (Cardiff County Council 2007b)



In terms of a related material shift, a deeper investigation into the politics surrounding the city-region concept suggests that while supportive of the concept of a city-region encompassing the ten local authorities of South East Wales, CC also began to territorially rescale the city-region. While the city was presenting an argument for the benefits of a smaller capital city, the Council was also considering the benefits of pursuing a

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smaller functionally-based city-region through which it could play a more active role in securing its social reproduction (i.e. by achieving goals such as reducing commuting times, ensuring wage-earning jobs for those not in high-value added sectors, delivering high quality urban environments (see: Krueger and Savage 2007)). While CC had continually argued that the success of the region was dependent on a flourishing core city, it also began to realise that through the intervention of the WAG the city would not be able to realise or play a leading role within the political city-regional space of South East Wales.

As a result, conventional thinking within CC on the appropriate territorial extents of city-regionalism in South East Wales began to shift. As will be demonstrated, this occurred both in parallel and as a response to the maturing nature of the city-region concept within local and international policy debates. Within South East Wales this is represented by the concept's development as a tool for place marketing to a much broader spatial conceptualisation underpinning the city's strategic approach to social reproduction and growth.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter the emergence of the city-region agenda within South East Wales was marked by the publication of the Cooke report for SGCC in 1992 in which the entirety of South East Wales was included within a 'Cardiff city-region'. These geographic boundaries were further enshrined by the WAG through the WSP and the organic development of numerous regional bodies operating across a range of strategic public service areas. However, the scalar city-regional politics determined by this geography were weighted against CC and the city had reduced capability to influence the terms of the debate in favour of pursuing its growth objectives. A range of factors contributed towards this including the relatively small population of Cardiff (c. 315,000) in relation to the rest of the region (c. 1.1 million); the high levels of socio-economic disparity between Cardiff (and the rest of the coastal zone) and the northern valleys areas and; a relatively weak business community in South East Wales.

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In response to this CC began to territorially rescale the city-region. Responding to the consultation for WAVE, CC's representation stated:

The concept of a "Capital Network" within the Wales Spatial Plan is in line with current thinking about the economic importance of city-regions to national prosperity. Put simply, this is predicated on the assumption that cities are emerging units of economic power and have an important regenerative impact on **adjacent** towns and communities due to their ability to attract private sector investment by virtue of their economic strengths, including connectivity, creativity, business services, cultural infrastructure, and availability of skills (Cardiff County Council 2006c emphasis added).

While hardly definitive by itself, the word 'adjacent' reflects a repositioning by Cardiff to redefine the political arena in which the city-region agenda is debated in such a way that the capital city is able to exert more influence and control. This was followed by a subsequent consultation representation to the WAG in which CC reiterates this position, supporting a recommendation for 'more emphasis on sub-regional collaboration in the development of strategies and projects' (Cardiff County Council 2006d).

In essence, CC was concerned that the 'regionalism by another name' (Local Authority I, personal communication, 5 November 2007) approach taken by the WAG jeopardised the city's ability to remain competitive within the global market place. A presentation by CC on proposals for an international business park noted that the size of the 'South East Wales city-region' is double the size of Manchester and 4½ times the size of the Liverpool city-region (Cardiff County Council 2008b), shown in Table 6-1. Officer's within CC's economic development / policy team were aware of the relationship between density and economic productivity and that this association provided a theoretically robust justification for city-regionalism as a strategic scale of intervention.

Table 6-1: Comparison of Metropolitan Areas - population, area and population density (Day 2008)

Metropolitan Area	Population	Area (Hectares)	Density (Number of Persons per Hectare)
Newcastle	1,075,938	54,005	19.92
Manchester	2,482,328	127,602	19.45
Liverpool	1,362,026	64,488	21.12
West Midlands	2,555,592	90,164	28.34
SE Wales	1,393,645	280,823	4.96

Following this revelation regarding density, the presentation notes that ‘Cardiff’s travel to-work data points towards a more compact city-region solution’ (ibid). Emphasising the importance of neighbouring local authorities within the wider South East Wales region, Cardiff’s *Local Development Plan Preferred Strategy*, observes:

Cardiff’s role in driving the South East Wales economy is demonstrated by the fact that, in 2005, 72,200 people commuted into the county daily to work – occupying 39% of the jobs in the county. The largest numbers commute from the Vale of Glamorgan (20,000), Rhondda Cynon Taff (15,000) and Caerphilly (13,000). These levels of commuting have been steadily increasing over recent decades (Cardiff County Council 2006a, 10).

By these logics, for CC city-regionalism as a territorial concept begins to relate to a much smaller area more in line with its functional economic geography (as often captured by Travel-to-Work Areas (TTWA)) than traditional administrative boundaries. This shift is dramatically demonstrated in Figure 6-6 which the Council produced (2008b) as part of a proposal for an International Business Park just off the M4 motorway. The map underpinned discussion on the city’s concerns over the WSP’s lack of clarity on the role of Cardiff within South East Wales (‘Containment OR growth? Concentrated growth OR dispersed?’ (2008b)) and whether the WSP presented a regional rather than a city-regional approach to development.

Figure 6-6: Cardiff Council's rescaling of city-regionalism according to functional economic geographies²⁸ (Cardiff County Council 2008b)



Building on this narrative and scalar repositioning, CC began to institutionalise their altered interpretation of city-region. Two examples discussed below are within the skills and waste sectors.

²⁸ and in contradistinction to previous understandings where the concept related to the ten local authorities of South East Wales.

6.3.2 Institutionalising Cardiff's re-scaled city-region

It has been suggested that the 'competitiveness' of city-regions might not be a function of their productive capacity but may rely more on their ability to ensure their 'social reproduction' (Krueger and Savage 2007). Following the publication of the first iteration of the WSP, key decision-makers at CC began to recognise that the discursive positioning of the competitive city-region was failing to gain the social support within the region that it required to influence subsequent policy-making, particularly around strategic infrastructure investments. While not referring directly to the ongoing disjuncture between CC, the WAG and other local authorities within South East Wales, a report from CC's Executive implicitly acknowledges the situation:

The Executive acknowledges that there are differing perspectives on city-regional competitiveness. It is inevitable that there will always be differing views and perspectives on how to regenerate cities and their regions. This is highlighted by the current debate within the UK and across Europe. The emphasis on competitiveness – highlighted by the work of Michael Parkinson and Sir Michael Lyons – is not universally accepted (Cardiff County Council 2006b).

As CC was loath to refocus their strategic ambitions, it recognised that it would have to adjust its city-regional strategy if it was to continue to pursue a growth first agenda. This is because in their view the reluctance of the WAG to fully endorse the traditional city-regional approach to development that CC was promoting could act as a potential barrier to the council's aims. Two specific institutional responses by CC reflect this position, namely, the development of a Regional Skills Vehicle (RSV) and the second is a sub-regional waste strategy.).

Cardiff's institutional response to the WAG's balanced approach to city-regionalism can be demonstrated by showing how the Council concentrated on securing the city's own social reproduction. A key project through which this was enabled was the establishment of a Regional Skills Vehicle (RSV). It is through this initiative that the city's urban growth ambitions and the physical transformation that had been unfolding through the city (particularly in Cardiff Bay) are explicitly linked as part of a wider sub-regional city-regional strategy. A Council information publication states that the RSV

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is a key initiative that will help deliver Cardiff's ambitious vision for the city by ensuring the success of large infrastructure projects is married with social prosperity at the local level" (Cardiff County Council 2007c).

Although the initiative is described as 'regional' it is actually sub-regional relative to the regionalism developed through the WSP because it is a partnership between CC and the neighbouring authorities of Rhondda-Cynon-Taf, the Vale of Glamorgan, and Caerphilly²⁹.

The most important element of the RSV relates to the development of St David's 2. St David's 2 is a £675m investment in Cardiff's city centre which includes new stores, cafes, bars, restaurants, luxury residential apartments, new public spaces and a new central library (St Davids 2 2007). In the words of CC, not only is the development intended to alter the city's skyline but it will also 'contribute to the competitive repositioning of Cardiff at the European level, and significantly enhance the quality of life in South East Wales' (Cardiff County Council 2007d, 3). The Cardiff Council-led RSV actively engaged with the St David's Partnership (Land Securities and Capital Shopping Centres) to ensure that people within Cardiff and the surrounding communities both possessed the right skills and had access to the construction jobs required to build the development. Following its completion in 2009 the RSV has also played a role in ensuring that there is a sufficient workforce to fill the 4,000 anticipated retail jobs. As CC states:

The St. David's 2 development is a fitting reflection of the city region model in practice; a first class project only deliverable in the region's metropolitan centre strengthens Cardiff's position as an international destination capital and affords wider benefits to the south east Wales region (Cardiff County Council 2007d, 3).

Interestingly, within the political space of South East Wales, Cardiff was unable to imprint its strategic objectives of delivering a competitive city-region at the scale of the 10 local authorities. However, the quote below shows that by rescaling its territorial

²⁹ Other non local authority partners Jobcentre Plus, Careers Wales and Cardiff Young People's Partnership as well as representatives from all the training provider sectors including Higher and Further Education, the 14-19 Learning Network and private sector training providers.

ambitions down to relations with immediate neighbouring authorities it has been far more successful. As CC writes in relation to the RSV (Cardiff County Council 2007c):

Though conflicting agendas proved difficult to reconcile, by continuing to assert its overarching aims, Cardiff is managing to attune partners to an increasingly common action plan. Whilst this involves a flexible approach to various methods of working, it is by pronouncing in an objective manner on the most effective path that Cardiff successfully steered the Partnership towards a consistent *modus operandi*.

The RSV example demonstrates CC's territorial and conceptual rescaling of the city-region concept in response to the WAG's balanced approach which marginalised CC's capability to play an influential role within this arena. This highlights the importance of political relationships within the evolution of city-regionalism and the danger of relying on historical administrative regions rather than more fluid functional economic geographies to achieve strategic, cross-boundary objectives. In short, it shows there is nothing inherently 'natural' about city-regionalism and the particular form that it can take.

The second institutional example of the rescaling of city-regionalism around the capital through efforts related to securing the city's social reproduction is demonstrated by *Prosiect Gwyrdd* (Project Green). Driven by the sustainability agenda, the risk of fines of up to £10m per annum³⁰ stemming from EU landfill targets, and the Making the Connections agenda in Wales, *Prosiect Gwyrdd* was developed by the four coastal local authorities in South East Wales (Cardiff, the Vale of Glamorgan, Newport, and Monmouthshire) - and more recently joined by Caerphilly - to deal with residual waste. While the South East Wales Regional Waste Plan provides a land use framework to assist in the development of an integrated network of facilities to treat and dispose of waste in the area, there was also recognition that a residual waste treatment facility would be necessary if the 2013 Landfill Allowance is to be met (Cardiff County Council 2006a).

³⁰ Paid jointly by the four local authorities participating in *Prosiect Gwyrdd* based on estimated residual waste growth and penalties of £200/tonne (Cardiff County Council 2007e).

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A key element underlining the partnership was the ‘proximity principle’, that is, waste should be dealt with as close to source as possible (Cardiff County Council 2006a). As mentioned in Chapter 5, one of the most significant issues which emerge from a wider regional approach to waste are the political problems associated with the transfer of waste from one area to another (Morgan 2006c). Although nationally three regional waste groups have been established to strategically manage this sector, executive responsibility has remained with local authorities and no regional implementation mechanism had ever been established, thereby endangering the development of treatment options which would mitigate fines³¹.

In this context the development and significance of *Prosiect Gwrydd* as part of the city-region debate can be interpreted in two inter-related ways. The first is as a pragmatic response to the inability of the regionalism promoted by the WAG to move beyond the rhetorical level towards the practical, where changes are felt in the everyday lives of residents. A key impediment to this is the tautological nature of the WAG’s interpretation of city-regionalism in South East Wales in which the role played by politics is unaccounted for and appropriate delivery mechanisms not in place, hence threatenig the social reproduction of Cardiff and its surrounding areas. The second is to view the development of *Prosiect Gwrydd* as the strategic positioning of Cardiff and its neighbours as a pre-emptive response to future government reform. If future reforms are enacted then it can reasonably be expected that pre-existing partnerships could prove an important material consideration as decision-makers decide the form and content of future governing entities. Speaking in relation to *Prosiect Gwrydd*, one local authority officer stated that:

we’re beginning to wake up to the whole business of working together, the whole business of regional mechanisms to actually deal with some of these big environmental issues. But there’s a long way to go but at some stage the Assembly is probably going to say well, perhaps we need to re-organise local government again, dare I say it, and try to have bigger authorities rather than these 22 smaller authorities throughout Wales which

³¹ It should also be pointed out that it is not clear whether an implementation mechanism has been established and agreed by the partners within *Prosiect Gwrydd* nor how the location of any future treatment facilities will be established and enforced (if necessary).

probably can't deal properly with some of these strategic issues. So, it wouldn't surprise me in the next 5, 10 years that things like strategic transport, things like strategic land use, waste, education, social services, might well go over to some larger regional bodies whereas the what I call the day-to-day stuff, the stuff I mentioned earlier might still be carried out by smaller unitary authorities (Local Authority J, personal communication, 30 November 2007).

Prosiect Gwrydd usefully highlights several aspects of the city-region debate in South East Wales which serve to underline the complex, contested, and messy process of rescaling. Higher tiers of government are seen to play key roles in promoting local level service rescaling through imperatives developed by the EU in the form of fines and by the WAG through the MTC agenda (backed by the implicit threat of local government reorganisation). However, the WAG also played an instrumental role in developing an ineffectual regional model of waste governance, thereby creating a need for other actors to develop bottom-up solutions. Finally, it also points to an example of the manner in which CC and the surrounding local authorities have embraced a sub-regional approach to managing a statutory service area which is critical to social reproduction.

6.3.3 Securing legitimacy

The literature identified that an important component in the narrative construction of city-regionalism is the processes through which 'actors engage in a discursive strategy to make their scalar political project seem as natural, normal and legitimate as possible' (Gonzalez 2006, 838). The WAG relied on establishing a dominant discursive frame through extensive consultations and the incorporation of existing regionally-based groupings of public sector professionals as part of the WSP process while attempting to redefine the city-region concept to better suit stakeholders across the wider South East Wales area. However, the empirical evidence collected by this research suggests that CC adopted a very different approach. While not arguing that power is causally related to knowledge (see Gottweis 2003), the approach taken by CC relied on presenting and legitimising competitive city-regionalism by reference to knowledge-based arguments

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emerging from specially commissioned reports and by strategically aligning itself with actors within the UK and continental Europe which shared similar worldviews.

Just as academics and specialty consultants played an important role in promoting and legitimising a 'regional development discourse' (Boland 2007, 2019; see also Lagendijk and Cornford 2000), the concept of the city-region has received similar treatment. This comprises numerous 'research projects, books, articles, seminars and conferences on cities and city-regions' and 'a flurry of policy documents from the UK government, regional agencies and local stakeholders all embracing the same ideas' (Boland 2007, 2019). The overarching claim these publications and events seek to make is that cities are now driving regional and national economic growth and that successful regions must have competitive cities at their core. To ensure the existence of internationally competitive city-regions the drivers of economic competitiveness must be improved. According to Parkinson et al (2004) these drivers are the knowledge economy and related industries and include economic diversity, skills, connectivity, innovation, quality of life and institutional capacity. While the theoretical basis for these claims has been questioned, they have nevertheless played an active role in the contestation of the city-regional politics of South East Wales. CC has employed various academic experts and specialist consultants to help create and legitimise their city-regional ambitions. Within the narrative political arena of city-regionalism this expert evidence has been used by CC in three key interconnected ways: to validate the city's growth agenda; to frame city-regionalism by legitimising a policy emphasis on competitiveness and the knowledge economy; and as an evidence-base in the narrative interplay between themselves and the WAG.

The WSP failed to clarify the future role of Cardiff and partially in response to this gap, CC employed specialist academics to help validate the city's growth agenda. While Cambridge Economics were commissioned to undertake research to inform the city's economic development strategy, two further reports commissioned in 2005/6 provided the city with a more robust evidence base legitimising the importance of city-regional

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competitiveness within a global knowledge economy and establishing the importance of cooperation between the city and its hinterland.

To review the competitiveness of the city in 2005, the Council commissioned a study by Professor Michael Parkinson from the European Institute of Urban Affairs. Parkinson's name carries weight because he is perceived as an important intellectual within the economic development field with national and international credibility (Boland 2007). By commissioning Parkinson, the work produced and any subsequent policy decisions which fall out of such a programme, assume greater legitimacy and a certain amount of authority.

This final report - *Cardiff – A Competitive European City?* (Parkinson and Karecha 2006) - benchmarked Cardiff against other leading cities in the UK and Europe and considered factors which may affect its future competitiveness. The report interestingly notes the role of politics and personal relationships within the city-regionalism and points to concerns that the Assembly was dominated by rural interests and did not adequately appreciate the economic contribution that Cardiff makes to the nation. However, the report makes clear the importance of Cardiff within the region observing that

Cardiff is crucial to the current and future economic success of the south-east Wales city region. But there have been historic tensions between different local authorities in the region and what contribution each does and should make and the benefits each should and does get (Parkinson and Karecha 2006, 56).

It then goes to the heart of the current city-regional politics within South East Wales stating:

There are important strategic decisions to be made about the location of investment and economic activity, skill levels and training, environmental and traffic management and questions to be explored about the ways in which they can be made in the best long-term interests of all parts of the region. There needs to be a mature political relationship between partners in the **sub-region** to ensure the right decisions are made in the interests of the future of the region (p. 56 emphasis added).

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This thinking reflects the evolution of the city-region concept from CC's perspective in terms of:

- a) the shifting emphasis from place marketing and raising the international profile of South East Wales to the governance and delivery of the common services which are intrinsic and essential to the functioning of any competitive city-region; and
- b) a rescaling of the city-region within South East Wales from a conceptualisation which incorporates all ten local authorities to one which focuses on a smaller sub-regional arrangement.

The aim of the second report, commissioned to Local Futures, was to 'analyse and benchmark [...] the area's progress towards a knowledge economy and explore [...] the role that the city-region agenda can play' (Ryan-Collins 2006, 1). An important function of this report was to help sell the benefits of city-regionalism to the wider spatial area. In this report the 'Cardiff city-region' is defined as the 10 local authorities of South East Wales, a scalar delineation that within the context of the knowledge economy leads to analysis further emphasising the importance of Cardiff as well as the knowledge-related skill deficiencies elsewhere in the region.³² Rather than suggesting that future policies should be geared towards enhancing the city as the main strength within the region the policy recommendations which emerge from the study more closely align with the balanced approach to regional development promoted by the WAG through the WSP. For example, the report suggests (2006, 4)

There is evidence that the knowledge economy of the city-region is dominated by Cardiff and so there is an urgent need to encourage knowledge-driven economic growth in other sub-regional urban centres and local hubs (in particular Newport) to avoid an over-concentration of activity in the capital;

It is through reports such as these that the city-region concept becomes associated with policy measures designed to tackle the different socio-economic problems within the

³² To clarify this point, while the strength of counter arguments to Cardiff being the focal point for development stems from the relatively small size of the capital city in relation to the rest of South East Wales, by reframing the characteristics of the region according to knowledge economy attributes the city once again becomes the dominant pole.

region through an emphasis on competitiveness and the knowledge economy. Indeed, the conciliatory suggestion for development outside of Cardiff can be interpreted an attempt on behalf of CC to address the link between inequality and the city-region concept. Previously there had been little to no explicit recognition of a dominant inequality discourse within the city-region narrative as developed by CC. However, the elevation of this concept by the WAG changed the terms of the debate and CC was forced to address this shift.

In addition to providing legitimacy to the notion of a competitive city-region and helping to realign the city's narrative, the use of expert opinion has also performed an important role supplying weight to a counter city-regional narrative which CC has deployed against the WAG. For example, a particular point of contention between CC and the WAG was the uncertainty over Cardiff's role within the region. Within WAVE the position is put forward that low earnings experienced in Wales were partially because no large urban area was found in the country, relative to the rest of the UK. At the time WAVE was published this viewpoint effectively undermined the competitive city-regional argument that CC was keen to promote. In response to this CC used Parkinson's research which they had commissioned to provide an evidence base to disprove the WAG's position. The Council's official response to WAVE states:

The Council also disagrees with the view of WAVE that the lack of a large city or urban area is an important factor underlying the lower earnings seen in Wales. Research undertaken by both Professor Michael Parkinson, the leading authoritative figure on city competitiveness, and Cardiff Research Centre demonstrates that Cardiff's economic performance is comparable to many of the UK "core cities". In particular, Parkinson's research revealed that when Cardiff is considered in terms of the local authority boundary in relation to other core cities it significantly out-performs a number of larger cities in terms of economic indicators (Cardiff County Council 2006c).

While the recognition of the underlying geographies of city-regionalism are found in WAVE, although not specifically referred to, this nevertheless indicated to CC that the WAG was warming to the concept. Evidence also suggests that it is through the formal consultation phases of public policy development that much of the stakeholder contesta-

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tion occurs and the interpretation of key concepts such as city-regions are determined.

As mentioned previously, and highlighted in an interview, the city-region

has been a slightly difficult debate because ummm, I mean, it especially came up with the debate when the consultation WAVE was out. Because it had the concept of the city-region in there [in all but name] and I think it partly had it in there so strongly because Rachel [Jones, Strategy and Partnership Manager at CC] bent the ear of Piers Bisson who was the civil servant who wrote it and it was in there for very good reasons (Local Authority D, personal communication, 9 November 2007).

Following WAVE, the subsequent inclusion of the city-region concept within the WSP suggests that the strategies adopted by CC were resulting in positive outcomes for the core city.

Nevertheless, even if a 'single networked city-region' did eventually emerge within South East Wales there still remained an overriding feeling within CC that the city was still at a major disadvantage with respect to cities in England, Scotland and the European continent where much more national support for city-regionalism was demonstrated (Morgan 2006c). In response to this CC also began opening up dialogues and forging links with more like-minded actors within Wales, UK Central Government and the European Commission.

Along with Newport and Swansea, CC formed the 3 Cities Initiative - an effort which has received little or no support from the national level and was not discussed at all during any stakeholder interviews. CC initiated contact with the ODPM in attempts to claim city-regional support and it has contacted Brussels through various channels in order to secure EU Structural Funding for the period 2007-2013. As the council states:

New Programmes for the period 2007-2013 are under development and the council is continuing to develop and feed into relevant position papers and lobbying strategies to ensure that key regional, national and European bodies are aware of Cardiff's position and concerns (Cardiff County Council 2005).

However, from a narrative perspective these actions by CC can also be explained by the need of the council to align itself with actors holding similar viewpoints on the concept of city-regions so that it is in a better position to contest alternative viewpoints within the

political space of South East Wales. CC's alignment with numerous organisations within the UK and Europe are linked to an attempt by the council to become the authoritative voice within the region on the city-region concept and subsequently to achieve the capacity to force the debate to its terms. The analysis of these activities highlights the utility of conceptualising city-regional governance as an activity that is both territorial and relational (see Morgan 2007; Bulkeley 2005).

The final aspect under consideration through which CC sought to establish legitimacy for city-regionalism within the political space of South East Wales was by aligning itself with domestic and international networks. Within these larger arenas that city-region concept more closely resembles the picture presented by critical academic work on the concept where the city-region concept is used as a spatial organising principle primarily promoted as the strategic scale most conducive to wealth generation (L Ward and Jonas 2004; O'Neill and McGuirk 2005; McGuirk 2007; Brenner 2003). The city-region scale as a category of practice (Moore 2008) within these networks links governance to territorial spaces defined by functional economic geographies³³.

As shown previously, the narrative shift and institutional re-positioning by CC reflected a malcontent with the strategic scale that WAG sought to coordinate city-regionalism in South East Wales and the Council's refined position more closely resembled the position stated above. Indeed, in comparison to the policy landscape in England and Scotland there was significantly less national level support for the type of city-regionalism CC was in favour of. Support for the city-region concept in Scotland and particularly in England was subsequently used by CC to support its own ambitions. While the commissioning of Parkinson's report on the competitiveness of Cardiff was partially motivated by the need to acquire legitimacy for the city-region concept within South East Wales, it was also a response to Cardiff (as a Welsh city) not being a member of the Core Cities Group. As such, Cardiff was not included in any comparative data this organisation

³³ See for example the letter written by the Secretary of State to the Chief Executive of Cheshire County Council in response to contested local government boundary reforms. This letter clearly identifies support for matching economic geographies with administrative boundaries (CLG 2007).

undertook relative to the performance of England and European cities. Parkinson's report subsequently filled this gap and the positive picture presented of Cardiff's competitiveness in relation to the English core cities showed that on economic grounds Cardiff belonged in this group and should therefore be treated similarly by the WAG. Responding to WAVE, CC officially stated that

[i]t is widely acknowledged that cities, like Cardiff, can play a critical role in driving forward the economy of their hinterlands or regions. This has been recognised by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, which has given considerable support to the work of the Core Cities Group in England (Cardiff County Council 2006c).

And as the following paragraph makes clear, CC were aware that the debate over the strategic governance of urban areas and their surroundings also represent a means through which financial resources may be drawn down from the national government. Again in the consultation to WAVE, CC informed the WAG that city-regional thinking,

has widely influenced UK regional economic policy through the work of the English 'Core Cities' and the [ODPM] and similarly in Scotland with the publication of 'Building Better Cities' by the Scottish Executive in 2003. This policy focus on city-regions has led to a greater emphasis on joint working between cities to ensure that strategic initiatives are implemented for the benefit of the wider region. In addition, significant resources have been allocated to the city-regions in both England (e.g. £100m for the 8 city-regions in the 'Northern Way') and Scotland (£90m for the 6 Scottish cities over 3 years) to bring forward proposals for achieving economies of scale and to deliver projects against jointly agreed priorities (Cardiff County Council 2006c).

In addition to aligning itself with similar-thinking actors within England, CC also established and formalised links with European cities. The impetus for this stemmed from the recognition that the European Commission had given to the role of cities in contributing to the competitiveness of the European economy (see: Cardiff County Council 2006c) and Council's ambitions can be summed up in the following summary of how the city intends to become 'world class':

A key mechanism for realising this vision is to ensure Cardiff's voice is heard by key Welsh, UK and European decision makers through utilising international networks and strengthening how the city is perceived on a regional, national, European and international stage...The Council has been pro-active in establishing a number of new alliances with key organisations and this has resulted in the city increasing both its intelligence

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regarding the international competitiveness of Cardiff but also importantly, the city's influence amongst policy makers and international institutions (Cardiff County Council 2007f).

As part of this strategic approach CC became a member within the Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities³⁴. During its two years with Presidency of the CAAC (2005-2007) Cardiff played an important role in the negotiation of the Bristol Accord, which 'acknowledged the role of cities in delivering European Union economic development objectives; and also provided a strong link to the European Commission in negotiations around the future of European cohesion policy' (Cardiff County Council 2007f, 6-7). CC was also a member of Cities of the Isles (COTI) Partnership which formally links the cities of Belfast, Dublin, Liverpool, Cardiff, Glasgow and Edinburgh. A primary of this partnership was to

promote the role of cities in developing competitive economies and to raise the profile of the UK core cities with government and decision makers outside of the English Core Cities Network (Cardiff County Council 2007f).

Finally, the Council has also participated with Seville and other UK and Spanish cities in a British Council project to explore *The City of the Future* where the emphasis was on issues and best practice relating to city and regional governance and the knowledge economy.

While it is not possible to determine the overall effectiveness of these new domestic and international partnerships, it is clear that CC's participation within them represents part of a coherent strategy to build credibility for the Council's ambitions within South East Wales and Wales itself and to re-emphasise the 'city' within the city-region concept. This approach is in contrast to the approach adopted by the WAG to developing the city-region concept through an inclusive manner primarily involving key internal stakeholders.

³⁴ This organisation was established in 2000 and viewed itself as 'a voice for cities in Europe' (Coventry County Council 2005). In 2008 it included more than 40 cities and urban networks across the European Atlantic Arc.

6.4 Conclusion

It is unclear *why* some strategic scales are privileged over others yet there is an acceptance that privileging will occur (Allmendinger and Haughton 2009). In empirically tracing the entrance of the WAG into the city-region debate within South East Wales evidence is provided which shows both defining characteristics and processes through which a certain spatial scale has been privileged. Through the analysis of CC's response it is possible to see the reaction of an important yet marginalised actor within the debate and the material changes that unfolded as a result.

The WAG's entrance into the city-region debate within South East Wales dramatically changed the politics of scale around the concept. While recognition of the city-regionalism can be found within WAVE in all but name it was through the WSP that the greatest region-building effects can be identified as the national government finally began to address the 'urban concern'. The WAG-led approach of spatial planning provided a territorially significant political arena allowing actors to discursively contest for power within South East Wales. However, by scaling the city-region to include all 10 local authorities of South East Wales the WAG was able to constrain the capacity of the core cities of Cardiff and Newport to assert dominance over the agenda.

Within South East Wales the socio-economic and political context of the area provides an important influence on the interpretation and implementation of city-regionalism. By prioritising concerns over deprivation and inequality, rather than competitiveness within the city-region narrative, the WAG fundamentally shifts the agenda. The terminology used within the WSP signals a significant shift in the direction of the debate as the discourse of inequality and use of the network metaphor defines city-regionalism in South East Wales according to the 'convoy principle' rather than through a 'follow the leader' approach.

Two key techniques are identified through which the WAG is able to remove the main barriers impeding the implementation of its strategic ambitions. First, by creating sub-

areas to divide territorial space and re-assign identities, parochial politics are obviated to a certain degree. Second, by forcing local authorities to work together against the implied threat of local government reform the WAG is able to further institutionalise the city-regional scale.

To capture the authority required to develop its own region-building narrative the WAG embarked on an extensive consultation process which it maintained control over. Here the relative weakness of Cardiff and the South East Wales business community within the city-regional political arena as it has been territorially scaled is brought to light. By incorporating the organisations which organically emerged following the strategic policy vacuum left by the Conservative's local government reforms in 1996 the WAG was able to enhance its regional knowledge-base and decision-making capability while also providing the mechanisms through which its city-regional narrative could be formalised and delivered.

The dynamics between the emerging city-region / spatial planning agenda and the emerging modernisation agenda highlighted how competing state imperatives can be linked together in delivering key strategic objectives, regardless of whether these were conscious intentions from the onset. In particular, the MTC agenda, in combination with the WSP and the National Assembly's gradual accumulation of power, fused with the city-region debate by promoting local government cooperation against the spectre of local government reform. The modernisation and efficiencies imperatives provide a unique context through which both top-down and bottom-up agendas are provided opportunity to develop within the same area.

Cardiff Council's response to the entry of the national state and the WAG's re-crafting of the city-region narrative demonstrates the fluid, dynamic and evolutionary nature of spatial development concepts such as city-regionalism. In narrative terms a significant shift can be observed as the concept of the city-region is transformed from an abstract principle originally conceived as a marketing tool to internationally promote South East Wales, to a core spatial approach through which the Council aims to secure the city's

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social reproduction. This shift can be observed in the territorial rescaling of the city-region as CC begins to develop a clearer picture of the city-region as consisting of immediate local authority neighbours and travel-to-work areas rather than the historical 10 authorities within South East Wales (as developed by the WAG through the WSP). This approach finds material purchase through a sub-regional skills initiative and collaborative working over waste management – initiatives driven by Cardiff and facilitated by the MTC agenda.

The analysis of CC's activities over this period also highlights a significantly different approach to securing legitimacy for their sub-regional development agenda. Insights were drawn from MLG, discourse coalitions and work on the politics of scale to uncover how Cardiff sought to develop social support for the concept of the competitive city-region. This consisted of two key components.

First, the Council relied on presenting and legitimising its interpretation of city-regionalism by reference to knowledge-based arguments drawn from specially commissioned reports written by influential authors. Second, the Council sought to strategically align itself with a variety of actors within the UK and continental Europe. It is generally recognised that rescaling events prompt significant degrees of contestation. However, the evidence provided demonstrates the role played by specialist consultants not only in securing widespread support for certain ideas and policies but also within the informal contestation over different spatial policy narratives as they are emerging.

Second, the significant efforts by CC to establish international links with actors in Scotland, England and continental Europe can be explained as a response to the lack of domestic national support for the competitive city-region concept. This example of 'scale-jumping', whilst encouraged by a lack of support by the WAG, demonstrates how as a category of practice the city-region concept can be developed and governed through a multi-scalar approach to governance.

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Improved transport for all is central to making the Capital region work, and to the regeneration of Valleys communities. The upward trend in car usage points to increasing congestion across the Area if action is not taken. Measures to alleviate congestion and investment to tackle transport bottlenecks are important elements in the Area's competitiveness. Road building in general is not a sustainable solution to the pattern of traffic growth. The overall priority is to make better use of the Area's existing transport infrastructure, to deliver more sustainable access to jobs and services (WAG 2008a, 131).

7.1 Introduction

The two previous chapters analysed the processes through which city-regionalism was introduced, contested over and became institutionalised within the political and regulatory fabric of South East Wales. The purpose of this chapter is to connect these narrative and institutional aspects of rescaling processes to the materialisation of city-regionalism.

The relationship between socio-economic processes and the surrounding natural environment underlines cultural landscape theorising. The various ways these ideas have been operationalised is discussed in Chapter Two but to clarify, the importance of the concept for this study is how it directs attention towards two different elements inherent to the materialisation of the city-region narrative in South East Wales:

1. It focuses attention towards the role of the landscape in normalising, challenging and constituting social and cultural practices (Schein n.d.; Schein 1997). Within the present study this specifically refers to the role that the planning and delivery of transport infrastructure plays in defining the city-region and in countering any emergent opposition to the dominant narrative in dictating social changes.
2. It focuses our attention towards the social processes which respond to and produce particular landscapes. Within the present study this specifically encourages the research to re-engage with the rescaling of power to examine the specific institutional changes that unfold as the city-region narrative materialises.

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Additionally, two caveats must also be placed within this introduction. This approach does not attempt to claim that the investments within the transport network in South East Wales have occurred within a vacuum. As Schein (1997, 662) reminds us, “like ‘space’, the cultural landscape is ultimately implicated in the ongoing reproduction of social and cultural life.” It is well understood that there is a significant degree of ‘pathway dependency’ which characterises and constrains transport provision within South East Wales, much of it largely dependent on historical flows of raw materials. However, care is also taken to bracket current decisions as much as possible by linking the delivery of transport to specific pieces of evidence drawn from a multitude of sources during the research fieldwork. These have been appropriately signposted within this chapter.

The second caveat is that the approach does not attempt to suggest that the investments in transport infrastructure can be directly attributed towards the narratives and discourses operating only within South East Wales. While the evolution of certain cultural landscapes is interpreted as representing an output from the confluence of several sociospatial dimensions (Prytherch 2006; Schein 1997) – in particular scalar and networked processes – the production of the cultural landscape of transport in South East Wales can be intimately connected to the production of other cultural landscapes in other places (see Terkenli 2005).

This final point draws together an important component of this case study in that while focusing on the unique dynamics of single rescaling event, city-regionalism is nevertheless also connected to larger scale discourses such as globalisation, economic competitiveness, inequality, and sustainable development. In this sense the cultural landscape, as the materialisation of discourse (Schein 1997), provides the link between the previous two components of the region building process – narrative construction and institutionalisation - and the final component: materialisation.

As identified earlier, transportation provision plays an integral part in the materialisation any city-regional strategy (Morgan 2006a; Marshall 2007), so by focusing on this aspect of the cultural landscape several knowledge gaps are addressed. First, transport provision as collective consumption remains an under-researched aspect of city-regionalism

(L Ward and Jonas 2004). Second, adopting insights from narrative-based approaches to region-building (A Jones 2006; Hajer 1995; Paasi 2001), the politics of scale (K Jones 1997; Smith 1992a; Gonzalez 2006; Paasi 2004; Moore 2008), and the cultural landscape (Schein 1997; Prytherch 2006) allows a tangible connection to be made between the discursive positioning inherent to city-regionalism and the previously ambiguous material effects (Harding 2007a). Third, while the approach taken by this study was designed to illuminate social conflicts associated with the provision of strategic transport infrastructure as part of the rescaling process (see Cox 1993; Swyngedouw 1997; MacLeod 1999; Brenner 2004; Smith 1992b) in some senses a lack of conflict during these processes drew attention to, and led to reflection on, the use of the cultural landscape to mediate socio-political tensions (see Prytherch 2006; 2007).

This chapter is structured as follows. First the lack of social conflict that was anticipated with respect to the materialisation of the narrative as has been suggested by theory is reflected on. Following this, connections are made between the city-region narrative and the provision of transport by identifying the concepts of competitiveness with agglomeration and inequality with accessibility. From here the changes that have precipitated and characterised the changing institutional landscape of transport within South East Wales are discussed. Finally, the evolving cultural landscape illustrated by recent large scale investments in the strategic transport infrastructure of South East Wales are discussed in terms of their relationship to the narrative development of the city-region concept. The key pieces of infrastructure discussed are the Heads of the Valleys Road, the proposed M4 relief road, and investments in rail.

7.2 Exploring the absence of conflict

Numerous authors (Cox 1993; Swyngedouw 1997; MacLeod 1999; Brenner 2004; Smith 1992b) have pointed towards the social conflict involved in the rescaling of state space and in the general transformation of spatial relations. These tendencies were confirmed within the narrative construction and institutionalisation of the city-region concept in South East Wales as numerous stakeholders developed contradictory city-regional

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narratives from the ‘bottom-up’ prior to intervention by a national governing body which subsequently drove forward its favoured perspective (or ‘option’ as it was termed in the WSP). It was anticipated that these conflicts would intensify as the WAG’s city-region narrative was implemented materially because it was at this point that the underlying tensions and contradictions inherent to city-regionalism in South East Wales might come to the surface. For example, would the historical tensions between the wealthier urban coastal regions and the relatively impoverished Heads of the Valleys erupt as the two areas competed for limited public transport investment? Would a schism unfold between Cardiff and Newport as both looked to substantiate their own city-regional growth strategies? What role would the apparently contradictory policy aims of boosting territorial competitiveness and reducing intraregional inequality play in these struggles?

However, interviewees, policy documents and meeting minutes suggested a surprising degree of ‘non-conflict’ in this area. An indication as to the level of city-regional ‘harmony’ is shown in Box 7.1. These comments were provided during fieldwork interviews when the semi-structured discussions focused on the delivery of the city-region and potential conflicts.

Box 7-1: Interview quotes indicating a surprising degree of ‘non-conflict’ as the city-region agenda unfolds and becomes materialised in South East Wales.

Respondent (R): What this process does is call for maturity of the local and regional level as to what are priorities. Taking into account factors which are beyond their boundaries.

Interviewer (I): And is that maturity there?

R: I think it is

(Civil Servant C, personal communication, 28 November 2007).

R: I think there has been a significant step forward to try to break down some of the barriers that have existed between local authorities and between Cardiff and some of the some of the other parts of South East Wales. Cardiff’s relationship with Rhondda-Cynon-Taf has been transformed for example in a way that has been very very positive. So you know, the climate is much more conducive to collaboration between the city and the wider region (Local Authority I, personal communication, 5 November 2007).

R: I think we’re quite lucky because we’ve got room for this debate. If you talk of city-

regions, in England for me it's about governance issues. Mayors get things to work together. Whereas here [...] people see the benefit and they know where they want to go and it's about avoiding conflict and I think people sort of realising that they must pool their sovereignty in some instances (Civil Servant D, personal communication, 9 December 2007).

I: What [is Newport's] relationship like with Cardiff in terms of developing complementary...

R: It's good. Seriously, Cardiff is the capital city and we're not the capital city. The joke about joining the two together, you know what it would be called don't you?

I & R: Carport [laughs].

(Local Authority C, personal communication, 19 September 2007)

This lack of conflict was unexpected and suggests that the nature of contestation within processes or rescaling requires further consideration. Within the context of city-regionalism and scale, the work of Prytherch (2006) demonstrates that cultural landscapes can be produced so that they function as an ameliorating agent between competing social forces and narratives. However, when considered alongside the approach and various techniques adopted by the WAG to develop a city-region narrative for the Capital Network it becomes apparent that the process through which the cultural landscape assumes the capacity to perform this function is more complex than illustrated by Prytherch's case study of Valencia. This knowledge may help to explain why previous incarnations of the city-region concept have failed to transcend academic studies into the work of policy making. That is, previous attempts to develop city-regionalism failed to sufficiently consider the social histories and personal politics which underscore and constitute urban-periphery relations as well as the processes through which these may be overcome. In light of the internal contradictions which laced the WAG's city-region interpretation, it is argued here that an examination of the cultural landscape may also provide an indication of how difficult or 'wicked' (Williams 2007) are addressed. Therefore, the implementation of a city-regional transport strategy with minimal degrees of contestation may suggest that lessons have been learnt within, and can be taken from, the South East Wales case study.

The analysis presented below into the production of the cultural landscape of transportation thus provides insights into how the dominant narratives directing city-regionalism in South East Wales (i.e. inequality and competitiveness) collide, are struggled over and materialise.

7.3 The transport narratives of agglomeration and accessibility

To understand the connections between the rescaling of state space, narrative-based approaches to region building and the inscription of dominant discourses on the cultural landscape within a single case study it is first necessary to augment the discussion of these wider processes (as was done in previous chapters) with greater consideration for the context in which these events unfold. To provide this the following section first discusses in greater depth the connections between the city-region concept and the provision of transport by connecting the concepts of competitiveness with that of agglomeration, and inequality with that of accessibility. This discussion provides a better understanding of how policy agendas in different fields fuse together and effect the development of city-regional debates. Secondly, the following section examines in greater detail the rescaling of transport in Wales and the impacts these processes have on city-regional development.

7.3.1 Agglomeration and competitiveness

Within the transport sector the connection between the city-region agenda and territorial competitiveness emerges through the concept of agglomeration. In line with the rise of the city-region concept, agglomeration became an important and contested concept which has influenced transport policy making. Broadly, agglomeration refers to the wider economic benefits which accrue through the geographical concentration of people and businesses (Eddington 2006). Part of the concept's importance during the unfolding of the city-region agenda in South East Wales can be attributed to an emerging understanding which recognised that the larger agglomerations are, the greater the economic

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benefits become. In other words, for certain sectors of the economy there are “increasing returns to density” (D Graham 2005, 50). Therefore, a policy-making imperative becomes increasing the effective density of an area in order to maximise potential agglomeration economies and improve the overall economic performance through increased productivity (Webber and Athey 2007). The means through which these benefits are realised is primarily through strategic investments in the transport network. However, the benefits emerging from different investment choices offer different agglomeration benefits and the methodologies used to understand and compare the impacts of transport investments are highly complex.

Within an English context HM Treasury (HMT) and the Department for Transport (DfT) published *Transport's role in sustaining UK's Productivity and Competitiveness: The Case for Action* (Eddington 2006) in 2006. This study highlights the importance of agglomeration economies and has had a significant impact on transport policy debates and national transport objectives (e.g. Delivering a Sustainable Transport System - DaSTS). When this report was first published most media attention focused on the report's support for road pricing however, an underlying message contained within it strongly advocates the spatial targeting of funding towards city-regions. The report states (2006, 11) that ‘[l]ooking forward, transport's key role is likely to be in supporting the success of the UK's highly-productive urban areas in the global marketplace.’ Two key logics underpinning this shift include: i) an increasing acknowledgement that the economic impact of transport schemes has been undervalued, leading to poor targeting and prioritisation and chronic under-investment in transport and; ii) cities and their surrounding areas function as the ‘building blocks’ of the UK economy and therefore transport investments within these areas will have the greatest overall impact (Marshall 2007). The Eddington report reflected a growing consensus which recognised that the UK transport system was not addressing the nation's fundamental economic needs (see: CfIT 2006; Glaister 2004; D Graham 2005). These debates quickly dovetailed with the competitive city-region agenda.

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The English Core Cities enthusiastically welcomed Eddington's comments regarding the spatial targeting of transport investment into core urban regions and were quick to link the recommendations to broader governance issues. Here the city-region concept became the central organising principal underlining these arguments. Manchester City Council found that

Eddington does not focus the potential benefits of aligning transport with other policy powers. There is a clear need to ensure that any new strategic governance and revised partnership arrangements for delivery of transport outcomes are developed as part of a coherent approach to the wider strategic objectives of the Manchester City Region (Manchester City Council 2007, 5).

However, the Eddington report only carried weight officially within England because the responsibility for transport had been devolved to Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. Nevertheless, the role of the transport in contributing towards the economic competitiveness of England has been an integral discourse in the discursive construction and subsequent materialisation of city-regionalism within South East Wales.

The concept of agglomeration underpinned a core theme within the narrative development of the South East Wales 'Capital Network' and formed a central organising principal around which transport investments were to be decided. The overarching priority was presented as improving connectivity between the valleys and the coast and achieving better connectivity between Cardiff and the outside world (Morgan 2006a). The WSP (WAG 2008a, 142, 125) states that 'the city region needs to improve its international connectivity to attract new investment' while internally, 'the area will function as a networked city region [and] a fully integrated high quality transport system is necessary for this to happen.' In England, the concept of agglomeration was strongly associated with the prioritisation of public investment towards the most nationally significant competitive city-regions. This policy shift was underpinned by an extensive evidence-base and central government support. However, in South East Wales the WAG projected a remarkably ambiguous position over the role that agglomeration should play in the policy-making process of transport planning and provision. This

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ambiguity further fuelled political conflict with important repercussions for city-regionalism.

At a meeting of the BPC Andrew Davies AM reiterated that the city-region concept was intrinsic to the WSP and WAVE and that ‘transport, specifically, was a key issue for business with there being greater recognition of spatial awareness and integration of policy in Wales than the rest of the UK’ (BPC 2006). However, WAVE presented a confusing picture of how agglomeration objectives would be incorporated within a city-region framework. The report reads:

Research also identifies the lack of a large city or urban area as being an important factor underlying the lower earnings seen in Wales. Large cities and well-connected urban areas can act as powerful centres to drive economic growth. [however,] the policy responses are not straightforward as there is no easy way to increase economic mass and gain more from agglomeration effects (WAG 2005, 40).

The report then suggests that:

The consequences of agglomeration for policy making are not straightforward, since it is difficult to change economic mass in a positive direction in the short or medium term. Actions that will help, though, include investment in transport, which will help to bring communities together and create broader and more competitive markets. The greatest potential for generating agglomeration benefits probably exist in south east Wales around Cardiff, Newport, and the associated commuter hinterland, or more generally in the wider urbanised region of industrial south Wales which includes close to half of Wales’ population (WAG 2005, 40).

While the report accepts that it is difficult to maximise agglomeration benefits the ambiguity inherent to the statements above may also suggest that the WAG did not wish to promote an overly pro-urban agenda, such as found in the Eddington report. However, CC quickly recognised the implications of the Eddington report and sought to align existing city-regional politics with the evidence-rich concept of agglomeration. The agglomeration concept had important connotations for the interpretation of the city-region concept as promoted by the WAG because it undermined the structural coherence of a city-region framework based on all 10 local authorities of South East Wales. However, the WAG was not able to offer a competing evidence-based logic to counter

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the conclusions of the Eddington report. This is because at the time WAVE was published the WAG's transport infrastructure policy group that would eventually be charged with considering the relationship between agglomeration economies and transport investment had not yet been established; this would not occur until April 2006. Perhaps recognising the opportunity this presented, CC aggressively pursued the concept of agglomeration as an evidence-based justification for transportation investments structured around the competitive city-region model. Responding to a WAG consultation CC stated:

Research highlights agglomeration effects may be stimulated by appropriate investment in transport. Indicative estimates show that it is around city fringes where most gains can be made" (Cardiff County Council 2007g, 2).

A local authorities officer remarked on the utility of the agglomeration concept for promoting a city-region agenda more closely in tune with Cardiff's historical growth ambitions. He stated:

We use agglomeration and that's one of our key concepts [...] and I think the agglomeration argument is a strong one you know and if you do have interventions that spread money elsewhere again, I'm not sure as to the evidence base but I suspect just anecdotally, that it hasn't worked perhaps as well as it was intended and that you're always going to have the draw, it's a very strong draw as far as the coastal belt is concerned (Local Authority H, personal communication, 19 November 2007).

In addition to research on the concept of agglomeration and using it to inform policy making, CC incorporated the city's work on the concept within applications to draw down funding from the Department for Transport for Transport Innovation Funding (England). This was in full knowledge that Cardiff was ineligible as transport was a devolved competence of Wales. Although there was a very small chance of actually drawing down resources through this approach (and the bid was ultimately unsuccessful), the application process involved discussions over the concept of agglomeration and its utility to promoting the competitiveness of Cardiff amongst members of Sewta and within the WAG (Local Authority H, personal communication, 19 November 2007). According to the competitive city-region model funding decisions regarding transport should be targeted towards the key urban areas of South East Wales and around the city

fringes. However, there was serious concern over whether this would occur and as a senior officer from CC explains,

It's an interesting time to be asking the questions [about agglomeration]. I think if there was more funding available then I think that would be helpful but I think the funding is so scarce that it is going to be spread so thinly there so the biggest concern is that it really isn't going to be able to make the difference required (Local Authority H, personal communication, 19 November 2007).

The suggestion here is that pepper-potting investment throughout the South East Wales 'Capital Network' was not going to result in the realisation of agglomeration benefits. Such achievements could be made by using the competitive city-region model as the central organising principal around which decisions are made. However, as a WAG civil servant acknowledged, the Assembly has a tendency to 'refer to agglomeration and then deny it to some extent in Wales' (Civil Servant E, personal communication, 24 October 2007).

7.3.2 Accessibility and inequality

The concept of agglomeration as an important driver of the city-region debate within England challenged the WAG's interpretation of the concept because it undermined the coherence of a territorial policy framework which included all ten local authorities of South East Wales. This is not to say that regionally administered transport provision can not address more than one transport issue. However, the connection between transport and the city-region narrative suggests that the spatial metaphor was employed by the WAG in relation to this sector because of an underlining territorial integrity. CC's concern was that by stretching the concept of agglomeration throughout South East Wales the benefits of planning and providing transport according to such logic would be lost. While the WAG was unable to offer a comparative evidence base to counter the Eddington report and CC's associated arguments, it was able to deflect the power of these arguments by merging another important discourse within the transport field, that of 'accessibility', with their reconceptualised city-region concept. Just as the concept of agglomeration aligns well with the strategic objectives pursued through competitive city-regionalism, accessibility as a concept is strongly linked with the WAG's commitment to the alleviation of deprivation and inequality through city-regionalism in the South East

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Wales Capital Network. Chapter Six analysed how the WAG intentionally altered the city-region narrative to better fit the context of South East Wales in a response to socio-economic and associated political imperatives. This strategy subsequently allowed the WAG to maintain its dominant position with the city-regional politics of South East Wales as well as within discussions over transport provision.

As previously mentioned the WAG successfully integrated the discourse of inequality as part of its narrative-based approach to city-region building through promoting a balanced approach to development. Indeed, a commitment towards the reduction of intra-regional social inequality became a key driver in the design of a city-regional policy framework through the WSP. Here the Welsh approach to city-regionalism diverged radically from the English concern with economic growth and wealth accumulation. This shift in the South East Wales city-region narrative was paralleled by discussions in transport geography to an extent that arguably, had not yet been demonstrated by the English city-region debates.

Within transport geography the traditional context in which policies are deliberated has shifted away from primarily economic considerations which led to a 'predict-and-provide' pattern of road building towards the impacts of state intervention on a broad range of societal goals (Docherty, Shaw, and Gather 2004). Emerging from a broader rhetoric over social sustainability, the discourse of accessibility has led to a 'paradigmatic' (Hull 2008) change in transport planning and provision as the extent to which 'travel poverty' felt by some low-income groups exacerbates social exclusion (Lucas, Grosvenor, and Simpson 2001, 9). The general argument states that an inability to access transport further hinders the procurement of job opportunities, education and other social services and is ultimately cited as the underlying factor for higher than average rates of unemployment and lower wages in many areas (ibid). The importance of the accessibility concept is that, as Farrington (2007, 320) explains,

it permits closer understanding of the role that place, or location, plays as a causal factor in generating those patterns. Thus, policy designed to address poverty should not be referenced only to structural measures such as taxation or benefits, but also to measures that recognise and relate to constrained access, and ways of reducing constraints.

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According to this logic poverty is understood as both contributing towards, and as an outcome of, low levels of accessibility (Farrington 2007). These ideas were increasingly recognised within UK and Welsh public policy although their connection to the city-region debates was not yet readily observable.

The former Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) was among the first Central Government department to examine this specific issue, commissioning a study to look at the role of public transport in social exclusion. The report concluded that inadequate transport provision can be a fundamental, and potentially causal, factor in the exclusion of disadvantaged groups and communities within England (DETR 2000b). Following this, former Prime Minister Tony Blair requested the Social Exclusion Unit to investigate how the location of services and the quality of transport to those services was affected by, and reinforced, social exclusion (Social Exclusion Unit 2003). The report had scalar implications for the design and delivery of transport provision as it was realised that poor transport had ‘an important role to play in moving people from welfare to work, reducing health inequality, raising educational attainment and participation in post-16 education, crime reduction and promoting neighbourhood renewal’ (Lucas 2006, 804). The report’s findings subsequently contributed towards UK Central Government establishing a framework for accessibility planning to be delivered at the local authority level (ibid). This process was to be led by county transport officers working closely with land use planners and other agencies than can have an impact on accessibility, in the development and implementation of their 2006-2010 Local Transport Plans (LTPs) (Department for Transport 2004). The concept has been further embraced and extended in the preparation of and the third LTPs (LTP3).

The shifting objectives for transport planning and provision were also felt in Wales where transport is a devolved competency and the uneven landscape of accessibility fuelled political debate (Local Authority H, personal communication, 19 November 2007). As of 2004, 25% of households in Wales did not have a car including half of lone parents and two thirds of single pensioners (Winckler 2007). The percentage of working-age households without a car also varies considerably from roughly 26 per cent

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in Merthyr Tydfil and Blaenau Gwent to 10 per cent in Monmouthshire and Powys (ibid). The percentage of people with daily access to a car is lowest in the south Wales Valleys at 55 per cent; statistics compounded by a dissatisfaction rate of 80% of residents in this area who feel that local bus services do not meet the need for weekday travel (ibid). The WAG has been vocal in its commitment towards tackling social exclusion and the role that transport plays in addressing this issue began to feature heavily within transport policy, land use planning, and spatial planning.

Reflecting events in England, Wales' transport strategy, *One Wales: connecting the nation* (WAG 2006a), focused on the role of transport in delivering a wider policy agenda by theoretically integrating transport with spatial planning, economic development, education, health, social services, environment and tourism. One example of the broader social goals to which transport should contribute towards is so that

People of all ages are able to access education and training to increase their skills base, thereby contributing to reduced economic inactivity and social exclusion and helping raise opportunities in the labour market, particularly for the most disadvantaged groups (WAG 2006a, 35).

In the 2002 government document, *Planning Policy Wales* (WAG 2002), the WAG committed to extend choice in transport and secure accessibility through integration between transport planning, policies for education, health, social inclusion and wealth creation. The delivery of this objective was to be achieved through Local Transport Plans, Unitary Development Plans, and the promotion of public transport by local authorities (Winckler 2007). The WSP (WAG 2004a; 2008a) also recognised the relationship between social inclusion and access to essential facilities and services, suggesting that the careful planning and provision of transport links contributed towards sustainable communities.

An effective transport network acts as the lynchpin of any city-region strategy however, the two primary discourses influencing the planning and provision of this sector present significant policy conflicts within this framework. Strongly influenced by the discourse of agglomeration and the bottom-up competitive city-region logic, the Eddington report provides clearer policy guidance on how public investment in transport should be

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spatially targeted. However, in South East Wales the WAG had secured the hegemonic status of its reconceptualised city-region narrative and altered the traditional, competitive interpretation to more appropriately fit the socio-political context with an emphasis towards balanced growth and thus accessibility. With differing levels of prosperity between the M4 corridor and the deprived upper valleys areas (not to mention somewhat forgotten, in-between communities such as Barry) the perspective in which transport investments are debated confirms Docherty et al's (2004, 261) observation that 'the traditional political balancing act of economic efficiency versus social equity [is] reasserting itself in the transport policy arena.' In Wales, the dominance of the WAG's city-region narrative reflects this position however the question remains, to what extent has the rhetorical conflict actually influenced people's everyday lives? Or in other words, is it possible to observe the materialisation of the city-region narrative within the cultural landscape of transport? Following an examination of the rescaling of transport planning and provision, the remainder of this chapter examines recent government investments in the transport network in order to answer the question posed above.

7.4 Rescaling transport provision in South East Wales

Predominantly the process of UK devolution is conceptualised as the transfer of power down from Central Government to the newly created bodies of the Welsh and Northern Irish Assemblies and the Scottish Parliament. However, with respect to the responsibility for transport planning and provision, devolution in Wales also prompted an internal displacement of power. While devolution gave the National Assembly slightly greater responsibilities for rail, the major change was that the creation of the Assembly gave Wales as a unified nation a much stronger political role to play within the realm of transport. This is because prior to devolution transport provision was determined by the interpretation of local government statutes by officers (Local Authority F, personal communication, 2 November 2011). Following devolution however, while executive power over transport remained with the local authorities the National Assembly was assigned the power to introduce statutory regional consortia to provide guidance and

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direct transport provision at the local level, thereby constraining policy options at this scale (Local Authority F, personal communication, 2 November 2011).

There have been two key institutional changes in relation to the provision of transport that have significantly altered the politics of transport within South East Wales. The first followed devolution and relates to the establishment and subsequent formalisation of SEWTA. The second was the shifting ministerial responsibility for transport within the WAG. These were both identified during the interview process as key contextual issues for understanding subsequent policy making and investment decisions.

7.4.1 The effects of devolution

Following the creation of the National Assembly for Wales, institutional changes within the transport sector continued to unfold. As spatial planning in Wales gained policy traction in line with the advancement of the WSP, the area known as the Capital Network increasingly developed its 'institutional thickness'. Assisting this process was the fact that the boundaries of the Capital Network aligned with those of SEWTA, thereby allowing this new scale to be operationalised as part of a means to a strategic end (see Jessop 2002a). While SEWTA's powers were legally constituted it was historically hampered in its ability to make politically contentious decisions. This is because SEWTA operated as a voluntary association of the 10 local authorities within South East Wales, each of which maintained executive responsibilities for transport. As one transport expert stated:

A lot of the executive power remains with the individual local authority so if they choose to drag their feet it makes it a lot more difficult for the other nine authorities to make them do what everybody's agreed. So from that point of view there are endemic problems in the structure (Local Authority F, personal communication, 2 November 2011).

However, during the early years of the 2000s, the financial structures through which transport schemes were paid for changed. Previously, transport grants were awarded from the WAG for individual schemes but this responsibility shifted to regional consortia such as SEWTA. This meant that priorities and investment decisions were jointly

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decided by the 10 local authorities of South East Wales.³⁵ While a lack of funding for large transport schemes characterised the decade leading up to the development of the WSP this had begun to change and as a senior Local Authority Officer observed:

I think everyone is beginning to recognise that there needs to be some spending on roads and I think the one big test we're going to get in SEWTA is where are those roads going to be and how the individual authorities can actually work together on a corporate basis (Local Authority J, personal communication, 30 November 2007).

It is within this context that the transport politics of space assumes such a prominent position within the city-region debates. And while the priorities were to be officially determined by the Wales Transport Strategy and delivered through The National Transport Plan (NTP) and Regional Transport Plans (RTP), the WSP sat above these and provided a critical influence on these documents (WAG 2009). Initially, the RTPs included more priorities than funds to deliver schemes (WAG officer), and did not contain a clear indication of either the financial resources available for delivering schemes or the priority schemes (Winckler 2007). This situation had the potential to exasperate the importance of scalar conflict. It is partially because of the paucity of funds and the institutional set up of SEWTA that the construction of the city-region narrative assumed such importance within South East Wales. This is because if one interpretation became accepted as the overarching principal through which investment was allocated then some parts of South East Wales would receive little or no investment – or in other words, the situation could create ‘winners’ and ‘losers’.

It is through this examination of the institutional changes at the regional level that the power dynamics between the individual local authorities becomes clear. In one sense the regionalisation of transport policy making eroded the power of the local authorities

³⁵ It is also important to note that prior to the current research there had been little to no new investment in terms of transport grants within Wales. While there had been individual schemes funded by the EU, most of the investment into strategic transport infrastructure had been spent finishing existing schemes such as the Porth bypass. It was suggested during interviews that because of this lack of investment the WSP was very important in terms of deciding the nature and location of future transport investments. This context adds credibility to the link that is argued to exist between the narrative development of the Capital Network and the cultural landscape of transport within South East Wales.

within the scale represented by their administrative boundaries. As one WAG civil servant stated:

I think when the local authorities really begin to realise that we're channelling the money through the regional consortia, that the regional consortia are setting the priorities...Some of the local authorities, that may not chime in with their priorities...but whether the people back in the local authority really realise that in effect some of their power has been taken away, you know, or pooled in a central body, I don't know yet (Civil Servant A, personal communication, 14 November 2007).

While it is true that some of the local authority's power will be taken away through this arrangement, the quote above does not reveal the whole story. What is missing is the recognition that while local authorities stood to lose some sovereignty over their own territory they were also gaining the ability to influence transport investment within other parts of South East Wales. Therefore, governance at the regional or city-regional scale becomes the mechanism through which areas of collective consumption can be strategically managed and certain agendas can be advanced.

7.4.2 The effects of shifting ministerial responsibilities

The second key institutional transformation which unfolded as both spatial planning and the city-regional narrative advanced was the departmental and ministerial responsibility for transportation within WAG. Following devolution the responsibility for transport at the national level in Wales was with the Environment, Planning and Transport Department led by Minister Sue Essex. However, following a cabinet reshuffle in May 2003, and led by First Minister Rhodri Morgan, transport responsibilities were merged with economic development to become the Department for Economy and Transport. This was first led by Andrew Davies AM. This departmental shuffle led to a radical change in the perceived role of transport within Wales and has impacted the cultural landscape of transport. The alignment of transport with economic development meant that transport was seen much more as an enabler of physical and economic development. A Civil Servant for WAG said that

with transport as part of the economic development department, transport investment in infrastructure, transport infrastructure, is now much more

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seen in the round as an enabler of regeneration. Be that at the local level or the city level (Civil Servant C, personal communication, 28 November 2007).

The cabinet reshuffle described above gives a clear indication of the role that the national government envisaged for transport as it became first and foremost a means of securing economic competitiveness. As mentioned in Chapter 5, Andrew Davies was also the lead minister for the South East Wales WSP area group and the transfer of the transportation portfolio to his mandate began to impact that transport landscape of South East Wales as it is repositioned within a globally competitive knowledge economy. One WAG civil servant who witnessed the changes emerging from the portfolio shuffles astutely observed that

after the elections in 2003...transport went into economic development, separated from planning...I think it was quite an important change yeah...I think one of the things behind it, when Sue Essex was the Minister, she was kind of putting off those big decisions, like the new M4 [relief road south of Newport] for example, it was on hold. As soon as it came into being part of the economic development department that scheme was moved forward a bit because obviously planning doesn't like it because it goes across SSSIs and economic development like it because it will, I think its seen as essential to the congestion at the Brynglas tunnels with which there is no alternative (Civil Servant A, personal communication, 14 November 2007).

These concerns were also recognised by a member from Cardiff who noted that

the Assembly Government has transport and economic development without the environmental side of it and that can cause problems as well in that they don't necessarily think about transport in a sustainable way; they get the short-term visions of business rather than the long-term sustainability both financially and environmentally (Local Authority E, personal communication, 27 November 2007).

These two institutional changes are important for understanding how transport in South East Wales has been planned and delivered. The WSP aims to integrate different policy areas and in South East Wales the Capital Network's city-region framework aligns with the scale at which RTPs are developed, suggesting this area possesses a coherence which allows it to become an appropriate scale for strategic state intervention. The different priorities within the region prescribed by the diverse socio-economic contexts mean that the decision-making structure must be capable of reconciling the competing discourses

of agglomeration and accessibility. The feeling of many interview respondents was that if this was not achieved then the scarce financial resources for transport would result in a pepper-potting of investments throughout the area and the strategic ambitions set out by the WSP would not be achieved. The shifting ministerial responsibility for transport, from planning to economy, suggests that there would be an overarching emphasis towards the contribution that transport can make towards the goal of territorial competitiveness, rather than direct social imperatives. However, an overt economic emphasis was not dictated by the city-region narrative as developed as part of the WSP. The following investigation into the cultural landscape of transport reveals the extent to which the WAG's dominant city-region narrative has been materialised within South East Wales. Two important points are demonstrated by the following discussion. The first is that city-regionalism as a concept does not necessarily further a pro-growth agenda. The second is that the territorial scale at which the city-region narrative is materialised has implications for the achievement of contradictory policy goals such as territorial competitiveness and the alleviation of uneven development.

7.5 Materialising city-regionalism through investments in physical transport schemes

Within the processes of region-building several dominant discourses coalesce to constrain the policy-options of decision makers. These discourses underpin the development of city-regionalism as the narrative organising principal through which transportation and other policies are negotiated and subsequently substantiated.) This section builds on the concept of the cultural landscape as the lens to view the role of transport planning and provision (as elements of collective consumption) in implementing the conflict-ridden narrative of city-regionalism in South East Wales. Three developments are discussed: the proposed M4 relief road south of Newport; the expansion to the Heads of the Valleys road (the A465) to the northern extent of the South East Wales 'Capital Network'; and the re-establishment of the Vale of Glamorgan and Valleys passenger rail lines into Cardiff.

7.5.1 The proposed M4 relief road

With respect to the provision of transport, congestion was almost unanimously cited as a key ‘problem’ within South East Wales because it impeded the realisation of agglomeration economies. One WAG civil servant notes that the main problem within South East Wales,

is congestion on the M4 and particularly around the tunnels and that is causing issues around the main west-east so that’s all about accessibility to south Wales from Bristol and other parts and that goes right through because it’s a main transport link to the ports in west Wales (Civil Servant C, personal communication, 28 November 2007).

This situation presented problems for improving the external connectivity in South East Wales in order to attract new investment and was explicitly picked up on by CC as a hindrance to achieving the city’s strategic growth ambitions. Cllr Morgan, former executive member of Transport and Environment in Cardiff Council, announced that

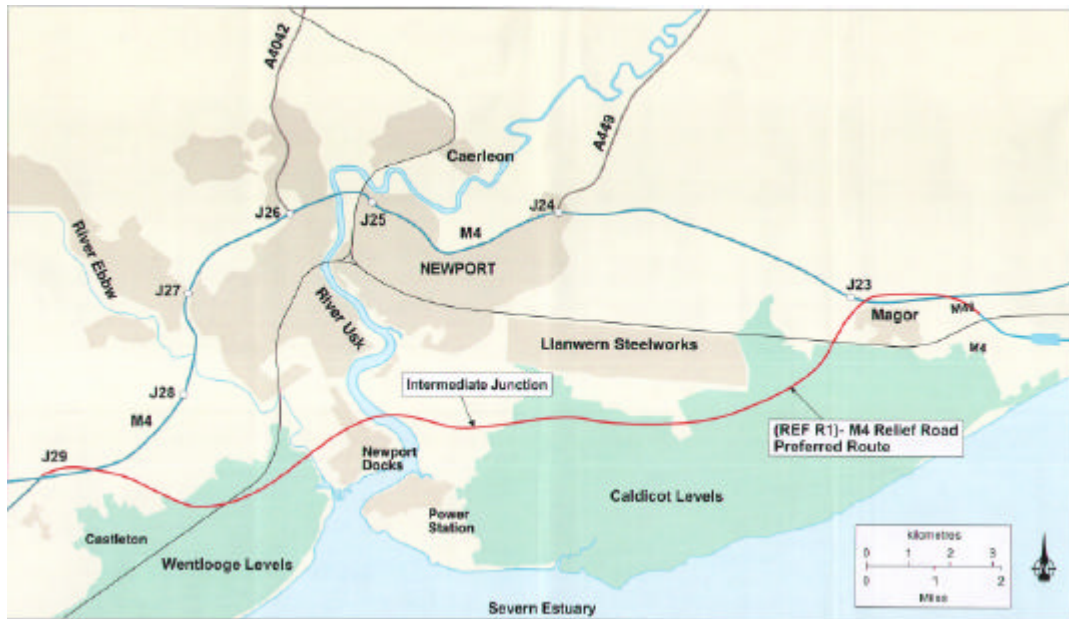
Cardiff has displayed strong economic growth over the last 10 to 15 years and is widely regarded as the driver of the South-East Wales economy [...] However, numerous studies have underlined that transport and connectivity remain the single greatest challenge to Cardiff’s competitiveness, and that the status quo cannot sustain the region’s economic growth and our aspirations to be a European capital (BBC News 2006a).

This statement almost mirrors the language found in the Parkinson report (2006, 3) which finds that,

Cardiff faces huge challenges in terms of accessibility[...]there are huge internal problems of mobility within Cardiff itself. The costs of moving 70,000 commuters into the city on a daily basis often by private transport are huge[...]Cardiff is also paying a price of economic success...it is in danger of choking on its own success...Although the Assembly makes some recognition of that fact, it is currently insufficient and it should provide greater support in future.

The business community in South East Wales largely agreed with the sentiments expressed above and noted that the ‘increasingly congested transport infrastructure acts as a major constraint on the growth and development of the Welsh economy’ (Cardiff Chamber of Commerce 2007). In response to this problem an alternative motorway to the M4 was proposed around the southern edge of Newport (Figure 7-1).

Figure 7-1: Proposed route of the new M4 relief road (WAG 2004b)



The WAG proposed building 14 miles of dual three-lane motorway around the south of Newport, linking with the existing M4 at Magor and Castleton. The main economic objective met by this project was to ‘deliver a more efficient transport capability for road traffic on the primary economic gateway to South Wales, to facilitate growth in regional and national prosperity’ (WAG 2004b). Despite a range of officially stated reasons for the new M4, the predominant driver was an understanding that ‘without it the South East Wales economy would simply grind to a halt’ (WAG civil servant).

The proposed M4 relief road inspired considerable local conflict, not related to arguments for improved accessibility but because consideration for the new motorway highlighted contradictions between the pursuit of economic growth and the WAG’s constitutional commitments towards sustainable development. The proposed route of the road would cross the Gwent Levels, an area of unspoiled wetlands that includes several Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and provide habitat for otters, birds, and rare plants and insects. Although ‘[p]rotecting environmentally sensitive areas, such as the Gwent Levels’ is stated as a goal within the WSP update (2008a, 137) many found it hard to imagine how building a road through this area would help to accomplish this.

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Plaid Cymru transport spokeswoman Janet Davies AM referred to the road as a short-term solution and stated that ‘Andrew Davies himself said only last year that evidence shows that building more and bigger roads eventually increases the usage of the roads.’ As mentioned previously, when responsibility for transport was packaged as a part of a ministerial duty which also comprised planning there was little discussion of the proposed M4 relief road. However, when transport became tied with economic development, the idea was progressed.

Although the business community in South East Wales does not represent a particularly powerful lobby, the agenda promoted by David Rosser, director of CBI Wales, clearly resonated more strongly with the WAG over transport policies following the cabinet reshuffle in 2003. In a 2007 editorial Rosser (2007) wrote,

Moving responsibility for transport to the economic development department within the Assembly has worked. Discussions are no longer dominated by walking to work and cycling strategies - I kid you not - but by what we need to make Wales' economy and society work better.

The shifting responsibility for transport within the WAG clearly had an important impact on planning of transport infrastructure in South East Wales despite an overarching commitment towards sustainable development. A VCS representative confessed that

since transport got in with economic development that [sustainable development] agenda has fallen back and is now far more focused on roads and his [David Rosser's] agenda than it was before. So you know, knowing he's very well connected, taken seriously by ministers, so I have every reason to believe that the transport move has been to his advantage, to his agenda and not ours (Voluntary and Community Sector A, 19 November 2007).

Despite environmental objections the dominance of the economic arguments for the M4 relief road demonstrated the power of the competitiveness discourse within South East Wales. Even SEWTA, who published an RTP widely acknowledged to be socially and environmentally progressive decided to back the new M4. The same VCS representative described that

when it comes to the political level decisions the SEWTA board decided in principal at the last meeting to back the new M4 at Newport and ummm, which runs completely counter to all their arguments on climate

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change, about the social destructiveness of roads and how this is not sustainable so despite the commitment being there, Justin Cooper, who is very committed to that, had to turn around and say 'it is inevitable that we will support this road' even though he recognises it runs completely counter to everything else (Voluntary and Community Sector A, 19 November 2007).

Despite the commitments towards sustainable development and the conflict that could reasonably be anticipated as the landscape of South East Wales was refashioned according to the dictum of international connectivity and economic competitiveness, there was surprisingly little conflict evidenced over the proposed M4 relief road. Primarily, it was expected that discussions over significant public expenditure within the coastal area of South East Wales would cause considerable unrest to residents and their political representatives in the northern valley areas. To help allay any such fears the project was rhetorically positioned as beneficial to all of South Wales. Graham Moore, chief executive of Newport Unlimited, emphasised that,

the M4 Relief Road is a piece of infrastructure that would benefit all of South Wales including Cardiff and Swansea. This is not just about Newport and the communities that surround it. Without this road, economies across the whole of South Wales are at risk. As well as being one of our greatest economic assets, the existing M4 is also our greatest threat (South Wales Argus 2004).

However, the same claims were made for the redevelopment of Cardiff Bay and its wider regional benefits. These were largely rejected by opponents at the time, particularly by the valleys communities. This reflects the statement from one senior local government official who said that, 'the idea that you sacrifice something for your ward to better another ward which is 30-40 miles away is a difficult political concept' (Morgan 2006c, 22). Rather, it was not rhetorical posturing that pacified any potential regional conflict over the development of a new M4 motorway in the coastal region, it was the fact that the cultural landscape of transport was being inscribed elsewhere in the Capital Network, particularly in the Heads of the Valleys areas.

7.5.2 Heads of the Valleys A465

Despite elements of an environmental ‘sustainability fix’ (While, Jonas, and Gibbs 2004) incorporated into the rhetoric surrounding the M4 relief road³⁶, it is only through looking at the cultural landscape as a whole in South East Wales that a more *socially* motivated ‘sustainability fix’ emerges. Transport investments targeted only towards the coastal region with the objective of further promoting economic growth would have certainly prompted intra-regional conflict. Although at the time it was unclear how the M4 relief road would be paid for (it was suggested that it would possibly become the second tolled road in the UK), substantial sums were spent in the development of the project. The symbolic effect of the investment would have signified an urban bias to public spending on transport infrastructure (and by extension WAG priorities) and would align well with a competitive city-regional agenda. As discussed previously, this would also run counter to the narrative development of South East Wales city-regionalism as led by the WAG.

However, while there was still debate over the utility of agglomeration as a concept that should be heavily drawn on to inform policy making within South East Wales, the city-region narrative within the Capital Network had been sewn together with threads from multiple discourses. In particular, the WAG had altered the narrative terms in which the city-region debate unfolded by prioritising the reduction of social inequality above the imperatives of international competitiveness. Within the realm of transport policy this manifests as a local commitment towards accessibility above that of agglomeration. It is within this context that the large public investments in the Heads of the Valleys Road to the north of the Capital Network are interpreted as a pivotal aspect of the materialisation of city-regionalism in South East Wales.

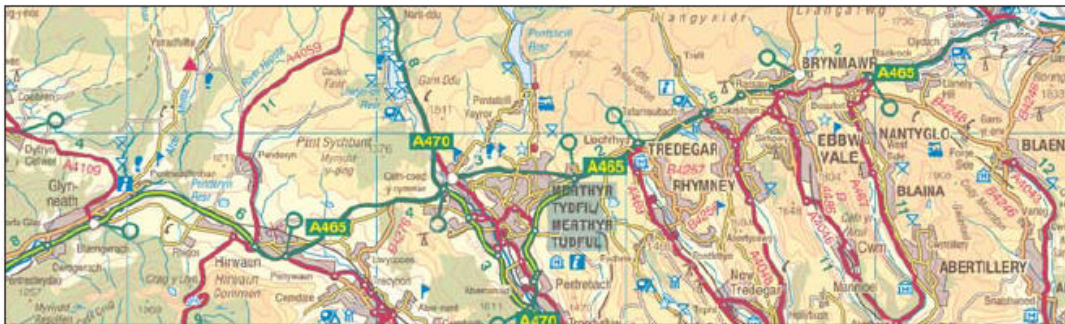
The first section of a scheme to dual the entire length of the A465 from Abergavenny to Hirwaun (see Figure 7-2) was opened in 2004 by the Minister for Economic Development and Transport, Andrew Davies. Physically the road helps to link South and West

³⁶ Although removed during editing it is interesting to note that one of the benefits of the proposed M4 relief road was that it in addition to a strategic element of the nation’s transport infrastructure it would also function as a defence against rising sea levels due to climate change. The irony that it would be contributing towards rising global temperatures was not lost on those involved in the debate.

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Wales to the Midlands and Northern England although official policy documents and media reports make it clear that it was much more than just a transport project. It was primarily about encouraging the regeneration of the Heads of the Valleys area in order to ‘reduce the economic imbalances of the area’ (BBC News 2004). This imperative was also confirmed through interviews with civil servants from the WAG and it is through this project that the integration of inequality within the South East Wales city-region narrative began to take material form. Here we begin to see how city-regionalism in South East Wales comes to mean something much different than *competitive* city-regionalism in England or Australia (cf: McGuirk 2007).

Figure 7-2: A465 Heads of the Valleys Road (Countryside Council for Wales 2003)



The WSP confirms that transport planning and provision within South East Wales is designed according to social as well as economic imperatives. The dualling of the A465 Heads of the Valleys road was to play an integral role as part of the Heads of the Valleys programme with

regeneration here link[ing] physical development with social and environmental action to ensure internal and external perceptions of communities change, enabling them to play a full part in the further development of the Capital region (WAG 2008a, 128).

A senior WAG civil servant confirms this logic stating that

At the same time we set up the HOV programme. So we put resources into it to ride on the back of the investment in transport to regenerate those towns in the areas and communities around it. So I think that's a good example of transport being an end in itself but also a means to a wider ends (Civil Servant C, personal communication, 28 November 2007).

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Despite the optimism surrounding the HOV programme amongst the upper Valleys communities and the WAG, elsewhere concern was expressed over the evidence-base supporting the decision to fund the road and the overall impact the investment would have. It is at this point that it becomes apparent that the WAG moved away from conventional thinking on agglomeration benefits and the role that this concept should play in developing evidence-based policy within this field. When questioned on the evidence base through which decisions in the Capital Network were being advanced a senior WAG civil servant with connections to the development of the WSP stated³⁷

Where I would challenge some of that is to say, must you always have evidence? How much of policy making by evidence is driving forward looking in the rear-view mirror? And how much is to say well, we think this area has this potential and that's what we think. It's sometimes a leap of faith as well and I'm not saying the settlement pattern is. I'm just saying that evidence must be characterised with vision and direction and pace in order to get there because a lot of time you can spend years looking for evidence and you'll only find contradictory evidence (Civil Servant D, personal communication, 9 December 2007).

Finally, a coastal zone local authority officer neatly summarises the concerns over the logic behind the HOV road, observing that

the HOV road was a typical political response to the declining economic area, we'll just put a road in and things will get better. It hasn't done a lot in terms of the economy up there (Local Authority C, personal communication, 19 September 2007).

Viewed as separate projects it is possible to observe that WAG's city-region narrative was materialising through public investment in the transport sector. The M4 relief road was driven by the powerful discourse of competitiveness and the threat of congestion to this imperative. Here environmental and social concerns became subservient to market imperatives. At the same time a very similar project (in terms of its physical nature) was backed by policy commitments and rhetorical posturing over the need to reduce socio-economic disparities within the region. Again, environmental concerns do not prominently figure in the debate but joining them in the 'backseat' of policy-making is the economic lobby. Viewed together as inter-related components within an emerging

³⁷ Care has been taken here not to take the quote below out of context.

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cultural landscape, the recent investments in transport not only reflected the balanced, 'convoy' approach to city-regionalism preferred by a cautious WAG, but they played an active role in diffusing the intra-regional tensions which have historically plagued cooperative development in South East Wales and would have hindered the WAG's ability to deliver on its city-region agenda for the area. As one local authority officer stated,

there's consideration as to how ok, the Wales Spatial Plan is developing around the city-region, but does that mean that there is still a heavy focus on the M4 corridor and not the HOV corridor? And I know that still is a slight worry for some people. But I know that the Heads of the Valleys programme has made some progress in mitigating those fears (Local Authority B, personal communication, 7 September 2007).

Nevertheless, following the conclusion of fieldwork for this study significant developments within the planning and provision of transport further demonstrated the socially contingent, rather than economically-deterministic, nature of city-region in South East Wales. First, the first National Transport Strategy (which implements the strategic aims of the Wales Transport Strategy) was released for consultation in July 2009, and was remarkable for what it did not include. Namely, it effectively cancelled proposals for the M4 relief road. Deputy First Minister Ieuan Wyn Jones explained that this decision was based on rising project costs which made the proposal economically unfeasible (Shipton 2009), a decision which 'caused fury among business leaders' (BBC News 2009a). Second, according to a story in the *Western Mail* (Barry 2009) a Ministerial Advisory Group (chaired by former Ford Executive Richard Parry-Jones) prepared a report which found that there is a need for 'greater clarity in the budgeting process, with a clear differentiation between transport expenditure for social and economic purposes – with priorities for projects within two separate strands of the transport budget.' The report found that in the previous financial year, £230 million went on social inclusion funding, which equates to more than two-thirds of the Assembly Government's revenue spending on transport. Reading between the lines it is clear that the Advisory Group found that funding transport projects without clearly distinguishing the purpose was leading to a

greater emphasis towards social goals at the expense of economic ones.³⁸ An editorial in the *Western Mail* which focused on the city-region concept noted that the WAG's 'current main road investment programme does not include a single project in the capital' (Barry 2010) and that 'the last major investment in the capital's road infrastructure was the Butetown Link Road in Cardiff Bay in the 1990s' (ibid), which is still yet to be completed.

7.5.3 Rail network improvements across South East Wales

The final aspect of the cultural landscape of transport to be examined relates to the WAG's aim of improving connectivity within the Capital Network. Public investments towards the rail network of South East Wales had been used to help achieve this aim and deliver the city-region agenda as laid out by the WAG in the WSP. Examining these rail investments through the perspective developed in this chapter provides more evidence of how the WAG has implemented a revised version of city-regionalism which reconciles commitments to promote the international competitiveness of Cardiff with a more balanced, socially-progressive form of development across South East Wales.

Despite some political resentment towards the economic success which Cardiff has experienced over the past two decades there is no denying Cardiff's dominant role within the South East Wales economy. This has been demonstrated by the 72,200 people who in 2005 commuted into the county daily to work, the majority coming from the surrounding sub-region – a trend that has steadily increased over the recent decades (Cardiff County Council 2006a). Without access to this labour force the city would not have been able to experience the levels of growth and economic success that it has and it is within this context that securing greater access to this workforce becomes an important cornerstone for Cardiff's growth ambitions. This has been recognised by the WAG and the strategic investments into the rail network of South East Wales can be interpreted to a certain extent as the substantiation of the competitive city-region narrative which emphasises growth-first imperatives. Indeed, the role played by the national state

³⁸ However, it should be noted that the WAG has correctly stated that many transport schemes have both economic and social benefits which would make it difficult to classify schemes as either economic or social.

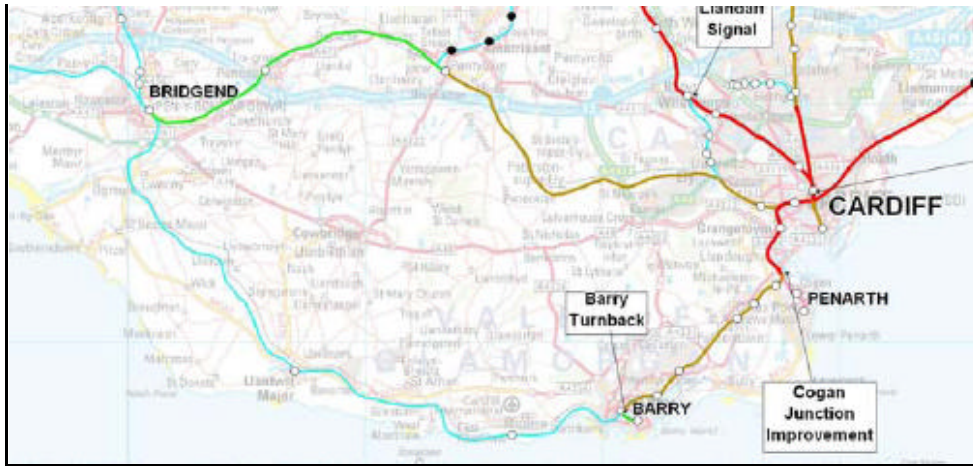
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in this context (as shown below) appears to confirm points raised by Brenner (2003) and reinforced elsewhere (see McGuirk 2007; O'Neill and McGuirk 2005) that city-regionalism, as evidenced in South East Wales, marks the structural and strategic expression of the ever changing forms of state spatiality, ultimately driven by the imperatives of territorial competitiveness. Nevertheless, the investments also remained consistent with the WAG's committed priority of tackling deprivation, inequality and social exclusion. Indeed, the WAG has taken the lead within Wales in 'developing economic infrastructure [like] transport systems' (WAG 2005, 14) not only because of economic imperatives but also the social benefits which emerge by 'enabling people from high unemployment, isolated communities to have better access to jobs and services' (ibid).

The Railways Act 2005 and Transport Wales (Act) (2005) granted the WAG increased powers to both influence and fund rail infrastructure. These new powers have played a critical role in the re-opening of two railway lines and further investments in existing services which have contributed towards Cardiff's dominant economic role within the region. The first was the re-opening of the Vale of Glamorgan railway line in 2005 which reinstated a rail passenger service between Bridgend and Cardiff via Barry (see Figure 7-3). This line also includes a new rail station at Roose which connects to Cardiff International Airport with a shuttle bus as well as a new station at Llantwit Major.

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Figure 7-3: The bottom solid line showing the recently re-opened Vale of Glamorgan line providing services between Bridgend and Cardiff via Barry (Jacobs Consultancy 2006)



The majority of the users of these services are workers based in Cardiff who have been driven out of the city in their search for affordable accommodation. As a local authority officer reflected,

Barry is growing because it forms part of the Cardiff sub-region because you know, the housing market drives these things. Cardiff has now become quite expensive for accommodation...[so] a large proportion of [these] people who can no longer afford Cardiff or Penarth or Dinas Powys are therefore moving out logically along the rail line as they are doing up the valleys and further to the east as well (Local Authority J, personal communication, 30 November 2007).

This quote underscores the inter-related sectoral aspects of strategic planning and the vital role that these services play in securing the social reproduction of Cardiff and the surrounding hinterland. In this sense the new Vale of Glamorgan rail line both facilitates the movement of labour and provides a workforce for the city, while also maintaining the attractiveness of the city-region as a place to live and work³⁹.

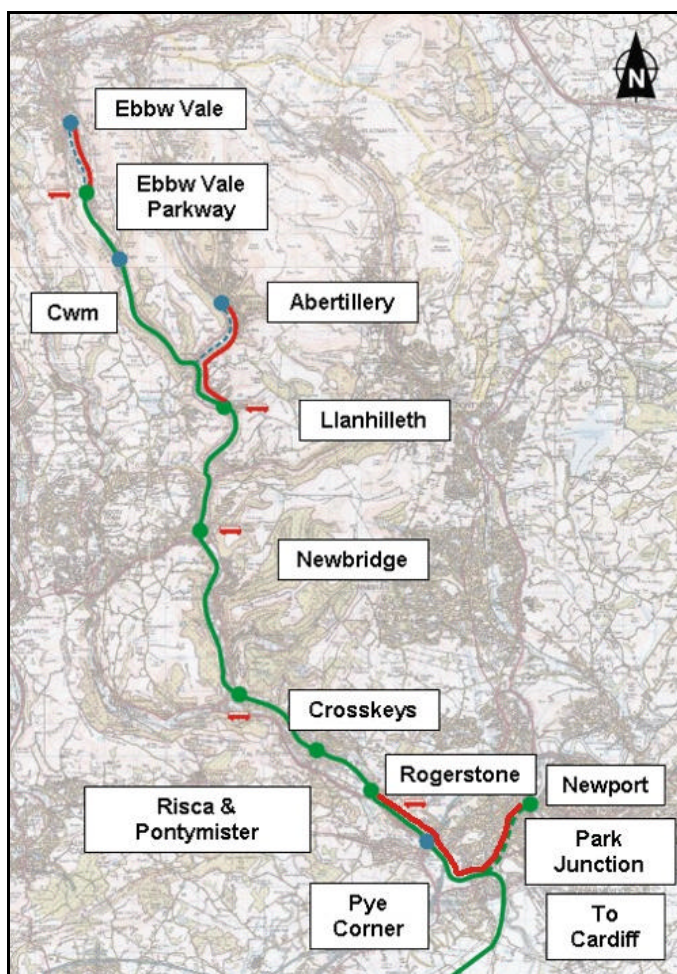
The second major rail re-opening was the Ebbw-Vale line direct to Cardiff in February, 2008 (see Figure 7-4) and this also highlights how certain investments can bridge

³⁹ That is, if commuters were pushed too far away from jobs through high house prices and poor transport links then they could be forced to look elsewhere to live and to work.

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imperatives of both accessibility and competitiveness. Transport expert Stuart Cole from the University of Glamorgan said that this scheme was primarily about regeneration: ‘It’s people’s opportunities to get jobs, people’s opportunities to take part in social events and people’s opportunities to improve their environment and lifestyle’ (BBC News 2006b). As the rail line’s website pointed out, and in line with the concept of the *Capital Network*, one of the primary impacts of the line is that it enables ‘access to skills training and increasing labour market interactions with Cardiff and the developing sub-region’ (Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council 2008a).

Figure 7-4: The recently re-opened Ebbw Vale rail line to Cardiff (Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council 2008b)



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Demonstrating the dominance of Cardiff vis-à-vis Newport within the city-region, the line initially provides direct services to Cardiff despite passing very close to Newport and forms part of the 5 Counties Regeneration Framework (Shared Intelligence 2002, 16). Indeed, a local authority officer in Newport states that,

above all else if you look at Newport's economy we've got 70,000 jobs in Newport and 40% are occupied by people who don't live in the city. Really the social geography as well as being along the M4 is north-south in terms of relationships between the 2 cities and their valleys hinterland. Eastern valleys look to Newport and western valleys look to Cardiff (Local Authority C, personal communication, 19 September 2007).

However, if the eastern valleys through which the rail line travels 'look to Newport' then it is apparent that the city has in fact been snubbed in favour of the capital. As Rhodri Clark (2008) from the Western Mail observed from the vantage point of the line's first service in 46 years, 'the train from Ebbw Vale entered the suburbs of Newport but turned right for Cardiff, shunning our third largest city for technical or political reasons, depending on who and what you believe.'

In addition to substantial increases in the number of services offered on all Valley rail lines, the third substantial change to the rail infrastructure has been a £13.2 million South Wales platform extension project (WAG 2008b). As part of this work 42 platforms are being extended to accommodate longer trains, easing capacity issues on the busiest services in South East Wales. The three routes on which platforms have been extended are the Rhymney to Cardiff and Penarth route⁴⁰, the Treherbert to Cardiff route⁴¹, and on the Maesteg to Cardiff and Gloucester route⁴².

⁴⁰ As part of a Sewta sub-regional Objective 1 bid with match funding in the form of Transport Grant from the WAG

⁴¹ Funded from Transport Grant from the WAG

⁴² Ibid.

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Figure 7-5: Recommended Sewta Rail Strategy 2018⁴³ (Jacobs Consultancy 2006)



These rail investments in South East Wales were designed to enhance the strategic position of Cardiff as the focal point within the region's economy and help to secure the city's social reproduction. Therefore, an argument could be made that city-regionalism in South East Wales was being facilitated 'from above', with the state strategically intervening to promote the city as the dominant economic zone within South East Wales. Crucially however, while the investments were designed to assist the achievement of Cardiff's growth ambitions, they have been located outside of the city itself and scattered throughout the region. They have also been promoted not as ways to help develop Cardiff's economy but as measures to assist in the regeneration of the communities in which they are located. In drafting the WSP, the WAG was aware that in placing investments outside of Cardiff the city could still be supported. As one WAG civil servant stated:

⁴³ Note that the rail line from Ebbw Vale has instead been directed towards Cardiff

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Sometimes investment needs to be outside that particular region in order to free up movements and that goes for roads as well or rail lines, so there's not necessarily a direct correlation between spatial area investment and spatial benefits (Civil Servant D, personal communication, 9 December 2007).

In short, investments in the rail infrastructure of South East Wales can be seen to serve several purposes including: i) supporting the growth of Cardiff by providing the city with a greater workforce; ii) supporting communities outside of the capital city by providing their inhabitants with improved access to Cardiff's job market; and iii) ameliorating intra-regional rivalries by spreading investments in multiple communities in a way across South East Wales. These purposes thus all contribute towards the materialisation and realisation of the Capital Network concept.

7.6 Further discussion

While this study's remit is primarily concerned with the processes through which rescaling occurs rather than the effects such events may have, there are some concerns which briefly need to be addressed as they relate to the territorial scale at which the WAG has strategically intervened. Some concern has been voiced by stakeholders that governing the planning and provision of transport across the 10 local authorities and in accordance to the discourses of competitiveness (agglomeration) and social exclusion (accessibility) has led to a pepper-potting of investment to appease various factions within South East Wales. That is, the WAG's city-region concept has been developed and implemented in response to political imperatives rather than a robust evidence base. There is some evidence which supports this position and therefore leads to questions over the WAG's ability to achieve its overall vision and strategic objectives for the area. This is discussed below and these scalar repercussions could have wider applicability given the continued support for the city-region concept across the rest of the UK.

There are two dominant rationales behind investments in the strategic transport network in South East Wales as prescribed by the 'Capital Network' metaphor. These are:

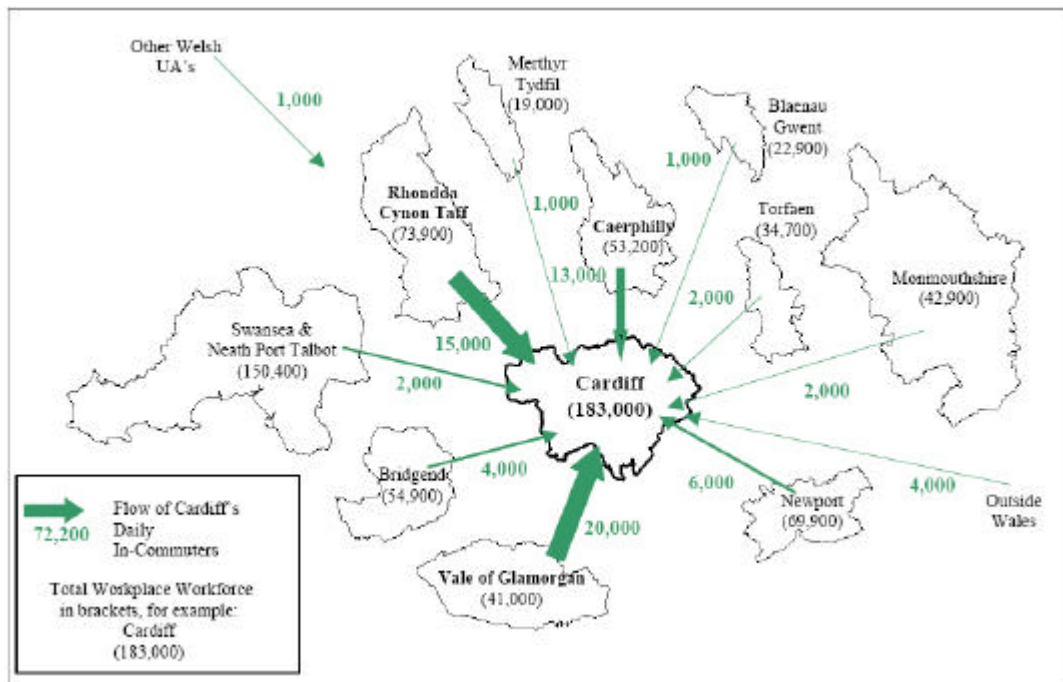
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1. To provide Cardiff with a skilled workforce to ensure it is able to meet its growth ambitions / ensuring that there is improved access to the Cardiff job market for those in surrounding communities; and
2. To enable regeneration in the hinterland communities on the back of rail and road investments. That is, the WAG hopes that by signalling support for an area will help attract additional investment to locate there.

However, as illustrated by Figure 7-6, the spatial targeting of investments across South East Wales as a whole does not align with the functional economic geography of the Cardiff city-region (as primarily defined as the travel-to-work area).

Figure 7.6 shows that while a high number of commuters enter Cardiff from the surrounding communities of the Vale of Glamorgan (20,000), Rhondda-Cynon-Taf (15,000), Caerphilly (13,000) and Newport (6,000), the proportion and absolute values are much lower for the upper valleys authorities of Merthyr Tydfil (1,000), Blaenau Gwent (1,000) and Torfaen (2,000).

Figure 7-6: Cardiff's daily in-commuters, 2005 (Cardiff Research Centre 2007)



Immediately, one can see that if Cardiff's social reproduction is to be secured it will rely significantly more on the labour pool from the adjacent local authorities rather than those at the heads of the valleys. Furthermore, as the WAG has stated, productivity benefits through agglomeration economies are greater where travel times are within the 30-40 minutes range (WAG 2006b). With no traffic it is 42 minutes from Merthyr Tydfil and 57 minutes from Ebbw Vale to Queen Street in Cardiff (www.googlemaps.co.uk). It is 56 minutes by train to Cardiff Queen Street station from Merthyr Tydfil and 1 hour and 9 minutes from Ebbw Vale Parkway (www.thetrainline.com). Crudely, these distances suggest that agglomeration benefits would be more successfully gained through investments in infrastructure much closer to the coastal zone.

However, according to the city-region narrative that was developed by the WAG for South East Wales, transport investments must also respond to the social imperative of inequality and accessibility. As mentioned previously, some have questioned whether such a large proportion of the transport budget in South East Wales should be designed primarily to meet social imperatives. While this position has emerged primarily from a concern that economic growth would not be adequately supported, there have also been

suggestions that allocating development throughout South East Wales according to these twin logics may jeopardise both. Specifically referring to this issue, a local authority officer stated that

funding the rail improvements is a major problem as is funding the revenue because you've got to have more revenue and that's the other thing that nobody has thought about. The integrated transport strategy in the networked city-region requires more revenue spending that we've had in the past on supporting the whole system and no government has even recognised the existence of a problem, let alone the solution. So the integrated transport system is based on something of a fallacy (Local Authority F, personal communication, 2 November 2011).

Evidence supports this statement. The majority of people living in the Heads of the Valleys who are in work do not commute outside the area so they will not significantly contribute towards the additional revenue required to maintain an extended rail network. Neither will they be contributing towards Cardiff's social reproduction. In terms of those individuals not currently in employment such a strategy requires 'asking the poorest and least motivated people, part of the population, to travel the furthest at the most cost and to work' (Local Authority K, personal communication, 14 September 2007). Therefore, an integrated transport strategy designed to reduce social inequalities across the Capital Network may not be able to achieve this goal because it lacks cohesion with the underlying social and functional geographies.

With price/cost functioning as an overarching constraint, transport investments within South East Wales are broadly determined according to their potential contribution towards either improving accessibility for areas experiencing poor service access and social inequality or else towards supporting the growth ambitions of Cardiff and the wider coastal zone. While the materialisation of the Capital Network can be linked to recent transport investments, the power of the city-region narrative can also be identified in areas which are not included in this story. Monmouthshire, for example, has not benefited from the city-region narrative. The County experiences the worst access to public transport within South East Wales and while the provision of half hourly rail services to Abergavenney and Chepstow achieve high cost/benefit ratios (used to assess possible transport schemes) they will not be provided for at least over a decade (SEWTA

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2008). The official reason why rail investments in Monmouthshire were not a priority was because the authority was not listed as a key destination according to the WSP (which provides a material consideration for the RTP).

However, an analysis rooted in the perspective provided by this study would argue that investments in Monmouthshire's strategic transport network were not granted because they did not coincide with the policy imperatives dictated by the constraints of the WAG's city-region agenda. In terms of the discourse of inequality, Monmouthshire is much wealthier than the Heads of the Valleys areas and other parts of South East Wales. The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2005 shows that none of Monmouthshire's areas fall in the 10 per cent most deprived areas in South East Wales and the majority of its areas are less deprived than the Wales average (WAG 2007c; Cardiff Research Centre 2006). In comparison to Wales, a higher proportion of working age people in Monmouth are in employment (78.5%) and a lower proportion are claiming Job-Seekers' Allowance (1.7%) (WAG 2007c). Additionally, as shown in figure 7.5, only 2,000 people in Monmouthshire commute to work in Cardiff. Minutes of a Sewta board meeting (2008) reveal that when an elected member from Monmouth raised the issue of rail services to his constituency he was told that they were not included in the RTP because 'Sewta's first priority was completion of the core parts of the network into Cardiff.'

This example confirms the power of the city-region narrative that has been developed for South East Wales. Strategic transport investments in Monmouthshire were excluded from the policy because they did not fit with the structuring discourses through which decisions were made. In other words, Monmouthshire does not suffer from social inequality and it does not significantly contribute towards the social reproduction of Cardiff so it did not receive transport funding. An academic gap within the city-region debates is the question of what this agenda means for the spaces in between city-regions i.e. those not included within these frameworks (see: SURF 2007). However, the exclusion of Monmouthshire as an investment priority within the Capital Network framework suggests that even those sites which are included within city-region catch-

ments based on historical institutional traditions still risk being left out if the investments they attempt to draw down to not align with the various discourses which are woven together in the narrative-based construction of specific city-regions.

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter connects the narrative development of city-regionalism in South East Wales to the materialisation of the agenda. To do so the concept of the cultural landscape was employed to provide insights into how the city-region narrative is materialised in the planning and provision of transport, thereby affecting the ongoing reproduction of social and cultural life in South East Wales. As a reminder, the concept of the cultural landscape was employed in this study to:

- highlight how the planning and delivery of transport infrastructure is both a material reflection of the city-region narrative in South East Wales and an instrumental component in the advancement of the agenda; and
- re-engage with the politics of scales to examine the specific institutional changes that have unfolded as the city-region narrative is materialised in order to provide empirical examples of these types of events

With respect to the first point, the chapter examined significant transport investments over the past 10 years in South East Wales including the proposed M4 relief road, improvements and dualling of the Heads of the Valleys A465, and various investments into the regional rail network. Within each case the arguments for these investments can be traced to the dominant discourses which coalesce to form the city-region narrative for South East Wales as developed through the WSP. However, a deeper examination - through field interviews and document review - of the background context and processes through which these schemes were planned and in some cases implemented suggests that they have been progressed for political reasons, rather than based on the rationale

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consideration of evidence and objectives.⁴⁴ To help explain why this may be the case we need to take a step back in the city-region process.

As part of the narrative construction of city-regionalism in South East Wales the WAG intentionally set out to re-define the city-region concept as a spatial metaphor for achieving economic, social and environmental aims within the 'Capital Network'. As discussed, these were more concerned with addressing social inequality rather than pursuing objectives linked to economic competitiveness. This is predominantly because the South East Wales city-region had been firmly established through multiple narrative perspectives which included all 10 local authorities. The result of this is that the relative socio-economic imperatives of the wider South East Wales region received greater support than those of the relatively affluent yet much smaller coastal zone. However, this also meant that there was that a lack of supportive data / studies that the WAG could draw on to support its approach. As part of the cultural landscape of transport this chapter has shown this to manifest as greater support for schemes aimed at improving accessibility at the expense of economic priorities. This includes a rejection of calls from stakeholders in the coastal zone to base transport decisions on principles of agglomeration. A point which is further evidenced through the high profile transport investments over the past 10 years which do not align well with the functional economic geography of Cardiff as the 'economic engine' of South East Wales. The result of this is significant transport investment throughout South East Wales including the dualling of the Heads of the Valleys road and the re-opening of various passenger rail lines into Cardiff. The key arguments directly linked to these investments have been the need to help regenerate the relatively deprived parts of the area and to provide the means for the residents of these areas to access jobs in the coastal zone and primarily in Cardiff. In these investments we witness the material definition of the city-region narrative adapted by the WAG to fit with the over-riding political imperatives of South East Wales.

Within this definition evidence has also been put forward demonstrating how these investments have also played a role in quelling potential opposition. As the WAG

⁴⁴ This latter expression is not intended to be pejorative.

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progressed its vision for city-regionalism in South East Wales, these investments can be linked to a number of techniques applied by the Government to reconstruct the ingrained and potentially damaging identity-based spatialities. Key elements of this approach included the creation of fuzzy borders and three new zones within South East Wales which were oriented on east-west axes, i.e. in contrast to the north-south axes that largely characterise the functional geography of the area. It is argued here that these new areas and fuzzy boundaries helped progress the implementation of the Capital Network concept by removing unhelpful localised barriers to co-operation. South East Wales has a strong history of parochial tension, much of it hinging on the specific location of public investment. As such, the investments in transport infrastructure over the past ten years can be viewed as the materialisation of a city-region narrative and spatial planning framework mindful the need to compromise. To the north (across the Heads of the Valleys) investments into the A465 have constructed a physical northern border to the region whilst also appeasing worries about disproportionate amounts of public funds flowing to the coastal zone. In the ‘connections corridor’ investments in the rail network provide a similar function while both correspond to the discourse of inequality. To the south the ambitious plans for the M4 relief road were ultimately abandoned but in their place a series of improvements to the existing road network are being examined while essential motorway maintenance proceeds. Viewed alongside the decision not to proceed with a proposed access road to Cardiff airport (BBC News 2009b) the upshot is that two multi-million pound road projects for the coastal zone which were argued on economic grounds were both abandoned. It would appear that the imperative for ‘the urban settlements and the waterfront [to be] well connected by a range sustainable transport options’ was seen as a greater priority than the needs of the city-region ‘to improve its international connectivity to attract new investment’ (WAG 2008a, 141-42).

It is through a combination of the inclusive, collaborative approach that the WAG took in developing the ‘idea’ of city-regionalism in South East Wales, the spatially-oriented techniques included within the fashioning of the ‘Capital Network’ and the balanced distribution of transport investment that the WAG has been able to progress the city-

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region concept in South East Wales with a minimal amount of social conflict amongst those deeply involved in the political process. This suggests that the cultural landscape, in association with a wider set of processes and events come together to perform an important conciliatory role by diffusing the scalar politics associated with the engagement of 'wicked' issues.

On the second point, the chapter provides empirical evidence on several key institutional changes that have affected the trajectory and processes of transport planning and provision in South East Wales. These may be drawn on to provide a useful evidence base against which other case studies can be compared. First, the process of devolution was described as an event which provided the Welsh Assembly much greater power over the planning of transport than had previously been the case. The organisations most affected by this shift were the local unitary authorities which had previously been entitled to unhypothecated spending over transport provision. With greater power over transport the WAG was able to introduce statutory regional consortia to provide guidance and direct transport at this level, thereby constraining policy options at this scale. However, the chapter also notes that while local authorities did lose some sovereignty over their own territories of jurisdiction, they were also provided with the ability to influence transport investment within other parts of South East Wales. Within this case study, governance at the regional or city-regional scale became the mechanism through which areas of collective consumption could be strategically managed and following the creation of such an arena, certain agendas could be advanced.

The second key institutional change that occurred as both spatial planning and the city-region narrative advanced was the departmental and ministerial responsibility for transport within the WAG. The evidence provided here suggests that by coupling transport with economic development rather than environment, the perceived role of transport within Wales was also altered. However, the city-region narrative as developed by the WAG did not contain an overt economic emphasis as developed through the WSP. The subsequent examination into key transport infrastructure investments pro-

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vides further evidence that city-regionalism as a concept does not necessarily promote a pro-growth agenda, contra the experience in other city-regions.

8. Analysis

8.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the key points of the empirical analysis presented in chapters five, six and seven. The summary reflects the main aim of the research, that is, to show how powerful city-regional narratives are materialised. It is structured according to the three dimensions of the analytical framework that was developed for this research but within each section consideration is given to the three sub-questions underpinning the main aim. As a reminder, these three sub-questions are:

- What is the role played by processes of narrative construction and institutionalisation in mediating the development of city-region agendas and subsequent material change?;
- How should research be designed to understand the relationships between the construction of narratives and material change?; and
- What evidence can be provided to increase our knowledge and understanding of these processes and events in South East Wales?

8.2 Narrative construction of the city-region concept

The development of city-regional narratives and their contestation within the political space of South East Wales were explored in Chapters Five and Six. These processes provide the empirical evidence required to inform the first part of the analytical framework. This evidence includes documentary sources providing insights into the defining and differentiating characteristics of several bottom-up and top-down narratives (characteristics which include the establishment of territorial boundaries and different functional rationales for intervention), the roles played by sub- and national-level actors, the influence on city-regional agendas by the socio-economic contexts of hinterland communities and the actors representing these interests, the shifting form of competing narratives, and the various sites in which contestation occurs. A single case study approach allows an in-depth exploration of the evidence collected and focusing on the processes through which city-regions are created (as opposed to using city-regions to explain social processes) allows the research to avoid reifying the concept of scale.

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Building on insights provided by the socio-spatial theorising of scale and networks, and meshing these with narrative-based approaches to policy analysis, the analysis teases out the messy and contested process through which competing region-building narratives emerge within a particular context as different social groups attempt to establish the legitimacy of their particular narrative as part of a politics of scale.

In contrast to accounts of city-regionalism which analyse the concept as a function of international capitalist logics and exchange relations (see L Ward and Jonas 2004), or interpret the emergence of city-regionalism as a top-down phenomenon implemented through changes devised at the national state level (see McGuirk 2007), the analysis of these processes suggests that within South East Wales the re-emergence of the city-region concept is best understood as a function of key actions driven by actors and organisations operating within and through sub-national as well as national scales of governance. In order to more fully explain the development of city-regions, attention is drawn towards a need to consider how several competing narratives can develop and compete for social support and acceptance within a single territorialised arena. This expands on previous empirical accounts of sub-national rescaling processes which chart the development of a single hegemonic narrative (see Gonzalez 2006; Prytherch 2006). It is argued that the role played by the national state is a key factor within these processes and depending on the nature of the intervention, the national state can either facilitate or hinder the development of city-regionalism within particular contexts. The analysis of the case of South East Wales suggests that a lack of national state engagement during the emergence of the city-region agenda presented an institutional and policy vacuum which the locally-led narratives attempted to fill.

The research identified an almost simultaneous ‘bottom-up’ emergence of three distinct city-region narratives within the political arena of South East Wales. Actors situated within the capital city of Cardiff and operating through the local administrative structures instigated the city-region debate in the early 1990s. Initially the city-region was territorially defined as comprising the ten local authorities of South East Wales, and was

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employed as an organising principle through which the area should be marketed to an international audience. Building on an improved understanding and promotion of the city-region concept within academic and policy circles in the rest of the UK, Western Europe and North America, CC began to develop an argument for a more sophisticated conceptualisation which suggested that wider regional economic success was contingent on the development of a wealthy capital city. This understanding of city-regionalism was associated with arguments developed as part of the new regionalism where the role of sub-national tiers of governance were promoted because *inter alia*: they were better at regulating their own space economies in order to remain competitive (Ohmae 1995); a widely held belief that sub-regional clusters of economic activity justified the decentralisation of economic policy-making (cf Porter 1990); regional institutions provided better support for activities associated with the knowledge economy and creative industries (A.J. Scott 1998; A.J Scott and Storper 2003); and this scale could best facilitate processes of economic growth that were enhanced through localised knowledge transfer (Cooke and Morgan 1998; Morgan 1997). By firmly positioning the city of Cardiff as the focal point for transforming South East Wales into an internationally recognized and successful knowledge economy, the narrative emanated by CC was defined in this research as competitive city-regionalism.

Demonstrating the potential for alternative city-regional perspectives to emerge from elsewhere within the political arena and challenge mainstream, urban-centric narratives, separate and distinct forms of city-regionalism emerged from actors situated outside of the capital city. For example, while territorially congruent with the vision emerging from Cardiff, the 'City of the Valleys' narrative progressed a polycentric interpretation of city-regionalism favouring a balanced and dispersed settlement pattern. A key feature of this narrative was how it eschewed the traditional understanding of the need to centralise the key supply-side features required to support the move towards a knowledge economy such as cultural facilities, sports stadia and commercial premises. Ultimately the 'City of the Valleys' failed to achieve hegemonic status however, an important effect from this narrative was that it helped weave the discourses of social justice and environmental sustainability into the discursive threads comprising the city-

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region debate. This analysis demonstrates the influential role played by competing narratives as they jostle for social support as they develop. Cardiff's promotion of competitive city-regionalism had failed to sufficiently engage with these issues and was therefore undermined by these direct challenges to the capital's narrative. For example, by positioning Cardiff as the focal point for development of the knowledge economy and public investment, the important issue of wealth transmission throughout the broader area of South East Wales was left to labour market mechanisms supported by housing and transport policies. The 'City of the Valleys' narrative challenged this in two key ways. It questioned the fairness of further direct support for the aspirations of the capital at the immediate expense of the relatively impoverished communities in the valleys and it considered the long-term sustainability of uni-directional flows of transport whereby workers travelled from the valleys to the jobs in the city. The importance of these contributions is underlined by a social context in which the relative size of Cardiff as the core city is small in comparison to the surrounding hinterland, and in light of the significant relative socio-economic inequalities between the capital city and its neighbouring local authorities. This offers important clues into how, on the basis of the case study of South East Wales, it can be argued that the greater academic attention should be given towards how the 'region' begins to define the 'city' with city-regional debates. This relationship has predominantly been described in terms of how the influence of the core city on the surrounding area.

The activities of the (Welsh) national state as part of the narrative construction of city-regionalism in South East Wales highlight the key role played by higher tier levels of government. The WAG's eventual (tentative) engagement with the existing bottom-up city-region debates provided the national body with a functional rationale for the engagement of the effective national state within matters concerning regional and sub-regional economic governance. However, as locally-based academics such as Morgan (2007b) and Boland (2007) have pointed out, this initial engagement, as projected through the country's new national economic development strategy, was more important for what it did not include. While *A Winning Wales* recognised the necessity of a clear framework in order to manage the spatial implications of economic growth, it did not

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include consideration for the city-region concept either as a means of driving forward development or for spreading prosperity. This omission was particularly surprising given the ongoing debate at the time over the development of the concept within South East Wales and the increasing focus provided to it by policy makers at both the sub-national and national level within England. It also underscored the failure of any of the bottom-up narratives to secure hegemonic status within the political space they were attempting to control.

The entrance of the WAG into the city-region debate via the national spatial planning process (the Wales Spatial Plan) was shown to have dramatically altered the politics of scale both in terms of the narrative construction of the concept and its institutionalisation. From the perspective of the narrative construction of the city-region in South East Wales, the WAG's intervention included two salient features. These features refer to the territorial and discursive components of the WAG's city-region narrative. First, the city-regional scale established by the WAG included all 10 local authorities of South East Wales. This was observed to hinder the ability of the core city of Cardiff (and to a certain extent Newport) to promote and embed its interpretation of competitive city-regionalism. Second, the WAG consciously re-designed the city-region narrative to provide a greater emphasis on the discourse of inequality over that of competitiveness. It is argued that the wide territorial context in which these discursive elements were applied helps to explain why the WAG was impelled to develop a narrative construction that was inconsistent with mainstream policy and academic orthodoxy. The analysis highlighted an important inter-connection between processes of state rescaling - viewed as the 'relativization of scales' (Collinge 1996; Jessop 2002b) or as a process of 'glocalisation' (Swyngedouw 1997) – and territorial aspects of state spatial restructuring. These inter-connections confirm Swyngedouw's (1997, 142) argument that 'scale redefinitions alter and express changes in the geometry of social power by strengthening the power and control of some while disempowering others.' These re-articulations of power were then explored as they operated in practice through the examination of how the WAG sought to achieve the strategic city-regional ambitions set out in the WSP.

The entry of the national Welsh state into the city-region debate and its subsequent reconceptualisation of the concept in a way which differed from mainstream competitive city-regionalism, prompted a strong response from CC (as the actor with the most to gain from a competitive city-region framework). An examination of key Council documents and strategies highlights the transformative nature of the city-region concept within a single organisation over the study time period as it shifts from a place marketing tool towards a core spatial approach through which the Council aims to secure the city's social reproduction. The shifting narrative is also linked towards the territorial rescaling of the city-region as CC developed a clearer picture of the city-region as consisting of immediate local authority neighbours and travel-to-work areas rather than the historical 10 authorities within South East Wales (as developed by the WAG through the WSP). This approach found material purchase in the form of a sub-regional skills initiative and collaborative working over waste management – initiatives driven by CC and facilitated by the MTC agenda.

While the analysis of the narrative construction of the city-region context within South East Wales demonstrates the fluidity and dynamism of the concept over time, in order for the idea to become a material reality, that is, to lead to identifiable effects within the realms of policy implementation, governance and/or patterns of investment, analytical attention is turned to the institutionalisation of city-regionalism.

8.3 Institutionalisation of the city-region concept

Following the bottom-up emergence and interplay between three sub-national spatial narratives and the top-down development of a national-level narrative, the ways in which the city-region narrative becomes part of the governing fabric of South East Wales is analysed. The institutionalisation of the city-region concept provides an important mode of mediation between its narrative construction and materialisation. As part of the second component of the analytical framework, empirical evidence of the institutionalisation of the city-region concept was gathered. This includes factors which served to hinder processes of institutionalisation prior to the active intervention of the WAG,

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identification of governance sites into which city-regional narratives are embedded, and the strategies employed in order to further sub-national region building and the motivations behind actors responsible for them.

During the analysis of the narrative construction of the city-region it was observed that the three bottom-up narratives failed to secure hegemonic status and therefore none were able to bring about material change. An examination of the institutional structures of governance existing within South East Wales as these narratives were emerging provides strong evidence for why this was the case. This analysis is informed by Jessop's (2002a) observation that new scales can only be operationalised as a means to a strategic end if they can achieve a certain degree of institutional thickness. During the development of the three competing city-region narratives, the tiers of public governance in South East Wales were in a state of rapid flux. For example: i) local authorities were re-organised in Wales as 22 unitary authorities in 1996; ii) informal public-private partnerships were operating at the regional level with no statutory duties and limited power over spending decisions (demonstrating a 'delivery deficit' (Morgan 2006a)) ; and iii) a new national scale of government was created in the form the National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Assembly Government. Whilst the event / process of devolution may have facilitated the emergence of new functional rationales for state intervention (see Keating 1997), the failure of the WAG to address the 'urban concern' provided the political space for actors situated at sub-national scales of governance to reconceptualise urban issues and appropriate responses to them (cf Tewdwr-Jones and McNeill 2000). However, the rescaled and newly emergent institutions within South East Wales (covering policy domains of economic development, waste and transport) lacked the sufficient 'thickness' to perform the function of conduits for political and other interests to effectively channel their city-regional narratives through (see Perkmann 2006). Therefore, it is argued that an important reason why all three bottom-up narratives failed to achieve any material effect was the lack of any powerful regional or sub-regional bodies into which these arguments could be embedded.

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A second important reason for the failure of the city-region concept to achieve any significant impact is identified as a function of personal relationships. Within the academic literature the explanatory emphasis for the emergence and function of city-regions and their supportive institutions is directed towards their treatment as ‘sites of innovation, development and competition, and, correspondingly, away from issues of redistribution, conflict, counterstrategies, and politics’ (L Ward and Jonas 2004, 2121). Strong evidence is provided by this research which helps to redress this balance. Evidence obtained from academic sources, interviews and official reports support the argument that the institutionalisation of the city-region concept - a spatial development approach which inherently requires cooperation, agreement and collaboration between key stakeholders – was hindered by political rivalries within South East Wales and particularly by poor individual political relationships between leaders from CC and the WAG, and between CC and neighbouring local authorities.

However, the entrance of the WAG into the city-region debate in South East Wales dramatically altered the politics of scale amongst the different government tiers as well as their territorialising activities. Significantly, the WAG’s use of strategic spatial planning provided a territorially significant political arena through which key actors were able to actively contest power within South East Wales. This is in contrast to a landscape of constantly shifting and relatively powerless institutional structures which characterised the bottom-up phase of city-regionalism. Nevertheless, while the relatively powerless institutional structures failed to provide the appropriate degree of institutional thickness required to mediate narratives through to material change, it was demonstrated that they did provide sites in which the concept of the city-region could be embedded. They also proved to be sites where particular, context-specific perspectives of city-regionalism interact with discourses to the extent that they are re-formulated while undergoing processes of institutionalisation.

Finally, a more detailed understanding of the institutionalisation of city-regionalism is provided through an analysis of the inter-related region-building activities undertaken by

the WAG and CC following WAG's intervention into the city-region debates and its reconceptualisation of the concept.

A number of different strategies (or 'techniques') were deployed by the national Welsh state in order to both directly break down barriers to cross-border cooperation and to actively encourage these processes. These actions were necessary for achieving the strategic objectives that can be delivered through a city-regional approach to governance. The techniques included the sub-division of territorial identities according to newly created sub-areas delineated by 'fuzzy borders'; extensive rounds of consultation with a wide variety of key stakeholders; incorporating a wide range of professional working bodies into the policy process; and, the parallel delivery of an efficiency agenda designed to encourage cross-border working, backed by legislative power to bring forward local government re-organisation. Interestingly, the separate development of the city-region agenda and that of achieving operational efficiencies imperatives represent a unique situation in which both top-down and bottom-up agendas collide and lead to contingent consequences within the same spatial arena. In contrast to the extensive consultation and careful consideration of territory relied on by the WAG to ensure social support for its interpretation of city-regionalism and to further its institutionalisation, CC adopted a significantly different approach for the competitive city-region concept. This including developing a robust evidence base to support its growth ambitions through the use of specialist consultants and high profile academics, as well as the strategic alignment with a variety of like-minded actors with the British Isles and across Western Europe.

8.4 The materialisation of city-regionalism in South East Wales

The final key component of region-building processes was identified as the materialisation of a particular narrative. Invoking the concepts and theories associated with the cultural landscape - set within the examination of a single rescaling event - creates a link between the narrative construction of the city-region, the processes of its institutionalisation, and the materialisation of the concept. This component of the analytical framework

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primarily sought to demonstrate how mediation of the narrative construction and institutionalisation of the city-region concept leads to material effects. This was explored through the lens of transport planning and provision. By linking the dominant discourses comprising the city-region narrative in South East Wales to associated discourses within the field of transport, a more robust, sector-specific analysis was possible and provides the basis for considering the significance of transport investments. Here the relationships between the discourses of competitiveness and agglomeration, and inequality and accessibility were brought together.

Progressing forward from this narrative platform, evidence was collected on state rescaling and territorial rescaling processes. This included shifts such as devolution and ministerial portfolios which provided further contextual information to inform the analysis of the materialisation of the city-region narrative. Evidence was also collected on aspects of social contestation during policy implementation phases and on the specifics relating to the large scale investments in the transport infrastructure of South East Wales. The investments into the proposed M4 relief road, the dualling of the Heads of the Valleys (HOV) A465, and the passenger rail network were separately discussed and then analysed as a whole.

The analysis of evidence from the perspective adopted by this research identified how devolution in Wales resulted in a complex series of ‘intra-national’ rescalings of state spatiality. These shifts formed an important backdrop as the institutionalisation of the city-region narrative progressed towards becoming material realities. In one sense devolution provided Wales as a nation with a much stronger role to play in the provision of transport while simultaneously withdrawing power from the local authorities. In another, the regionalisation of transport planning awarded the weakened local authorities with a greater capacity to influence investment in neighbouring authorities across the South East Wales city-region. The shifting ministerial portfolio within which transport is located was also identified as an important contingent event for subsequent decision making. The perceived impact of the ministerial shift of responsibility for transport (from Environment, Planning and Transport, to the Department for Economy and

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Transport) was that transport was increasingly seen as an enabler of physical and economic development.

Surprisingly, a perceived lack of conflict during the implementation of major transport schemes engendered theoretically-grounded questions over whether the cultural landscape can also play a role in alleviated tensions associated with the politics of scale (cf Prytherch 2006). Significant potential for contestation within this policy area was identified. For example, a widespread understanding of the role of transport in helping to accrue agglomeration benefits largely supported CC's interpretation of competitive city-regionalism. In contrast, it undermined the coherence and functional rationale for a South East Wales city-region consisting of all ten local authorities as promoted by the WAG through the WSP. However, the WAG's interpretation of city-regionalism maintained an important alignment with the discourse of accessibility; a position which arguable helped the WAG maintain its hegemonic position within the city-region debates as they were materialised within the planning and provision of transport.

With differing levels of prosperity between the M4 corridor and the deprived upper valleys areas (not to mention somewhat forgotten, in-between communities such as Barry) the perspective in which transport investments were debated confirms Docherty et al's (2004, 261) observation that 'the traditional political balancing act of economic efficiency versus social equity [is] reasserting itself in the transport policy arena.' The extent to which this balance leans toward an emphasis on supporting the economic competitiveness of South East Wales or towards alleviating inequality was considered through recent large scale investments into the transport infrastructure of South East Wales – an outcome which reflects the 'cultural landscape of transport'. As mentioned previously, these investments included the proposed M4 relief road, the dualling of the Heads of the Valleys (HOV) A465, and the passenger rail network.

Analysed as separate projects, it would be possible to connect the individual objectives of the M4 relief road, the Heads of the Valleys A465, and the investments into the passenger rail network of South East Wales to a range of discourses that have played a

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role in the city-region debates in South East Wales. For example, the case for the M4 relief road was connected to strong arguments for the need to support the economic growth of the coastal zone. The HOV A465 project was primarily about the regeneration of a relatively deprived part of South East Wales – the inequality within the region was underlined by the relative proximity of the HOV to areas of greater affluence in and around the coast. The investments into the passenger rail network can be linked to both objectives of economic competitiveness and the alleviation of inequality, as well as wider discourses of sustainable development and the transition towards a low-carbon economy. However, it was only by analysing the cultural landscape of transport holistically that stronger arguments can be made for both the connection between the city-regional narratives and the materialisation of the WAG's hegemonic re-interpretation of the concept, and for the potential role of the cultural landscape in alleviated the tensions associated with politics of scale.

Ultimately, the balanced city-region narrative, where the discourse of inequality (accessibility) is prioritised over economic competitiveness (agglomeration), is well reflected through the cultural landscape of transport. The consideration of investment decisions against this backdrop, supported by government documentation and interview quotes, helps to explain why investments in the HOV A465 and the passenger rail lines have proceeded and why the M4 relief road was rejected. It helps to explain why CC's arguments for the allocation of transport funding according to the principles of agglomeration benefits failed to significantly influence policy making. It clarifies why a ministerial advisory group comprised of former business leaders called for greater clarity in the Government's budgeting process for transport with clear differentiations between expenditure for social and economic purposes. The paucity of transport investment within Monmouthshire further emphasises the power of the city-regional narrative and its material influence on the cultural landscape of South East Wales.

By specifically focusing on the policy making processes and delivery of transport several identified knowledge gaps are addressed. First, transport provision as collective consumption is an under-researched aspect of city-regionalism (L Ward and Jonas 2004)

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and therefore the results of this research directly enrich this area. Second, adopting insights from narrative-based approaches to region-building (A Jones 2006; Hajer 1995; Paasi 2001), the politics of scale (K Jones 1997; Smith 1992a; Gonzalez 2006; Paasi 2004; Moore 2008), and the cultural landscape (Schein 1997; Prytherch 2006) provides a theoretical basis for tangible connections to be made between the discursive positioning inherent to city-regionalism and the previously ambiguous material effects (Harding 2007a). Third, while the approach taken by this study was designed to illuminate social conflicts associated with the provision of strategic transport infrastructure as part of the rescaling process (cf: Cox 1993; Swyngedouw 1997; MacLeod 1999; Brenner 2004; Smith 1992b) in some senses a lack of conflict during these processes drew attention to, and led to reflection on, the use of the cultural landscape to mediate socio-political tensions (cf: Prytherch 2006; 2007).

9. Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

This chapter revisits the core arguments that are made in this research, the key contributions that are made by the research towards other researchers as well as policy makers, and it outlines future research challenges.

9.2 Summary of the core arguments

The research aims to show how powerful city-regional narratives are materialised. In order to achieve this aim, three sub-questions were posed reflecting theoretical, methodological and empirical issues. Theoretically, the research asks how the processes of narrative construction and institutionalisation mediate the development of city-region agendas and subsequent material change. Methodologically, it investigates how research should be designed to understand the relationships between the construction of narratives and material change. Empirically, the research looks to increase our knowledge and understanding of these processes and events within South East Wales.

South East Wales was identified as a fertile geographic location for research attention in light of the significant progression of a city-regional debate and the unique social, historical, institutional, and economic characteristics of the area. A single case study was identified as the most appropriate method for this study. In order to achieve the overarching research aim, a novel methodology was developed which incorporates a three-stage analytical framework. This framework is heavily informed by theories developed within the fields of human geography (including economic, cultural and critical geography), political economy, international relations, and urban and regional planning, and consists of the following intersecting dimensions:

- the narrative construction of city-regions;
- the institutionalisation of city-regions; and
- the materialisation of city-regions.

In accordance with this framework, the literature from the various fields informed the evidence that was required to achieve the main research aim as well as directing attention towards additional research gaps that could be addressed.

9.3 Key contributions

This section outlines the key contributions made by this research for both academic and policy communities.

The main contributions this research provides members of the academic community, particularly those working within the context of the rescaling of state spatiality, are related to theory and methodology. Current explanations of city-regions reflect a partial understanding of why they have re-emerged on the policy landscape (L Ward and Jonas 2004), how rescaling activities unfold and engender power (see: Haarstad and Floysand 2007; Prytherch 2006) through processes of narrative construction and institutionalisation, and whether the discursive construction of city-regional narratives actually result in material change (Harding 2007). The research addresses these three knowledge gaps in order to demonstrate how the processes of narrative construction and institutionalisation mediate the development of city-region agendas and subsequent material change. A novel analytical framework was developed to systematically collect and analyse evidence, and this was overlaid by an interpretive framework heavily informed by a socially constructivist epistemology and discourse-based analysis. Although applied to a single case study in this research, the application of the framework is replicable by other researchers and comparisons between cases are possible.

In addition to the main research aim, a number of minor knowledge gaps on city-regions have been addressed in order to provide a more complete explanation for the development of city-regions. Accounts of city-regions primarily situate them as contingent responses to the demands of capitalist market functions (see L Ward and Jonas 2004). While the initial appearance of the city-region concept in South East Wales in 1992

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confirms this position, the more detailed analysis of the evolution of the concept from its discursive construction through to institutionalisation and materialisation supports the argument that important insights can be gained by taking a wider view of the spatial phenomenon. The analysis of South East Wales shows that city-regions can also be considered as a policy response to progressive demands such as the alleviation of social inequality and are very much contingent on the unique context in which they unfold. In addition, it is argued here that the role of the hinterland has largely been ignored in city-regional studies. Predominantly the hinterland is understood as a passive receptor of core city ambitions and policies. However, this research highlights how the socio-economic characteristics of a relatively deprived hinterland can define the city-region narrative contrary to the growth-related ambitions of the core city. Operating in conjunction with a rescaled territorial landscape in which the changing scales of state spatiality provided the core city with relatively limited power within these particular politics of scales, the relative levels of deprivation of South East Wales led to a hegemonic city-regional narrative which prioritised the alleviation of social inequality above that of economic competitiveness. The materialisation of this narrative through the provision of strategic transport infrastructure which prioritises social objectives over agglomeration benefits is just one striking example of how city-regionalism in South East Wales has responded more to the (political) needs of the region than the city.

This research shows that narratives do not represent static storylines but are constantly evolving as a result of narrative interplay between the competing interpretations and influences from external discourses. Additionally, the important role played by the political relationships and historically-rooted tensions between key actors were identified as key factors influencing the narrative mobilisation and institutionalisation processes around particular city-regional interpretations. With specific respect to the institutionalisation of particular narrative constructions, a number of measures, including the development of 'fuzzy borders' and the re-articulation of territorially-based identities, undertaken by the national government to embed its city-regional narrative were identified.

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Finally, the research demonstrated that there are tangible connections between discursive aspects of city-regionalism and material change. Once this finding is accepted, a deeper analysis of the planning and provision of transport then shed light both on the process through which state spatiality is redefined and on the role of key elements of collective consumption, such as transport, within this process. In addition, a lack of contestation as transport was planned and delivered supports the notion that key pieces of infrastructure within the cultural landscape can also play an important role in alleviating conflict and thus allowing the materialisation of the hegemonic narrative.

Before providing comment on the normative value of this work with respect to the policy making community it is important to state that the research was not undertaken with this output in mind. However, in light of the significant amount of time and effort that has gone into this research (by the researcher, the organisations that supported the research, and those who provided their time during interviews) it is appropriate to reflect on any messages that can be drawn from this work which could be applied in practice. The discussion below considers these messages within both the Welsh and UK context, that is, for those public, private and civil sector actors that are actively engaged in redefining state spatiality at the city-region scale.

First, the territorial scale of the city-region (i.e. the administrative boundaries of the different policy areas that will be considered through the city-regional lens) should be in close alignment with the functional economic geographies of the core city or cities. Although historical administrative geographies may appear to lend themselves as an appropriate scale, if these do not match the economic geographies of the core city or cities then they are unlikely to be fit for purpose from a city-regional perspective.

Second, the policy narrative that must be developed alongside (as well as encompass) the territorial framing of the city-region should effectively communicate the following:

- the problems that are being addressed by a city-regional approach in order to provide the rationale for particular forms of state intervention as well as opening the rhetorical space for these debates to unfold; and

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- the solutions that are to be progressed through a city-regional approach (the definition of the particular problems will automatically lend themselves to these); and
- The benefits that are to result from a city-regional approach as well as specifics on how these will be experienced and transmitted across all communities within the city-region (and beyond, if possible).

Third, moving from the narrative construction component, perhaps the most critical factor for realising the policy objectives for any city-region is that of governance. The administrative architecture of the city-region must facilitate effective decision making. While the early stages of the city-region building process may exhibit constellations of semi-official organisations, sectorally-specific public servant working groups or other forms of rapidly forming and dissolving policy making bodies, it is unlikely that these will possess the power to enact effective change. While performing a valuable function in terms of providing key sites in which the city-regional narrative can be signed up to and embedded, the actual delivery of a city-region requires greater institutional thickness and shifting power structures. For example, this could include the transfer of executive power from local authorities to sub-regional bodies vested with greater responsibility for policy making and public investment, or the more radical re-alignment (i.e. amalgamation) of local authorities.

The three messages are likely to form critical considerations in the development of most contemporary city-regions. However, the research also provides a number of minor insights that may be drawn on by practitioners to further their activities. This includes ensuring that good professional relationships exist between key local decision makers and between local and national levels of state. If these are not in place then efforts to progress city-regions are likely to suffer. There are also a number of techniques available to policy makers for building and securing social support for particular approaches to city-regions. These include developing a strong evidence base in support of policy, aligning city-regional policy with similar efforts elsewhere in the UK and Europe, by fostering networked relationships, and extensive consultation with stakeholders within

the public sector sphere as well as with those representing private and civil sector interests. Breaking down opposition to the progression of city-regions can also be assisted by attempting to re-draw political maps. For example, by creating new types of administrative bodies which do not necessarily align with traditional boundaries or by using the concept of 'fuzzy boundaries' to further erode place-based allegiances. Finally, symbolic physical investments can also be made in order to further substantiate the emerging city-region narrative and administrative structures and to help alleviate opposition amongst stakeholders.

9.4 Future research challenges

As with all dissertations it was necessary for practical reasons to constrain the scope of the research thereby closing off potentially fruitful lines of inquiry. The contribution made by this research also shines light on further areas worthy of investigation. This concluding section outlines potential future research challenges highlighted by this work.

This research relied primarily on the characteristics of the local context as a site in which evidence was gathered and analysed. However, many of the key characteristics of South East Wales identified as playing an explanatory role within this research are not directly comparable with other city-regions in the UK and across Western Europe. These characteristics include, for example, the relatively small size of the core city in relation to its surrounding area, which can be characterised as a relatively deprived hinterland. Additionally, the recent (in relation to the study period) and ongoing process of devolution no doubt creates an almost entirely unique situation through which the role of a national state (which lacks sovereignty) in developing the city-region concept is explored. While this presents difficulties in terms of the ability for research findings to be generalised, the uniqueness of the case study context can also be perceived as strength because it allows for detailed analysis of the contingencies inherent to city-region processes. The use of a single case study however, does present opportunities for further research consisting of a single case study or multiple case studies against which the findings here could be compared and contrasted. The clearly defined, three stage

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analytical framework developed to explore city-regionalism in South East Wales can be readily adopted or adapted by subsequent research efforts.

Further research opportunities are presented by the selection of the key stakeholders that received the majority of empirical and analytical attention. While this research focused primarily on state actors operating in South East Wales, there are likely to be a multitude of other groups operating within other city-regions that could be examined to add further evidence to explain processes of state restructuring at the sub-national level. This could include members of the private sector, civil society, as well as further investigations into the theory-policy interface between academics and policy makers. Similarly, other aspects of collective consumption such as housing could be explored to test the extent to which debates within this sector impact upon the development of city-region narratives as well as having been influenced by them (i.e. reflect the materialisation of the city-regional narrative).

Finally, the clearly demarcated time period during which evidence was collected and analysed might suggest that further, longitudinal research could prove insightful given the highly dynamic institutional and policy framing of this research. It would be particularly interesting to investigate the long-term impacts from the development, institutionalisation and materialisation of city-regionalism in South East Wales. Specifically, there are two types of impacts that would appear to warrant attention. This first relates to the extent to which the adopted city-region approach has been successful in the achievement of the priorities set out for the Capital Region in the Wales Spatial Plan. That is, the extent to which the area functions as a networked city region, has realised its international potential, its national role, and has reduced inequalities (WAG 2008a, 98). Secondly, it is not clear from the literature who wins and who loses as a result of city-regionalism. Therefore, following the implementation of the city-region concept within Wales, the UK and Western Europe, there is an ethical imperative to better understand which communities and social groups have benefited from city-regionalism and those which have been disadvantaged by city-regionalism.

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