
Non-state nations: Structure, rescaling, and the role of territorial policy communities, illustrated by the cases of Wales and Sardinia

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Abstract

This paper explores the role of non-state nations' identity and agency with regard to relations with their host nation states. The particular focus here is on the means by which such regions might express their individuality. To this end, we employ a comparative case study analysis of two non-state nations with a range of differing yet in other ways similar qualities – namely Wales (UK) and Sardinia (Italy). We suggest that this is a valuable exercise, allowing as it does for the exploring of evidence 'on the ground' of the processes involved. The conceptual rationale for the paper is provided by new regionalism – regions as actors beyond the nation state. Following this, the idea of the 'territorial policy community' is presented as a point of departure, with the scope of the paper being to develop a diachronic framework for regional change. Given the focus on identity and interest articulation, the role of regional political parties is a particular subject of the empirical investigation, with non-state nations and nation states linked by opportunistic relationships based on political and electoral support. We then consider what this might mean with regard to the capacity of non-state nations to build on the past to successfully negotiate future policy-making agendas. Finally, we reflect on the limitations of the study, and consider the implications of its findings for further research agendas.

Keywords

Devolution, non-state nations, policy, Sardinia, Wales, territorial policy community, regional parties

Introduction

The authors of this paper have spent perhaps more time than they might care to remember residing in, observing, studying and in some small ways participating in the economic and political lives of the two case study regions that are presented herein. To this end, we consider political, economic and structural change taking place within two European regions – Wales (UK) and Sardinia (Italy) which are in some ways similar and yet very different in others, a mix which it is hoped offers a degree of comparability on the one hand while providing for useful contrast on the other. The over-arching motivation here is thus an attempt to make sense of the ongoing changes taking place within our home regions in relation to a broader context in terms of both theory and geography, the ultimate aim being address the following research questions: how can we better understand what has happened in the past, what future developments might therefore be likely? Does this have any implications for policy at the regional level – and indeed the nation state level given the limited ability of regional actors, even within the most functional of regions, to effect such changes? Finally, although not intended to be generalisable in any scientific sense of the word, it is nonetheless a desired outcome that the findings shed some light beyond the two regions considered in this paper.

The broad context for this paper is that of the restructuring of the state (Hudson, 1998) which has occurred in parallel to the shift towards a globalised, knowledge-based economy which all developed nations have experienced (albeit unevenly) over the past three decades (Amin, 2002; Brenner, 1999; Cooke et al., 2001). These trends can be summarised as involving the increased mobility of physical products, of knowledge, and both financial and human forms of capital (Florida, 2002; Giddens, 2002). The spatial patterns of this new economy are revealing themselves to be evermore ‘spiky’ (Florida, 2005), urban-focused and self-reinforcing in terms of their agglomerations (Storper, 2013). Unsurprisingly, these developments have seen the further divergence of peripheral regions from their respective economic cores in terms of their relative performance (Martin, 2015); perhaps less anticipated has been the emergence of greater degrees of variation within states than between them (Pugh, 2017), clearly highlighting the potential value of comparisons at sub-state level in terms of relationships to the nation state. Put bluntly – such circumstances would appear to reveal the central state as either unwilling or unable to address these disparities. Simultaneously, by implication the regions in question are also lacking the capacity for remedial action, which may be due to internal inadequacies, the nature of its external relations with the nation state, or indeed beyond it. These are clearly questions worthy of consideration.

At the risk of over simplification, regional economic development policy within this climate has fallen into two broadly distinct strands – the attraction of mobile inward investment, and the upgrading of indigenous skills and entrepreneurial capacity (Brooksbank et al., 2001; Pugh, 2014). These are of course not mutually exclusive policy repertoires (Morgan, 2016) but the former generally precedes the latter, albeit along different time-frames in different regions. A relatively recent policy sub-theme has been the attraction of mobile knowledge workers (aka the ‘creative class’ of Florida, 2002) and to a lesser extent,

related to this and depending on the region in question, the attraction of tourism and its related activities. While for former industrial regions (e.g. Wales), the focus of inward investment has typically been on the rapid replacement of jobs lost in these sectors, and more latterly the attraction (and retention) of occupations higher up the value chain (such as in finance and professional services), more rural regions (Sardinia being an example) have been required to address different challenges; while not having to overcome the deeply embedded legacies of prior regime of production, they typically possess few options to build on in transitioning to a more knowledge-based economy (Asheim et al., 2011). Conversely, regions faced with deindustrialisation face the conundrum of reconciling large-scale (likely unembedded) job replacement in the short run with longer term development goals. Operationalising these policies has in some cases been the job of dedicated regional executive bodies (the Welsh Development Agency (WDA) in Wales for example) or alternatively that of agencies of the national state acting on a basis of limited functional decentralisation.

At the European level, regional policy has generally reinforced the knowledge-based model of development, emphasising skills, and innovation and entrepreneurial capacity building, with varying degrees of success (Brooksbank et al., 2001; Cooke and Clifton, 2005), the latest incarnation enshrined in the agenda of ‘smart specialisation’ (Pugh, 2014). Significantly, there is evidence that the quality and appropriateness of local institutions is an important factor in the success of regional development policy (Rodríguez-Pose, 2013), a theme to which we return later in this paper. Ultimately, the over-arching theme of development programmes at the European level is towards cohesion via reducing regional disparities in economic performance rather than the promotion of any sub-state nationalism; that said an increased level of sub-state level subsidiarity may be required for successful policy implementation. Moreover, there is a spatial tension between the regional and nation state levels inherent within development models derived from this so-called ‘new economic geography’ (Krugman, 2011) approach – i.e. stressing increasing returns to scale from agglomeration. This is particularly acute within the UK which has seen over four decades of divergent sub-national performance (Martin, 2015).

There has been a contemporaneous breakdown of what can be termed spatial Keynesianism (Keating, 2017), i.e. the idea that regional inequalities were largely the result of weakness in demand for a region’s goods and services and therefore could be addressed by redistributive spending by the central state. Thus from the 1980s in the UK – typically later elsewhere within Europe – there was a shift towards the supply-side concerns (as noted above—skills, innovation) that more recent policies have sought to address. Consistent with these developments, we have seen the rise of what Keating (1998) termed the ‘new regionalism’, entailing regions as actors beyond nation state in their own right, and in direct competition with each other both within and outside their own nation state.

With the above in mind, employing a comparative study to investigate the role of structure in shaping expressions of, and responses to, sub-state nationhood offers the potential to be an interesting and hopefully valuable exercise, not least as it allows for the exploration of some evidence of processes at work ‘on the ground’. In particular, the focus on non-state nations should allow for the interaction between institutions and identity to be revealed. Thus, it is suggested that Wales and Sardinia are interesting and relevant examples, not least as they bring together distinct European cultures and varieties of capitalism as per Soskice and Hall (2001) (Northern European vs. Mediterranean, liberal market economy vs. coordinated market economy), but also quite different state structures and traditions – centralism in the UK (albeit asymmetrically devolved since the late 1990s), as opposed to federalism with strong municipalities in Italy. Moreover, we suggest that there is significant

value in studying ‘ordinary regions’ rather than the, in fact, much rarer exemplars of unquestionable success and/or best practice (Hepburn, 2011; Hospers and Benneworth, 2005). At this point, we should add a note of caution against overestimating the capacity of regional institutions to influence outcomes at the regional level. For example, the UK Treasury calculates that total public spending in Wales is around £10,000 per head; approximately, half this figure is spending that the Welsh Government has discretion over (although not directly comparable, figures from Eurostat show that the Sardinian public sector spends around €17,000 per head). However, within this, the major proportion is allocated to health and education. Although there is a large indirect impact via these activities (salaries, purchasing and so on), there is relatively little resource available to pursue programmes of real discretion such as economic development policy. On this point, the recent launch of the Development Bank for Wales suggested an investment fund of £440m over a 10-year period. This is not the only vehicle for economic development within the region but nonetheless indicates the relatively small scale of such activities.

Thus, the paper proceeds as follows; in the following Section ‘Rescaling interests: Restructuring the state and new regionalism’, we provide a review of the literature on new regionalism and the rescaling of the nation state. In brief, economic development policies are strongly influenced by what Keating et al. (2009) term ‘territorial policy communities’, i.e. the legacies of identity and locally inherited institutional frameworks, policy regimes, and regulatory practices. Thus, Keating’s notion of the territorial policy community serves as a point of departure, with the scope of the paper being to elaborate the kind of diachronic framework called for by Atkinson and Coleman (1992), rather than to provide an empirical investigation of these communities per se. There then follows in the Section ‘Methodological approach: Analytical framework and case selection’, a more detailed explanation of the methodology adopted, including the rationale for the selection of case studies, and a summary of the analytical framework developed. Following on from this, the Section ‘Wales and Sardinia – Comparative cases in non-state nation restructuring’ presents a comparative analysis of Wales and Sardinia, with the ‘Discussion’ relating the comparative material back to the research questions outlined in ‘Methodological approach: Analytical framework and case selection’. Finally, in the Conclusions, we reflect on the findings and their implications for further research.

Rescaling interests: Restructuring the state and new regionalism

As described by Keating (1998) and developed in subsequent work (Keating, 2009; Keating and Wilson, 2014), markets, international institutions and trans-national corporations increasingly penetrate state borders; national economic management is thus complicated (or indeed confounded) by the increased mobility of all forms of capital. Keating argues however that this does not in itself imply the end of territory as an organising principle – rather it is reconfigured as ‘new regionalism’. The two key features of this new regionalism are first that regions are no longer confined within the borders of their nation state, thus becoming actors beyond it in their own right, and second that regions are increasingly in competition with each other as a result of which they may be transformed largely into systems of economic development. Lovering (1999) takes this idea a step further by suggesting that the active promotion of the region as the ‘imagined unit of competition’ at the expense of the imagined ‘national community’ by associated vested interests actually renders new regionalism itself as instrumental (unwittingly or otherwise) in the dismantling of redistributive structures at the national level. The extent to which ‘national community’ ever existed is of course debatable, as is the degree to which the (re)assertion of regional identity

may now challenge such notions; answers to questions such as these will of course vary from case to case.

Tomaney (2000) has pointed out that although national coherence was indeed augmented in the immediate post-war period, regions had been actively involved in shaping their host nation states; i.e. they were not just passively subsumed therein – their interests and political structures had to be accommodated to a greater or lesser degree by the enhanced nation states. By the 1960s, however, nation states were dealing with the need to modernise economic structures while simultaneously addressing geographical inequalities. Thus as Tomaney puts it, new regionalism came to the fore because ‘territorial relationships are no longer manageable by existing forms of accommodation and exchange’ (498). What is clear is that fundamental to the emergence of new regionalism is the breakdown of the post-war spatial Keynesianism model of territorial management (Keating, 2017), the fundamental aim of which was to integrate lagging regions within the nation state. Thus, policies were ‘depoliticized and integrative’ (Keating, 2017: 11) with largely technocratic justifications, operationalised by development agencies with centrally allocated resources. From the 1980s, however, increasing international flows meant that the internal (i.e. within nation state) recycling logic of transfers from rich regions to poor ones began to break down. Put simply, increased spending in lagging regions was more likely to leak out of the nation state via imports than it was to be retained via increased demand and associated multiplier effects. This neo-liberalisation has implied a shift from publicly planned solutions to market-oriented ones or, at least, ones serving private companies and their customer groups (Bradbury, 2007; Sager, 2011). As Keating (2017) has noted, policy makers have sort to rebut such critiques by broadening their associated measures of regional ‘competitiveness’ to include other factors beyond those relating directly to production costs (e.g. social, environmental and cultural aspects as per Florida, 2002) – but, ultimately, these are all assumed to enhance regional productivity.

The idea has persisted though that interests deriving from class, sector and so on would ultimately trump those based on territory; meaning that even after regional governments had begun to arise they would be rather redundant ‘regions without regionalism’ (Pastori, 1980) as these supposedly dominant affiliations would continue to be manifested on the national scale. The outcomes however appear more complex, with these interests appearing not to displace territory, but rather being ‘refracted’ by it in new ways, influenced by the dual factors of regional government and the rescaling of functional (economic, social) systems (Keating, 2014a, 2017).

The key point regarding purely functional decentralisation is that in the end the regional is always outranked by the national. Keating (1998) has distinguished between different types of regional government with functional decentralisation at one end of a continuum (i.e. specific agencies for local tasks in combination with decentralised arms of national government) and federalism at the other. However, the lines between incorporating ‘strong’ regionalism vs. those of ‘weak’ regionalism have become somewhat blurred, which led him to the later conclusion that ‘... the degree of self-government desired is an empirical question to be examined in context, not a defining feature’ (Keating, 2017: 13). This in turn naturally raises the vexed question of identity, with regions as ‘sites of social identity formation, which can be integrative or autonomist’ (Keating, 2017). As noted above, the latter (i.e. autonomist tendencies) began to emerge in the 1970s, while the former (the integrative focus) was conceived historically as contingent to the broader ‘modernising project’ of government, such that territorial integration and functional differentiation were seen as normative manifestations of progress (cf. regionalism as the ‘revolt against modernity’ of Lipset, 1975). Further blurred lines distinguish regionalisms from

minority nationalisms, with the latter typically concomitant with separatism, as traditionally the term ‘nation’ was used as an implicit shorthand for the right to self-determination. Thus, those seeking self-determination purposefully employed the term. Now, it is largely accepted that sovereignty is a more complex issue, which means that even in places with strong regional-nationalist movements, the majority of the populace have developed dual identities rather than mutually exclusive ones. In turn, all this means that identity is ‘.. .not a given... but another field by which regions can be constructed and given meaning’ (Guinjoan and Rodon, 2016: 14).

The nexus of identity and function produces then what we might term a variety of regions and of regionalism. Adopting the typology of Keating (1998, 2013, 2014b) produces three broad groupings; the historic ‘non-state nations’ such as the Basque Country, Galicia, Scotland, and Wales but also including a sub-group of regions with distinct linguistic or historical identity but without ‘national pretensions’ – the Italian special status regions (including Sardinia) featuring here; second, regions defined primarily by their possession of an effective set of internal institutions (the stronger of the German Lander being the most obvious example); and finally, a third group which are largely administrative only and thus not regions in any other sense (such as the bulk of the English regions). Moreover, attitudes to regionalism at the nation state level also play a role – for example, the Italian state as a relatively late construct comprising strong regions in contrast to the UK as a long-standing if asymmetric union; thus traditions and histories matter.

In summary, before the 1990s, regionalism was largely concerned with the accommodation of internal (i.e. nation state) inequalities and related functional pressures. Subsequently, ‘new’ regionalism has reflected a shifting focus towards international markets and the emerging European level, with regions themselves conceived therein as actors in their own right. This thinking has become more nuanced in recent years via the role of contextual and identity factors, such that both the dismissal of territory on the one hand and territorial determinism on the other are mitigated (Keating, 2017).

The territorial policy community

Turning attention directly to formation of policy, the term ‘policy community’ is employed to describe the actors, institutions and relationships that are at work here. Potentially, this includes all those with interests in shaping and delivering policy (representative bodies of industries, sectors and professions, trade unions, political parties and governmental bodies, as per Wilks and Wright, 1987). However, the term ‘community’ also implies a degree of consensus and coherence (Marsh and Rhodes, 1992), which in turn suggests that the policy community is not just a structural entity but also behavioural one.

The emergence of new regionalism, the reassertion of regional image and identity and the formation of a policy community that is regionally embedded represent interconnected aspects of the restructuring of relations between the region and the nation state. To this end, Keating et al. (2009) introduce the idea of the territorial policy community, emerging in response to the rescaling of government; there is no implication here that articulation via sector or territory need be mutually exclusive or indeed zero sum. The concept of a territorial policy community is consistent with thinking around new regionalism in that if these regions were indeed without regionalism we would expect to observe little change at this level, i.e. with interest articulation largely continuing at the national level. The counter assumption to this being from the purely functional perspective, such that any regional differences that reveal themselves in the politics of interest articulation would derive from the respective sectoral/class distributions therein rather than being related to any defining

aspects of the territory *per se*. Such an observation makes the comparison of two regions which are in some ways similar but in others different a potentially fruitful exercise. A further possibility would be the opportunistic ‘venue shopping’ (Baumgartner and Jones, 1991) at different levels by actors seeking influence – as Keating et al. (2009) note, the new regionalism literature actually does not clearly specify the institutions and interactions that produce policy. The constituents of the policy subsystem at the regional level will be mediated by behavioural variables such as strategy, the degree of consensus, shared norms and the like. This in turn suggests that identity and notions of nationhood will temper manifestations of new regionalism, particularly for the group of non-state nations and their respective host nation states, which are effectively ‘caught’ between different scales of action as outlined above – in the words of Keating et al. (2009: 53) ‘. . . the regulation of different policy fields at different levels challenges the old social compromises of the state’. With this in mind, the study presented here has a particular focus on regional polities and (local) governing parties as key actors within territorial interest articulation, policy formation and delivery at the regional level. Relevant questions to consider here are how the nation state might respond to these sub-national challenges, and indeed what its capacity is to do so, given the embedded or indeed path-dependant courses of action available.

Methodological approach: Analytical framework and case selection

Having provided an overview of the literature relating to the concept of new regionalism in the previous section, and explored what implications this might have for regions which are simultaneously experiencing economic change and a shifting set of relations with their ‘host’ nation state, attention is now turned towards an analytical framework for investigating these processes in action, and the selection of suitable comparative settings within which to do so. As we saw in the section above, interest articulation can occur on a sector or a territorial basis, with these channels not mutually exclusive and indeed simultaneously available, and with venue-shopping possible in terms of the spatial level deemed most appropriate by the actors in question. Moreover, no normative progression from the territorial to the functional can be inferred, rather outcomes are mediated by regional identity which in turn may be autonomist or integrative. The fact that divergence within nation states is often greater than between them suggests inability, unwillingness or a combination of the two by actors at both the regional and national state levels to address these outcomes, while policy at the European level ostensibly promotes regional cohesion while itself relying on effective local institutions for delivery. Thus, we suggest that the analysis presented here is all the more pertinent.

To this end, a framework for analysis is outlined in Figure 1, relating to non-state nations, institutions, identity, and structure. At the centre of the framework is the non-state nation, representing a particular case of new regionalism – i.e. one in which the functional and structural aspects of rescaling are most subject to refraction, using the terminology of Keating (2017), via regional culture and identity. All non-state nations are not the same of course, hence the value of comparison. Given the two-way nature of the relationship between region and nation state, the context of the latter is important. As noted earlier, nation states will vary in their own internal structures, cultures, norms and indeed varieties of capitalism, linked to the nature of their restructuring. Similarly, regarding the context within which economic development is taking place, again as outlined earlier old industrial regions (for example) have different priorities to those transitioning from a more rural economy, strategies focused on inward investment and job replacement are likely to

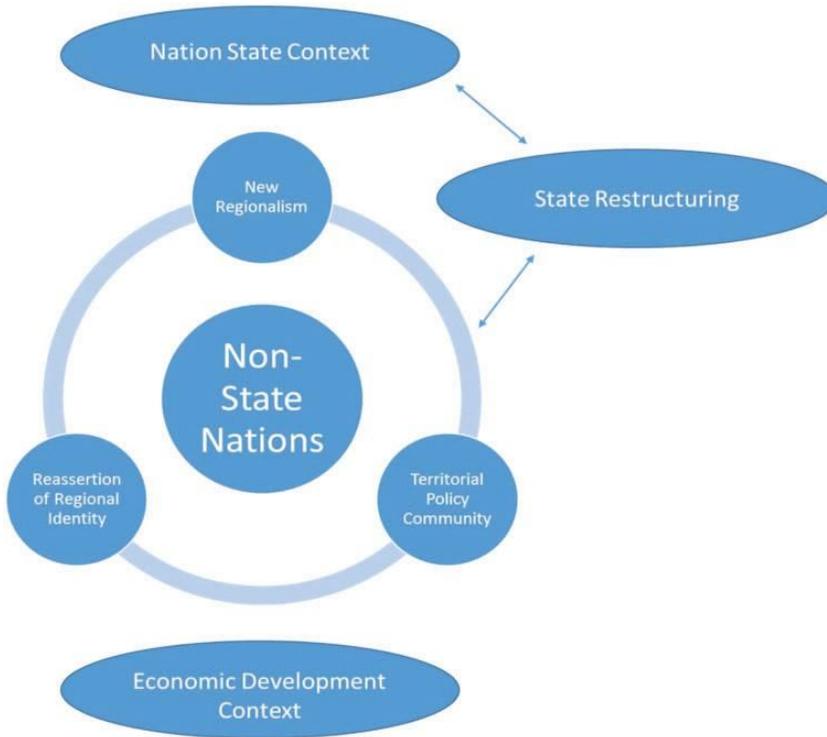


Figure 1. Non-state nations, institutions and identity: a conceptual framework.

imply a differing set of institutions, relationships, and interest articulation than those more focused on bottom-up capacity development.

Wales and Sardinia as illustrative cases

As noted in the ‘Introduction’, the authors have a long-standing interest and a degree of embedded knowledge in the two regions we seek to compare here – Wales and Sardinia. Although useful, and important as a motivating factor this is of course not a sufficient rationale for the selection of these two case studies; to this end, we offer some further justification here. To briefly sketch out the comparative economic contexts of the two regions, Wales has a population of 3.1 m (5% of the UK) while for Sardinia the corresponding figures are 1.6 m and 3%, respectively, their geographical areas being similar; GDP in Wales is approximately €24,000 per head, just over €20,000 for Sardinia.

The UK is a centrist nation state, which has undergone limited and asymmetric restructuring (devolution – including Wales) during the past two decades; conversely, Italy maintains a federalist structure albeit with partially developed devolution – there are five ‘special’ regions, one of which is Sardinia. The UK operates a liberal market economy emphasising flexibility and financialisation while the Italian model is more coordinated (corporatist and negotiated). Within these, both Wales and Sardinia both meet the criteria of non-state nations albeit with some significant differences with reference to Keating’s (1998) typology of regions, Wales being a historic or ‘type 1’ non-state nation along with Scotland, Catalonia and the Basque Country, while Sardinia is ‘type 2’, i.e. also possessing distinct

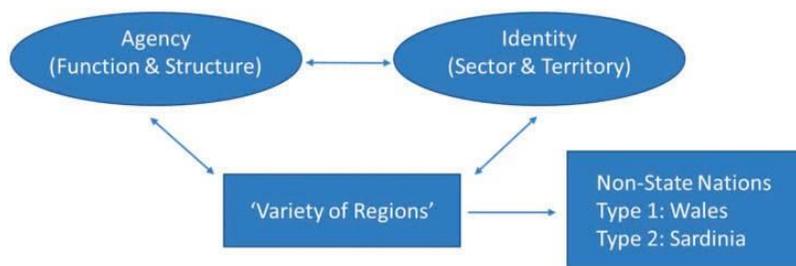


Figure 2. Rationale and case study selection.

language and regional identity but essentially lacking in widely articulated separatist tendencies. This is represented graphically in Figure 2.

While Wales is a peripheral former industrial region (at least in the south, the north and the west being more rural), Sardinia is an island in the Mediterranean which has undergone a more recent nation state-led industrial shift. There are also some parallels with regard to infrastructure particularly in relation to transport; while in Sardinia this has historically been neglected, Wales has good links on an east-west basis – connecting with the regional economies of south west and north west England – while travelling between north and south within Wales is problematic by road and rail. This hints at differential aspects of the previous spatial Keynesian consensus; within Sardinia as an island the upgrading of transport infrastructure was of little benefit to the wider nation state, while for Wales it offered greater scope for spillovers. Conversely, the imagined national community of Italy was manifested in its most extreme sense with the fascist autocracy, although the north/south divide remained the main schism in the post-war period (Keating, 1998).

Research questions and analytical approach

From the sections above, we can distil the following research questions, the addressing of which in a comparative approach is intended to shed light upon the role of structure in both shaping expressions of, and responses to, sub-state nationhood.

- What are the consequences of functional and economic rescaling at the regional level and how can we better understand both past events and possible future trajectories?
- How are territorial policy communities rescaling and what might this mean for policy at the regional level?
- More generally what does this mean with regard to the capacity of devolved regions to successfully negotiate future policy-making agendas, given the limited ability of regional actors, even within the most functional of regions, to effect such changes?
- Finally, although not intended to be generalisable in any scientific sense of the word, it is nonetheless a desired outcome that the findings shed some light beyond the two regions considered in this paper.

We seek to address these questions by exploring evidence of processes ‘on the ground’ in the two regions, via the authors’ own contextualised knowledge, the review of policy documents and of the specific academic literature on the two regions. This evidence is then reviewed comparatively in relation to the framework set out in Figure 1. The approach we take here is consistent with conceiving the relationship between endogenous choice and

exogenous process as not being one of mutual exclusivity. In other words, in relation to changes within prevailing economic models and the associated institutions thereof, these are not viewed as two distinct evolutionary routes, rather they are necessarily inter-linked, as per Mokyř (2016). Thus, the shift towards a knowledge-based economy does not imply an inevitable process within which domestic development agencies are essentially redundant, conversely nor does it imply a prescribed set of ideological choices with a consequent suite of institutional outcomes. Mokyř's concept of choice-based evolution builds on Jones' (2006) work on culture and economics which views culture (broadly defined) as neither a fixed exogenous environment constraining behaviour, nor one that is perfectly malleable to economic needs. Such a model of evolutionary change also implies complementary but also competing mechanisms for the transmission of new ideas; vertical transmission is largely based upon socialisation (i.e. from one generation to the next) while horizontal transmission is driven more by peer to peer learning – which although it involves choice is itself subject to a (spatially and temporally non-uniform) degree of constraint. Thus, Mokyř's analogy here is choice but from a 'pre-existing menu' (2016: 35). Having outlined the methodological approach, selection of cases, variables to be considered and key research questions arising, attention is now turned to the two regions in question, namely Wales and Sardinia.

Wales and Sardinia – Comparative cases in non-state nation restructuring

Brief overview of restructuring and development context

With regard to economic history, there are parallels but also chronological shifts between the two regions; these are shown in summary in Table 1. While in Wales mining dominated in the late 19th-century with a transition to heavy industry in the 1930s, in Sardinia, these two steps took place respectively in the 1930s (with the fascist autocracy) and in the post-war period with the Rebirth Plan. The relative failure of this plan being apparent during the 1990s, at which point Wales was well into the cycle of FDI replacing now declining heavy industries.

From the institutional perspective, the chronology is reversed as Sardinia became an Autonomous Region in 1947 while the Welsh Assembly was not formulated until 1999 – only since then has regional development policy been self-determined. The Welsh Government became responsible for regional policy and the establishment of structures for this function, albeit limited to the expenditure of the UK government block grant, and facing a difficult transition from policy delivery to policy formulation responsibilities, as per Cooke and Clifton (2005). In contrast, in Sardinia, the adoption of a more radical stance by the independence movement and their alliance-building in order to counter nation-state industrial policy led to an early electoral success¹ followed by a progressive marginalisation of these movements and their policy proposals (on issues such as bilingualism and the establishing of a free-trade zone) (Demuro et al., 2013; Pala, 2012; Roux, 2006).

It should be noted that the UK 'union state' was highly centralised in the post-war period, with the Scottish and Welsh offices as functional arms of the Westminster government – charged with the implementation of policy rather than its formation. The more developed territorial policy community in Scotland arose from distinct legal and financial institutions predating formal devolution, which allowed the pursuing of a more 'visionary' approach to policy-making under devolution as opposed to the more 'precautionary' one in Wales (Cooke and Clifton, 2005), which was largely around the mitigation of continuing

Table 1. Wales and Sardinia: summary of state restructuring and economic development context.

Time period	Wales	Sardinia
1930s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift from mining to related heavy industries • Initial nationalist party support (Plaid Cymru) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mining industry dominates, also traditional crafts, agriculture • Initial nationalist party support (Sardinian Party of Action/Partito Sardo d'Azione)
1940s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hierarchical planning models established 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hierarchical planning models established • Becomes Autonomous Region (1947)
1960s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of Development Districts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rebirth Plan – top-down transition to heavy industries
1970s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closure of Regional Economic Councils • Two tier administrative system in the UK 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Policy in a 'steady state' • Suppression of customs, language
1970s/80s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First devolution referendum (1979) • Increased central control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU and subsidiarity – associated with transfer of power and responsibilities
1990s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased pressure for autonomy • Creation of Unitary Authorities • Pressure for autonomy – 2nd devolution referendum (1997) • 'Asymmetric' devolution in the UK- Establishment of Welsh Assembly Govt (1999) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased pressure for autonomy • Relative failure of industries promoted via Rebirth Plan • Electoral reform • Official recognition of the Sardinian language (1999) • Additionality – EU programs considered by regional governments as additional interventions
2000s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective I funding comes on-stream • Quangos abolished (WDA, WTB) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phasing out of Objective I • Rise of 'Progetto Sardegna' (Sardinian project)
2010s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silk Commission on increased devolved powers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stalling of identity-based politics

large-scale job losses in traditional industries. The expressly anti-federalist intent of the devolution settlement suggests the continuance of a unitary state model based on Westminster sovereignty albeit only modified asymmetrically by devolution (Cooke and Clifton, 2005; Hogwood, 2003).

Despite this, in Welsh and Sardinian policy certain similarities can be seen. First, an industrial past with subsequent national government intervention through programs for disadvantaged areas, sometimes 'top-down' and without buy-in from local authorities, enough to raise fears of 'internal colonisation' by the State (Davies, 1987; Palloni, 1979). Second, the influence of autonomist movements and EU programs on devolution processes, in terms of the recognition of regional self-determination and strategic approaches to policy planning. Finally, the adoption of spatial policies in the face of globalisation, especially with iconic regeneration projects in the regional capital (although in Sardinia this process has been inhibited by the economic crisis in the late 2000s).

Turning to more cultural and political aspects, during the 1970s Sardinia saw the active suppression of customs and language; this occurred much earlier in Wales from the 19th-century into the early 20th, although more passively so through until the 1970s. The rise of 'Progetto Sardegna' (Sardinian project) in the 2000s saw the revival of language, crafts and traditions for economic ends including tourism. There are some parallels here with the cultural resurgence seen in Wales during the mid-2000s (Clifton, 2011); although this was less overtly political in Wales. Finally, the nationalist political parties have experienced mixed fortunes, with Plaid Cymru (Wales) reaching a steady state after gains in the early days of devolution (21% of the vote and 12 seats of 60 in the present National Assembly), which is to be contrasted with the Sardinian Party of Action (Partito Sardo d'Azione, Psd'Az) which after strong beginnings is now very much a minority party polling at around 5%. By way of comparison, the Scottish National Party achieved 47% of the vote and just under half the seats in the most recent Scottish Parliament elections. It is also the largest party in Scotland in the most recent Westminster elections (UK level).

Functional rescaling

Following a period of ineffective national economic programs, during the 1970s and 1980s, both UK and Italian governments considered increased regional subsidiarity. In Italy, reforms were essentially progressive as powers and responsibilities were transferred to Provinces and Municipalities (although not always accompanied by adequate resources). In the UK, conversely, administrative reforms were largely conservative and focused on enhancing central state control over local authorities' policy making, in particular in urban recovery and renewal.

During the late 1990s, both UK and Italian governments attempted to redress the deficiencies of their respective administrative frameworks. In the former case with the introduction of Unitary Authorities (1996) and in the latter via electoral reform (1999) and further constitutional reform (2001). The asymmetric devolution process in the UK was also brought to fruition during this period (1999).

In the immediate post-war period, both Italy and the UK possessed hierarchical administrative systems in which local authorities/municipalities were the central players while regions were still linked to manifestations of national planning, such as the Development Districts² in Sardinia and Regional Economic Councils (1965–1969) in Wales. The former were spatial units which joined urban and economic planning on the basis of local territory functions while Regional Economic Councils were regional bodies charged by the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA) in Westminster to draft regional planning policies implementing the National Development Plan (Fried, 1968; Gilg, 2005).

Thus, since the late 1990s both Sardinian and Welsh non-state nation governments had significant control on the spending and administration of a central government budget at regional level. However, during this period, they encountered a new challenge – coordinating EU funding programs (most significantly Objective 1) and initiatives to be delivered at local authority level. For this purpose, Welsh Government (WG) adopted a precautionary economic policy largely confined to the reorganisation of administrative apparatus. In 2005, for example, WG abolished three economic development quangos, the WDA, the Training Agency (ELWa) and the Wales Tourist Board (WTB) with their functions re-absorbed centrally due to concerns over their performance (Cooke and Clifton, 2005; Gilg, 2005, Morgan, 2013). Conversely, in Italy, regional governments typically employed EU structural funds as 'additional measures' in continuity with national intervention in the South. While this decentralised some responsibilities (within rules, however, rigidly codified),

it did give central government the power to assess the adequacy of the programs drawn up by the Southern Regions compared to EU guidelines, leading to some political friction (Giannola, 2000; Tabellini, 2005).

In 2003, WG was charged with designing mechanisms to spend £1.2 billion of Objective 1 EU Structural Funds (plus national match-funding). An extremely complex system of committees was set up for each programme area, involving WG and other actors, with approvals given by the external Welsh European Funding Office (Gilg, 2005). Similarly, in Sardinia, there was a significant attempt to harmonise national and regional actions directing them towards the practice of economic policy agreements and contractual implementation tools. Despite some significant progress, non-state nation governments still face difficulties in constraining local authorities (Keating, 2014b; Morgan, 2013). In Wales, for example, WG struggles to connect the ‘business climate’ and ‘people climate’ aspects of neo-liberal spatial policies (Cooke and Clifton, 2005; Shipton, 2011). In the same way, the Sardinian regional government has also faced difficulties creating a coherent and attractive image for foreign investments, although neo-liberal spatial policies are not yet as common as in the UK due to the later onset of economic transition. Largely due to 1999 electoral reform the direct election of a regional President and new contractual planning processes, the stability of the Sardinian political framework has allowed a better control on localism and market pressures than in Wales³ (Hospers, 2003, 2005; Hospers and Benneworth, 2005; Mundula and Bona, 2012; Onnis et al., 2009; RAS, 2008).

Regional politics and interest articulation

The birth and evolution of Welsh and Sardinian territorial policy communities are linked to regional political movements which, since the early 1990s, have pressed for the recognition of distinctiveness of identity, cultural and linguistic bases according to principles of political pluralism and subsidiarity. Both in Sardinia and Wales, these can be seen as rooted in socialist movements in defence of the working classes. In Wales, the first decades of the 20th-century were characterised by an economic and population boom which reduced the relative importance of the Welsh language and changed the political framework: after the First World War, the Labour Party replaced the Liberals as the dominant party in Wales, particularly in the industrial valleys of South Wales and in 1925 the national Party of Wales – Plaid Cymru – was formed, starting its slow growth (Cooke and Clifton, 2005; Davies, 1987, 2000). At the same time, in Sardinia, Emilio Lussu and other Sardinian veterans of the First World War founded the national party Psd’Az promoting popular sovereignty, administrative autonomy and freedom of trade. In the 1930s, the party won support from a large stratum of the population, especially former soldiers, peasants and miners (Hepburn, 2011). In the early part of the 20th-century, Sardinian politics often adopted an unfavourable position on autonomy, viewing it in terms consistent with Lipset (1975) as noted earlier. Plaid Cymru formally adopted a policy of independence for Wales within Europe in the early 2000s. Although ostensibly social democratic/centre left Plaid still struggles to transfer a message beyond Welsh Nationalism/advocacy of the Welsh language. As Hepburn (2011) notes, Sardinian parties – most notably the Psd’Az – are hampered by their ideological opportunism or ‘flakiness’.

After this initial electoral success, Welsh and Sardinian political movements for independence faced a transitional phase characterised by subsequent alliances with national parties to obtain regional representatives in National Parliaments – and in the Regional Assembly for Sardinia. In some respects, this strategy brought positive results to both territories; in the 1970s, for example, when the Labour government lost its two-seat majority, Prime

Minister James Callaghan was forced to negotiate with regional parties (including Wales) and grant referendums on devolution (Conroy, 2006; Davies, 2000). Similarly, during the 1980s, the Sardinian territorial policy community adapted in response to change led by the EU, Italian Provinces and Municipalities; new ideas were introduced at the local level on strategic planning, principles of subsidiarity and administrative decentralisation (loosening of hierarchical and sector ties). The latter, in particular, encouraged the re-emergence of independence movements, identified as *neo-sardismo* (Demuro et al., 2013; Hepburn, 2011; Pala, 2012; Roux, 2006). These political successes were however followed by different paths for Sardinia and Wales. The former saw a progressive marginalisation of independence movements and their policy proposals (on bilingualism and free-trade zones – both unpopular among national parties, Demuro et al., 2013; Pala, 2012; Roux, 2006). Much the same occurred at a European level where Sardinia, sharing its electoral constituency with Sicily, lacked representation at the European Parliament.⁴ In following years, the trend continued due to a complex set of factors. First, due to the compromises of regional independence movements as they sought support from national parties. Second, the adoption of an essentially two-party system at the national level which led to the vote-seeking regionalisation of the national parties as well as facilitating a polarisation of autonomist movements within left and right national coalitions. As Hepburn (2011, 2013) notes, the inability of the Sardinian territorial policy community to adapt to multi-level politics, developing coherent strategies at Sardinian, Italian and European level, is thus evident.

The situation in Wales was rather different where alliance with the Labour party, at the core of national political opposition during the Thatcherite phase of the 1980s, led to a series of interventions in support of devolved institutions in Scotland and Wales and ultimately to a referendum for devolution with a positive vote (Davies, 1987; Thomas, 1992). The devolution process is still ongoing with increased primary legislative powers and taxation power proposed by the Silk Commission which reported in 2012.⁵ The 2011 referendum on the granting of further powers saw a vote of over 64% in favour, evidence of an increased public confidence in the Welsh Government; however, assessments of the impact of WG in its first phase have been critical with regard to its ability to both develop and administer effective regional policies (Morgan, 2016; Shipton, 2011). With regard to other sectoral interests, Keating et al. (2009) have shown that business interests in Wales tend to focus on the UK level, opposing policy divergence. In reality, the limited nature of the devolution settlement means that the majority of legislation impacting on business occurs in Whitehall. Welsh Trade unions support devolution but also derive benefits from UK level bargaining and regulations. The Wales Social Partners Unit (WSPU) acts as a conduit between government and the interest of all stakeholders, underpinning a genuine sense of pragmatism, albeit as a somewhat unwieldy vehicle for interaction. Broadly speaking, within Sardinia the much less formal structures of the Progetto Sardegna have fulfilled some of these functions, although in a rather limited fashion.

Discussion

Attention is now turned to a discussion of the material presented in the previous section in relation to the research questions posed within the ‘Introduction’ and developed in the Section ‘Methodological approach: Analytical framework and case selection’. These were intended to shed light upon the role of structure in both shaping expressions of, and responses to, sub-state nationhood, and by way of a reminder are summarised below:

- What are the consequences of functional and economic rescaling at the regional level and how can we better understand both past events and possible future developments?
- How are territorial policy communities rescaling and what might this mean for policy (the capacity for both development and delivery) at the regional level?
- Finally, though not intended to be generalisable per se, can the findings shed some light beyond the two regions considered in this paper?

The top-down industrial policies of the 1960/1970s represented an attempt to modernise the industrial structure of Sardinia. However, as Hospers (2003) and Hospers and Benneworth (2005) note, the lack of prior industrialisation (which can be contrasted to the situation in Wales) was actually problematic in this context as the new structures imposed by the central state failed to take into account the existing structural, economic and cultural realities on the ground. Thus, the new plants became largely ‘cathedrals in the desert’ – unembedded both in terms of supply chains but more significantly with regard to the social and cultural fabric of the island. More generally, the impact here can also be interpreted as a variant – directly imposed by the state – of the ‘Upas Tree’ effect posited by Checkland (1976) in which large-scale industries suppress smaller local enterprises. Wales has seen similar effects, although less instrumentally so.

Thus, a more radical interpretation of the Rebirth plans sees them as a deliberate attempt by the central state to ‘Italianise’ the problematic region of Sardinia (Onnis et al., 2009), to normalise a region seen as too distinct by ruling political classes. In this view, the suppression of customs, language and so on is not an accidental by-product of top-down nation state intervention. There are parallels with Wales, although there these processes were earlier and less explicitly state-led. However, it is suggested that for many Welsh people these historical and political processes have culminated in the notion that the Welsh are ‘second class citizens.. . [and] that status creates a very real feeling of inferiority’ (Thomas, 1992: 10). Thus, Davies (1987: 60) has described Wales as a classic example of an ‘internal colony’, for which the union with England marked the beginning of a sustained campaign of cultural homogenisation by the central state ‘... Welsh was banned for administrative and legal purposes, children were punished for speaking Welsh in schools’.

As noted, the Sardinian language was formerly recognised as late as 1999 (as were other traditions via UNESCO). Such nation-state intervention can in fact be traced over a significantly longer period, with Sardinians being excluded (for example) from the civil service during the 18th-century. Onnis et al. (2009) thus argue that the structure of relations with the nation state and the institutions thereof continues to inhibit the lack of real local decision making at the regional level.

Notwithstanding this view, it is certainly the case that this industrial restructuring saw regional institutions replaced by functional ones of the national state, disregarding (for example) local agriculture and the associated local mutual societies. On this subject, Hospers and Benneworth (2005) report low levels of trust and a lack of participation in civic society in Sardinia. We can think of this as social capital – with reference to Wales, Cooke et al. (2005) report higher levels, but it is typically local in nature and accompanied with low levels of trust.

There is a broader point here around cultural and political factors and their limitation of constitutional autonomy; Onnis et al. (2009) put this bluntly, stating that ‘... imposition of top-down approaches to decision-making and the consequent dismantling of the traditional social and cultural structures has lead Sardinia’s population and the political elites to expect solutions to their problems from the high hierarchies in the central state’ (1330). The danger here of interest articulation at the national level via local elites using these links to serve their

own interest is thus clear, with the risk that significant parts of the population will view regional autonomy largely as a mechanism to promote demands for resources (or other assistance) from the central state, rather than a means by which bottom-up capacity might be developed. In contrast, the approach in Wales is much more towards one of partnership working for the benefit of ‘Wales plc’; that said there are some parallels to Sardinia with certain political rhetoric around achieving a better ‘deal’ for Wales from Westminster (i.e. UK central government). In other words, venue-shopping still occurs in Wales, but less so than for interest articulation in Sardinia.

With specific regard to identity, as Hospers (2003) describes, a bottom-up emphasis on the ‘real’ Sardinia, reinforcing local culture, has seen some success albeit on a relatively small scale. During the mid to late 2000s, ‘Progetto Sardegna’ (Sardinian Project) led by Renato Soru promoted high-quality tourism, giving more attention to community entrepreneurship and the preservation of Sardinian identity. In recent years, the Project has stalled somewhat in the absence of extensive linkage with other sectors both within and outside the region which might facilitate more innovative approaches; this can be interpreted as the lack of an effective policy community. With some remarkable similarities, Clifton (2011, 2017) shows that Wales has also begun to use its culture and identity instrumentally as a resource in branding (both via products and the region itself), ironically stymied to a degree by some of the Welsh Government’s own activities in the external projection of regional image.

In particular, from this analysis, we can identify some common trends, summarised here according to the key components of the conceptual framework developed in the Section ‘Methodological approach: Analytical framework and case selection’. With regard to *territorial policy communities*, within non-state nations these are rescaling, embracing a multi-level policy concept. The success of development policy depends upon the confidence of sub-national government with these bodies, especially in (a) establishing alliances with European and national parties so as to obtain regional representatives supporting devolution in the legislative bodies, and (b) coordinating local authorities in order to mediate excessive localism. In relation to *institutional rescaling*, non-state nations have two key new tasks: to coordinate relationships between nation states and local authorities, and to integrate European programs within ‘ordinary’ regional development policy. Often this requires administrative reforms whose success is mainly linked to (a) the acquisition of primary legislative powers and taxation powers – see latest referendum in Wales in relation to the outcomes of the Silk Commission, and the free-zone (enterprise zone) proposals in Sardinia; and (b) a clear definition of the ‘administrative space’ thus avoiding the overlapping of competences and giving a precise limit to private intervention (reference is made here to the two-tier administrative systems in the UK which are potentially open to capture from public–private urban development bodies, and the speculative urbanism which followed the abolition of the Provinces in Sardinia). Ultimately, it was though the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 which forced both nation states to move on this centralism. Turning to *functional rescaling*, the transition towards a knowledge-based economy has had a strong influence upon non-state nations in terms of their functions and operational tools. Becoming central to economic development policy after the failure of national interventions for disadvantaged areas, sub-nation level governments have essentially renounced their own development role to become intermediaries between nation state and local authorities in the implementation of European programmes (in Wales adopting a precautionary economic policy, in Sardinia using structural funds as ‘extra’ resources to strengthen ongoing intervention).

Conclusions and implications for further research

This paper has sought to employ a comparative study to investigate the role of structure in shaping expressions of, and responses to, sub-state nationhood. The role of non-state nations' identity and agency regarding their relations to existing territorial states has been explored, with a particular focus on the means by which such regions might express their individuality. The idea of the territorial policy community was applied as a lens through which to make cross-national comparisons in the broader context of state rescaling and changing regimes of economic development policy, within the broader theoretical framework derived from the concept of new regionalism. The authors suggest that this is an interesting and indeed valuable exercise, allowing as it does for the exploration of evidence 'on the ground' of the processes involved. We are convinced that the two non-state nations that we employ as case studies – Wales and Sardinia – provide an interesting and relevant contribution to debates around the spaces for political exchange and interest articulation, not least as they bring together different state structures and traditions, cultures, and policies. However, they also provide sufficient commonality as variants of the non-state nation typology that meaningful comparisons can be made and insightful parallels drawn.

There are examples from the Sardinian case of the detrimental effects of top-down industrial policies on the already weakened indigenous capacities and local identity of a region, albeit later (partially at least) reasserted via the instrumental use of regional culture and identity. Wales has seen some similar developments albeit less overtly political. Devolution in Wales is (for the moment) partial and asymmetric; despite this, the venue-shopping approach to interest articulation has largely given way to an increasingly coherent territorial policy community – more so than in Sardinia. The experience of territorial policy communities in Wales and Sardinia shows how autonomist movements, although growing, are able to obtain a significant political outcome only when their needs are aligned with those of national governments – or even to those of the opposition in the national parliament. Both parties, non-state nations and national state, are then linked by opportunistic relationships based on political and electoral support. In both examples, the legacy of past norms and structures is evident, which to a degree has constituted a rather weak foundation for real autonomy – more so for Sardinia as 'type 2' non-state nation, but also an issue for Wales. Moreover, we should ultimately keep in mind the constraints on regional governments given the resources and levers available to effect significant change on outcomes, even if the 'correct' course of action can be identified. For sub-national governments more generally, it may be that the following are necessary but not sufficient in seeking to do so; the acquisition of primary legislative and tax-raising powers, establishing alliances at both the European and national levels, and recalling Hepburn (2011, 2013) – becoming adept at multilevel policy formation and delivery. For the use of local traditions, skills, and so on to be most effective for 'ordinary regions' (the beginnings of which we have seen in both case study regions), the continued devolution of policymaking and its inherently centralised institutions and associated policy levers (not just governments per se, but also banks, bodies concerned with innovation, the law and so on) from the central state to the local level may be strongly needed.

The study presented here has of course limitations and constraints; we have for example briefly attempted to quantify the scope of sub-national governments to effect genuine change here, but a much more comprehensive and sophisticated attempt to investigate this – again cross-nationally – might represent a fruitful area for further research. We have employed a rather broad-brush approach when considering the comparative policy formation and the institutions therein, so again further research could seek to investigate the

subtleties of these relationships at a much deeper level in an approach analogous to the one of ‘innovation biographies’, i.e. tracing a policy development from genesis to implementation incorporating a holistic mapping of all actors, institutions, and processes involved. On these points, there is a growing body of literature (some of it touched on herein) around how the quality of institutions impacts upon regional outcomes. If it is indeed the case that as per Rodr'iguez-Pose (2013), we should fit the local policy to the institutions available rather than vice versa, the investigation of what these might actually mean in practice should be a useful exercise.

The development of a different level of analysis may also be interesting; within this paper, the role of institutions has been the focus of analysis; less so variations in the operation of the politicians that seek to guide them. Perhaps a further development of the role of cultural transmission in these processes as outlined by Mokyr (2016) may shed light; similarly, Wales has seen relatively stable internal politics since the inception of devolution – this could reasonably lead to expectations of policy persistence and institutional stability but this has not been the case. Three potentially useful areas to investigate suggest themselves here, one being the region – nation angle in that the Welsh Labour Party is ultimately a branch of a UK level party – unlike other regional or nationalist parties (obviously caveats exist in that there can be quite significant differences between branches of a single party while conversely separatist parties may have similar agendas to unconnected parties at the nation state level). The second area to investigate could be the lack of a mature specialist departmental structure within regional governments which has the capacity to enact and ensure persistence, thus mitigating against cronyism and the promotion of ‘pet’ projects. Third, an empirical investigation of the territorial policy community as a whole (mapping actors, institutions and linkages) would be a potentially valuable contribution. Finally, at the time of writing, the elephant in the room is of course Brexit and the form that this will ultimately take – what powers for example risk being re-captured by the nation state from devolved administrations within the UK. These are all issues to address if, in the words of Adam Price⁶ (2015), devolution is to be more than merely a ‘dented shield’ against the worst excesses of the nation state.

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Notes

1. The election in 1982 and 1984 of Mario Melis, as yet the only President of the Sardinia Region from the nationalist party *Partito Sardo d'Azione*.
2. Italian: *Comprensori dello Sviluppo*.
3. Political stability has favoured a new season for regional enterprises incentives, accompanied by technical support, training opportunities and an institutional 'MICE-oriented' territorial marketing strategy (i.e. a strategy oriented to Meetings, Incentives, Congresses and Exhibitions – MICE).
4. Only in May 2014 did Sardinia gain a representative, with Renato Soru (a former Sardinian President) of the (centre-left) Democratic Party winning support in both islands.
5. <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140605075122/> and <http://commissionondevolutioninwales.independent.gov.uk/>
6. The Member of the Welsh Assembly for Carmarthen East and Dinefwr.

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