



Productivity+ in Cornwall: a place-based approach

Introduction

On Monday 9th May 2016, the British Academy held a roundtable in Truro to discuss a place-based approach to productivity in Cornwall. The session was introduced by Deborah Lamb, co-Chair of the British Academy policy project *Where We Live Now*. The afternoon included short interventions from representatives of policy, business and academia based in and around Cornwall. Interventions covered the implementation of the devolution deal, the future tourism and skills needs of Cornwall, thinking strategically for a long-term vision, and embedding the natural and historic environment in our understanding of culture towards holistic place-based growth policies. The session gathered academics from Cornwall, representatives from NGOs, environment and heritage experts, as well as those involved in infrastructure and services.

This briefing note summarises the discussion at the roundtable. As the roundtable was held under the Chatham House Rule, names have been redacted. This session followed a similar discussion in Manchester on the Monday 11th March 2016.

About *Where We Live Now*

Where We Live Now was developed by Deborah Lamb and Fiona Reynolds, who is the other Co-Chair of this project. The purpose of the project is to explore how people relate to place and the different spatial levels in which people connect to place and think about their place. The second objective is to think about and explore some of what that means for policymaking. Is decision-making at the right levels, given the way that people relate to place? Through this project, the British Academy is trying to offer solutions to that tension. The British Academy is keen to understand the issues that are concerning people all over the country, and to do some of the work of bringing together policymakers and academics.

This project is timely in terms of devolution and the deals around the country, including Cornwall. *Where We Live Now* is not just about devolution but it gives us an opportunity to consider the policy implications. This session is particularly interested in the relationship between productivity and place, and how that works in a number of facets. Through this discussion we are also trying to explore going beyond some of the traditional thinking about productivity and the impact of environment, culture and wellbeing on productivity that, and how it all works together with communication going both ways.

Thus far the project has included two public events – the first on balancing quantity and quality of housing provision, and the second on using social media data about the movement of people through places to design policy. There has also been a roundtable in Manchester on place-based productivity. These activities, as well as ten opinion pieces from a range of contributors, are featured on the project

microsite – www.wherewelivenow.com. Ongoing activities include a further productivity roundtable in Wales, roundtables in London on the relationship between local and central government in designing the scale of policy spheres, a collection of think pieces from a variety of academic disciplines and practitioner organisations, and a final policy report joining together the findings and conclusions from the project activities.

Lessons from Manchester

The discussion in Manchester raised the issue of where a place-based approach might be most appropriate, and whether it goes too far towards weakening already fragmented national institutions, which are vital to many people. In some instances, national standards may be necessary, whilst place-based policies which can improve the quality of life – rather than constitute an excuse for not meeting the original standards – could be helpful in other areas, to rethink how key services have previously been configured.

Other useful observations from Manchester, which may be useful in a Cornish context are:

- A need to recognise the rural spaces in between the urban areas – dealing with rural areas themselves as well as the relationship between rural and urban areas;
- Planning, whilst an unfashionable concept, is vital in maintaining beloved places, and improving that needs change;
- A broader understanding of the relationship between place, culture, health and wellbeing, and ultimately how we measure success – whether wellbeing and happiness should be the focus, and whether productivity is a means to that, or a by-product of it;
- Place as a lens for the integration of services – positive investment in preventive services rather than crisis-led services;
- The geography of place has real consequences in terms of connectivity, relative isolation, and exposure to extreme weather conditions.

Implementing devolution, and the future needs of Cornwall

Cornwall is a special place, and it is important to think constructively about what that means. Conversations about Cornwall and Cornwall's place in the UK and the EU should be constructive, and it is time to think differently about the geographical facet of Cornwall as a place.

The Local Enterprise Partnership is a facilitator or conduit for investment, along with the council and other bodies, in terms of infrastructure, opportunities, and skills within Cornwall. The LEP is currently planning up and beyond the year 2020, with the view that the current round of EU funding may potentially be the last if Brexit prevails. The framework for the next 4-5 years is set in many respects, and the mindset is largely operational, ensuring that investment can be converted into the desired return.

Devolution has many implications. Delays in operational activities can occur for many reasons but whilst devolution is very good for Cornwall, it can also slow down certain conversations. In addition, Cornwall is seen as small compared to the Northern Powerhouse so funding mechanisms designed to invest in small businesses to allow them to grow have run up against time constraints. At a recent LEP conference, Lord Adonis spoke on behalf of the National Infrastructure Commission, discussing the South East counties, HS2 and the Northern Powerhouse. The South West did not enter the conversation, just Hinkley. This indicates there is work to be done on developing the Cornish discussion, rather than concentrating on what Cornwall does not have.

There is a need to change the mindset of how Cornwall's current position and offering is described to the outside world, towards inward investment and focus on growth. People must be persuaded that Cornwall is a special place both to live and work. In the broadest sense, this means as an economy, culture, lifestyle and also its governance, in which there is a key alignment with the status of public

bodies under devolution, as well as Cornwall's unitary status. This also includes relative cohesion and the environment.

In practical terms, there is an issue with underemployment and high levels of inactivity. Cornwall's earnings and productivity levels are relatively low, with 40% of businesses in southeast Cornwall experiencing real exposure to the national minimum wage. This poses a real threat to an environment that is predominantly composed of SME and micro-businesses. In addition to this, the resilience of Cornwall's connectivity is an issue – there is a mismatch between the qualification of the people within or trying to get into work, compared to available employment opportunities. This is against the backdrop of the industrial landscape and housing inequalities.

There are many positive aspects such as Cornwall's tourism with its international reputation. Food, drink and restaurants also enhance the region's reputation, as well as a very distinct creative character. There is immense cohesion between and within public and private bodies, and there is a reputation for people living outdoor lifestyles, for green and blue gyms.

The economic landscape is also changing quickly. Digitally enabled businesses are growing at a huge rate, building upon the connectivity advantages of the South West. Pool Innovation Centre is now the second fastest growing area of its type in the country, with leading edge work on app development and other creative industries with links to health and e-health. The LEP and other public bodies are focused on research and development, mentoring and making workspace available to attract SMEs and start-ups. The challenge is not whether this will be successful, but how big it could be.

Space and aerospace is also another positive discussion in Cornwall building on dark skies, the peninsula environment, dispersed populations and the legacy from RAF sites. Newquay, in addition to being a booming airport, is also potentially the centre for a spaceport due to the development of the enterprise zone, the links into Goonhilly and improved connectivity. Some years ago this would have been inconceivable.

Marine and renewable opportunities are also changing rapidly. The Isles of Scilly are in many respects some of the most beautiful and possibly also the dirtiest parts of the UK coastline. In 20 years' time there will likely be a sustainable renewable energy source incorporating smart technology for housing connectivity. There is potential for house and wellbeing programmes to be based on this. In addition, there are calls out for deep geothermal, which, if successful, could make Cornwall a net exporter of energy.

Alongside these many positive developments, is the alignment between further and higher education, which is very important. Some of the devolution detail will allow that alignment of education provision against Cornwall's future needs to be more effectively deployed. Building on that is a will power and an intent to improve it. Underlying all of this is a need to recognise that there is a programme of government and European investment going forward but the hard work will be around inward investment and recycling monies. The LEP, council and Cornish people need to change the language used to describe place, to talk very differently about communities, economy, culture and the land. These positive attributes must be developed into items of national importance.

A strategic vision: beyond cities

Academia is no longer the ivory tower that it once was. There is a greater emphasis on relating academic work to the real world, through policy or commercial operations. Along those lines, some roots of a strategic vision began to emerge a decade ago as greater thought on a global scale was put into the relationship between human beings and the environment. Driven by climate change, biodiversity loss, and global pollution amongst other issues, this moved slightly beyond public health and reassessed what people were doing in relation to their surrounding environment, how they affect it and how it affects them.

The conversation in Cornwall has often been about improving opportunities for jobs, economic growth and more affordable housing. Billions of pounds have been spent over the years to transform Cornwall into this vision, but there is a strong argument that this has not been fully realised, despite the many positive attributes discussed above.

A different vision is required – around the UK, in Europe and around the world, people are concentrating on the urban environment in terms of developing society in the future. Some 85% of the UK population lives in an urban environment so the glut of government and EU initiatives for smart, health and sustainable cities is somewhat understandable. However, there are no major cities in Cornwall, rather there are small towns and many economic problems. There are small villages, tiny communities and much green space in between, and rather a lot of blue at the edge. There is as yet no clear plan or vision for these places.

The key question is to consider what Cornwall will be like in 20 years' time – this needs greater consideration, and incorporates transport, energy, education and its delivery, health services, employment sectors, farming and agriculture, as well as the impact of technological transformations in the interim. Many changes in these sectors, such as automated vehicles, electric buses and renewable local energy supply, are in progress and Cornwall will not be immune. Those with a stake in the future of Cornwall must question how these transformations will affect people's lives: whether people will want more choice and flexibility of work, to leave Cornwall and return later, or simply spend all their time in Cornwall but be better connected to the world through technology.

Some of the reasons for a lack of long-term vision can be found in 'standard' horizon scanning approaches. An example would be the question of the biggest future threat to global biodiversity: an answer might be ice cream consumption in China. When a quarter of the world's population starts to want dairy products, we must consider where that milk will be produced, and where extra pasture land for cattle will be sought. This impacts countries already producing dairy, and means for those and other countries, chopping down forests and the surrounding areas, wiping out biodiversity on a huge scale. This sort of thinking is required for Cornwall – what major global, European and national transformations will affect Cornwall? Key areas of concern are agriculture and housing, and whether technological developments can offer solutions.

Cornwall has many advantages, which contribute to the sense of 'special place', especially within the UK context. Cornwall is a coastal community – there are many opportunities to use beaches and coastal areas in interesting ways, and future potential for wave energy, and projects to develop massive seaweed farms for nutrients and as food products. As discussed, tourism is also a significant asset but certain aspects require further thought, such as sustainable tourism, travel infrastructure, and building on features such as the Eden project.

Across all of these issues it is important not to be led by external influences, not to be dependent on London or plans around the country, or the EU debate – the initiative, enthusiasm, momentum and creativity must be harnessed from within Cornwall towards delivering that vision. The biggest 'trick' of this vision is helping people with their daily lives – work, local economy, and housing. These practical aspects have to be wrapped up intimately with having a higher quality of life, as well as awareness of the surrounding environment, and its influence on health, wellbeing, optimism, communities and personal relationships.

Environmental growth and cultural distinctiveness

Three related topics under consideration at present in the context of Cornwall's decentralised future are: environmental growth, heritage and culture, and energy and resilience. As discussed, there is a strong cohesion between public bodies in Cornwall, and the Council's work with the Local Nature Partnership (LNP) is a good example of that. Other LNPs look enviously upon this relationship.

Underpinning Cornwall's view of the environment is the notion of sustainability, and a move to challenge how this is traditionally understood. Cornwall is now thinking about how to use the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in other words, thinking globally about Cornwall. Whilst current wisdom looks to highlighting difference and the 'unique' (as distinct from 'special'), the SDGs demonstrate in stark terms how similar issues in Cornwall are to other parts of the world.

The environment is often looked to as the potential source of solutions for life below water, life on land and climate action. An example might be reducing inequality – can the environment reduce human inequality? Similarly, there are salient questions about inequality in the environment, as illustrated in Cornwall with the coastal environment and property values compared to the middle, as well as differences in health and life expectancy combined.

The Environmental Growth Strategy seeks to look at this over a 50-year timeline. The fundamentals of the strategy are about environmental growth towards a net gain, as well as the function of natural systems in order to produce more goods and services. The context of the strategy is increasing and multiple pressures on Cornwall, on an environment that is already fundamentally depleted. One of the major selling points of Cornwall is the perceived quality of environment, which in some cases is true, but the function of that is to look beautiful. This beauty needs to be balanced with function, acknowledging that the base level environment is already very weakened from the past.

In addition to this is the development of a set of principles towards the protection of Cornwall's natural heritage, increasing natural capital, and ensuring that new developments are designed to enhance and support Cornwall's natural systems. The model for this set of principles is underpinned by the importance of the environment. There are spaces and places in the environment that are outside of structured society and the economy – nature also operates this way, despite human impacts on nature. One of the goals designed to develop people's experience and understanding of nature, and therefore to value it more, includes the suggestion to double the number of trees (currently 4-5% coverage) to put Cornwall on a par with the rest of the UK (averaging 12%).

A secondary area of discussion is the devolution of energy and resilience, in particular flooding and coastal defence and management. The current approach is organisationally driven, with each organisation working from a different set of responsibilities. Ideally, a better approach might be for those organisations to collaborate, but this is not currently a routine way of working. There is a large European bid in motion, which demonstrates how the relevant bodies and agencies can work together for place-based outcomes. Similarly, the devolution deal is working towards collaboration as a routine way of working, with a 25-point investment plan with coastal change in mind.

Returning to the 'special' understanding of Cornwall, the devolution deal includes a focus on heritage and culture. The Cultural Distinctiveness Study, a joint study between Cornwall Council and Historic England, supports development of a heritage council, which will have a coherent voice for Cornwall in that sector. The purpose of this study is to better understand how distinctiveness is formed in places in Cornwall, and how the historic natural environment contributes to different communities. Part of that includes working with Visit England to seek a better outcome for the tourism sector, and to see how devolution could support that. Heritage Kernow has already been set up by local partners to promote and manage the culture and heritage of Cornwall. This will feed into a wider South West Heritage Environment Forum.

There is an important lesson from heritage, which is often seen as something to be held, rather than lessons from the past about decision-making. Much could be learned in looking back at the conditions for innovation in Cornwall in the past, such as prior to the industrial revolution when Cornwall was a central maritime hub for the whole of Europe. This is somewhat of a cautionary tale – the landscape, which is depleted through Cornwall's mining heritage and further compounding factors from the agricultural industry, might look very different now. Heritage can inform where we live now, and

can demonstrate the attachment to place. A cultural distinctiveness approach can help to define that which is 'special' in terms of buildings, geography and feelings.

Geography may have to change, there may not be continued resources to keep everyone living where they are, as they are now. However, the sense of special place doesn't have to be sacrificed to do this. Cornwall's coastal communities are iconic in appearance, but may have to change substantially in order to develop resilience to flooding. Communities must be involved in this discussion in order to strengthen their sense of community, whilst loosening some attachments to the shape of the place as it is now. The end result is to build on Cornwall's strengths, adapt to change innovatively and deliver the idea of a sustainable Cornwall.

Central government: the bigger picture

Collaboration between the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) and the European Centre for Environment and Human Health seeks to support Defra in thinking about what more the department can do to promote health and wellbeing, whether at the individual level such as getting people outdoors, or at the population level, improving the places in which we live. Defra is now building its 25-year plan, which will include strategy for the environment, farming and agriculture. The plan will most likely be delivered through the natural capital approach.

Related to this forward-thinking approach is the need and desire to work with other departments and agencies such as the Department of Health, Public Health England and the Department for Culture, Media & Sport. This would go some way towards balancing the different capitals in society: natural capital, cultural capital, and social capital, of which health is a part. These agencies and bodies share interests in urban resources in particular, however the shared language and understanding of what is important in society is not there at present. If a problem is owned by one department, and the resources by another, it can fall between the cracks. This can be solved with local level collaboration, which can be easier to generate and maintain, particularly with devolution.

A good example in Wales is the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, which is being used to build structures that force collaboration as the status quo. The bill has been put together in such a way that wellbeing must be considered in every policy and initiative going forward. This includes Defra and Health. What is happening in Cornwall possibly has more in common with Wales than what is happening in central government at the moment.

6000 miles away

There are important instrumental reasons why it is important for academic institutions such as the University of Exeter to work on Impact, Innovation and Business projects, such as research excellence framework reporting, income and diversification, as well as global standing. However, there are also imperatives concerning engaging with communities and businesses, as well as ethical imperatives concerning a desire to drive environmental, social, and economic change.

You, Me and Our Resilience explores how very different communities, in Kenya and in Cornwall, are transforming and building resilience to climate change, and some of the problems that communities are facing, in very different socio-economic contexts. The project has sought to engage people on an emotional and cultural level, which is under-represented in theories of resilience.

Porthleven in Cornwall experienced serious storms in 2014, and communities in southeast Kenya have faced very extreme climate change in terms of flood risk, storms and drought conditions. The project involves working with a theatre in each location, Golden Tree Productions in Cornwall and Sponsored Arts for Education in Kenya. In Cornwall the method was place-based theatre production highlighting coping with storms and flooding, whilst using forum theatre in Kenya for communities

to co-create a situation and critique scenarios live. In Kenya, plays have included fishing, farming, female education, disease and public health, ecosystem services and diversified economies.

The outcomes indicate a real powerlessness in dealing with these situations, and communities categorised risk and resilience in very different ways. In Kenya, there was much more personal resilience, and there was much more systemic resilience in Cornwall. Narratives and solutions were suggested by the participating communities, they were not imposed. If the lessons learned could be transferred, the two communities could learn a lot from each other. This is a cultural and emotional issue – it has less to do with graphs and statistics. Inciting change will require direct, meaningful engagement with communities.

What makes Cornwall a special place? From vision to reality

According to Philip Payton, feeling Cornish is feeling as if Cornwall is more than just a place to live. Others have expanded this: it is a place to be, but also a way to be.

5 million people visit Cornwall every year. Some 10% of the British population feels a strong personal connection to Cornwall. Unlike any other region in Britain, Cornwall has a unique national reach, effectively equivalent to London in terms of national connectedness. There is a long history of diversity, people moving through Cornwall, due to its strategic coastal position.

In addition, the Cornish have been recognised as a protected ethnic minority in the European framework convention on human rights. Compared to 542 000 Welsh speakers, there are only about 1000 speakers of the Cornish Kernewek language, which ought to be protected rather than trivialised.

However, contrary to popular myth, Cornwall is not a rural idyll – 209 000 Cornish people are urban dwellers (ONS). Cornwall is a post-industrial landscape, with a mining World Heritage Site. This designation, alongside the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty designation, is very positive for Cornwall's reputation, but this can also be overly restrictive. An example would be UNESCO's opposition to developments in Hayle and the possibility of the resumption of mining, which threatened the WHS status. Integrating creativity and business at a local level can resolve tensions such as this, for example in St Just and Pendeen – the Tin Coast – the National Trust is using the mining history and culture to promote a sustainable model of a great place to live, and visit.

In addition to strengthening a circular economy of market towns, a key recommendation towards reframing productivity in a place-based way would be to look towards the 'alternative capitals'. This is being led by the 'Big Four' accountancy firms and has since been taken up by the National Trust and the Crown Estate, the latter of which is the most developed with reporting on six capitals: Financial, Physical, Natural, Human, Knowledge and Networks. Other bodies such as the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development are also starting to look towards human capital evaluation.

The feeling of being Cornish – that living in Cornwall entails living a certain way – could be harnessed as an economic opportunity with more forethought of the unique selling point. However, as demonstrated with the six capitals, productivity is still reported in a non-integrated way, and there is still a problem with the perception and understanding of productivity. Amongst EU countries, the UK works some of the longest hours, and yet productivity is comparatively poor. The definition of productivity needs to be more clearly understood within Cornish communities – not just business communities. Being more productive must mean working smarter and more efficiently, not necessarily harder or longer.

Cornwall has a significant culture of enterprise, and there is a noticeable difference in many Cornish business communities compared to elsewhere in the country. There is an emotional attachment and commitment, which often means change can be challenging. In terms of place, this can give the

appearance of a lack of buy-in for unitary policies, which may not necessarily relate to local activities. Utilising that pre-existing emotional energy and aligning it more clearly with a strong, long-lasting legacy vision presents a real opportunity.

A unique, although not necessarily positive, attribute of Cornwall arises when mapping personal wellbeing data from the What Works Centre for Wellbeing against the LEP's productivity data – there is very high wellbeing against low productivity. The long-standing definition of productivity means, simply put, making more from less money. In practice this means fewer jobs and jobs of a different nature. Redefining measures of success for long-term growth means strengthening the sense of community people have in Cornwall, but in some senses to loosen the attachment people have to place, through which greater resilience can be built.

There is an opportunity to look to initiatives in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, which question concepts of success. The Office for National Statistics has run discussions around the UK on what is important in a place, towards the development of a set of objective and subjective measures; some are universal, and some are unique to a place. These measures of success could form the backbone of an inclusive place-based growth strategy, in other words a long-term Cornish vision, and devolution presents an opportunity to do this. A positive example of thinking differently about productivity comes from one of the first clients of the Pool Innovation Centre, which reported a 30% increase in per capita output as a productivity measure. A significant proportion of this was due to a low level of absenteeism, because people enjoyed their working environment more.

However, many of these public debates are overly technical and still preliminary. As Cornwall's devolved infrastructure gets up and running, it is becoming increasingly clear that communities want something tangible to demonstrate progress. In addition, a significant number of people in Cornwall do not work, such as those who are in retirement, so any focus on the work environment does not impact these people. A conversation about what is important in Cornwall ought to include the needs of this group, and suggestions might include technology and telephone connectivity – making sure broadband and BT lines are functioning, or any problems are resolved quickly.

Whilst there is much cohesion between public bodies and services in Cornwall, there is room for improvement – for example, both hospitality and social care are large sectors in Cornwall and both have low pay, high economic impact and relevance. Investment in local hospitality networks towards lifting wages and up-skilling is only just beginning. These tactics could also be applied to domiciliary care, considering life expectancy is improving rapidly. The fastest-growing group of entrepreneurs in Cornwall are in the 64+ category.

There is an argument for strong Cornish identity manifesting upon people returning to the region, having experienced other people's passions for other places. However, to maintain Cornwall's economy and reputation young people have to be encouraged to stay, and other people from the rest of the UK and abroad must be encouraged to settle in Cornwall. In order to do this, there must be more in place than strong higher education institutions – there must be opportunities for progression in employment, but also life activities and cultural offering.

As similar discussions continue apace around the country, Cornwall's unique offering is the environment, which could generate local sustainability that realises its global value. Policies and decisions should be checked in terms of local sustainability and global value. Centrally-driven policies such as the development of a Local Plan, which must be constructed in a particular way, must be reconsidered in light of this discussion. The future of public services, which have so often been told to do 'more with less', must instead be encouraged to do 'better with less', focusing on quality and integrated services.

In conclusion, a long-term vision for growth in Cornwall must be made in reference to Cornwall's interactions with the rest of the world, but the momentum, understanding and delivery of that vision

- the measures of success - must come from within Cornwall without putting up walls. Global permeability must be balanced with focus on those districts which are perceived as impermeable.

Statistics in this briefing are drawn from the discussion and presentations at the roundtable so cannot be cited directly. If you have any queries about this briefing, the Where We Live Now project or the British Academy's policy activities, please contact:

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