Chapter 14

Politics, Systems Thinking and Building the Wellbeing Economy: The Example of Wales

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Abstract This chapter discusses the example of Wales to give insights to how and why a Wellbeing Economy approach has been successfully initiated there, and some idea of its future prospects. The systems aspects of Wellbeing Economy are identified as being inherent in ambitions to develop transitional strategies that can achieve system change through combinations of measures across different aspects of economy, society and ecology. The example of Wales includes the historical, cultural and economic background to help understanding of the bases on which Wellbeing Economy commitments can be supported in a population. The chapter concludes with some general points about the value of systems tools and approaches in helping to really bring Wellbeing Economy topics off the page and into reality. In particular, the complexity of the task of Wellbeing Economy is suited to systems approaches that can help to map coherent relationships between different areas and also aid in moving from loose alliances to more synergies. These tools and approaches can be powerful when combined with the extensive local knowledge and motivation that exists wherever we find communities and individuals working for a better future.

Keywords Wellbeing economy · Systems · Politics · Wales · Alliances · Synergies

14.1 Introduction

This chapter explores issues of the conception and roles of politics in creating a constituency of support for Wellbeing Economy transformations. It focuses on the case study of Wales, a small country currently within the UK, but with a devolved government, the Welsh Senedd. This case also gives some perspectives on how the individual situation and historical circumstances of different countries affect and inform the path that Wellbeing Economy might take. Wales is particularly of interest as the current Welsh government has joined the Wellbeing Economy Governments (WEGo) coalition of governments supporting a Wellbeing Economy approach.

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Current membership in the coalition includes Scotland, New Zealand, Iceland and Finland in addition to Wales. Wales has in place some relevant foundational legislation, the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (2015), which helps to provide a framework for Wellbeing outcomes across a range of related areas. How we manage, engage and communicate wellbeing is of concern when we consider the complex systems aspects of transitioning to Wellbeing Economies. The experience of Wales may help to illuminate some possible ways forward.

This chapter also draws on the current attempts being made in Wales to engage with the electorate and wider civil society to give their support and vote for Wellbeing in the 2021 Senedd (Welsh Assembly) elections. In so doing, the analysis goes beyond the limited conception of politics as being concerned primarily with state actors, using an expanded conception that includes civil society organisations and social movements as important political actors. This approach follows that taken by the Wellbeing Economy Alliance which has governmental and civil society wings. This exploration gives a view of how these relationships might play out in the case of different countries. Some of the strategies for communication and engagement may be of interest for others concerned with gaining political support and legitimacy for the Wellbeing Economy project in their own contexts. Finally, the conclusion raises questions about politics and systems thinking, proposing that systems-informed transition strategies will be needed.

‘Wellbeing Economy’ is a very broad concept (Hough-Stewart et al., 2019), but there are several key elements to highlight for the purposes of this chapter. Firstly, there is the need to move to deliberate design of economic frameworks that structure and enable the activity of economic agents. This point is linked to the commitment to making the economy work for wellbeing outcomes and clearly makes the links between social and political goals and values and economic governance. In this way the Wellbeing Economy is opposed to the neoliberal concept of a ‘value-neutral’ economy which should be allowed to take its own path irrespective of the harm it may do to people, communities or nature along the way. The commitment to wellbeing outcomes implies a wide interdisciplinary research and development programme to work out how to achieve these, with many different strategies and tools proposed (Blewitt ed, forthcoming). Secondly, there is the key recognition that the economy has to be designed to keep in being life-support systems of the planetary ecology and climate. Not only do we need to keep in being that which currently exists, but also to repair and regenerate the living systems on which we all depend. Finally, the approach to change is based in a systems understanding which proposes that a combination of changes in different areas can add up to progressive system change understood as ‘transitional’. This brings the hope that system change can be designed in ways that could keep key social functions and provisioning in place whilst change is managed. Whilst this demands a high and developing awareness on the part of actors, it may be able to avoid destructive episodic change which has frequently resulted in new forms of oppression and environmental damage.

In order to discuss, the historical bases from which a Wellbeing Economy might emerge we would therefore want to inquire into the cultural, religious and ethical roots of values and identities. We might also want an idea of social norms and the

texture of community life. The material infrastructure and economic sectors that have developed will be important; along with the way that these have shaped the land and ecologies. Environmental history is still in development, building from the huge achievements of J.W. Moore (2003), but there is no environmental history of Wales as such. Here, I refer to John Davies (1996) work 'The Making of Wales' as it covers infrastructure and environment along with social history. The account below is necessarily a compressed overview that combines elements of social, economic and environmental history to provide context to the development of the Wellbeing Economy in Wales.

14.2 Welsh History and the Changing UK

The history of Wales is important in order to understand the challenges and potentials of the current time. Wales has been called an 'internal colony,' a term designed to indicate the balance of a relationship that is colonial in certain respects, but also includes, and implicates, the country in other wider colonial ventures (Price, 2020).

Wales was colonised early in the formation of the UK (thirteenth century) and many look back with regret to the destruction of legal frameworks, social norms and the Welsh language. For example, the laws of Hwyl Da (Hwyl the Good) are held to have been more equal, for example with respect to gender (Owen, 1841). Whilst there was continuing conflict, the imposition of the Norman state in the Marches (or borders) put in place forms of estate land ownership and class structure (as in the rest of the UK). The spread of Christianity also affected land and ecology as for example, estates granted to the Cistercians were material in bringing in intensive sheep farming driving deforestation (Davies, 1996). Social divisions were heightened in Wales due to the clashing of cultural norms and the prevalence of the Welsh language spoken by the ordinary people. The importance of the cultural aspects can perhaps be seen in the fact that the current Eisteddfodau cultural celebrations, and the youth festivals or Urdd, are the largest in Europe, quite an achievement for a small nation of approximately 4 million (Davidson, 2020). As a nation Wales has been developed in a classic extractive pattern, with infrastructure designed for these purposes (as can be seen from road and rail maps for example), and with attempts to suppress or destroy indigenous culture and institutions. The rules against speaking Welsh at school, and the punishments, are within living memory (Gower, 2012).

14.2.1 *Leading the Early Industrial Revolution*

The economic history centrally includes the huge social upheaval of a farming nation turning to industries based on extraction and processing of raw materials, including slate, lead, copper and coal (Davis, 1996). These early industrial sites are found throughout the north and south but south Wales became profoundly shaped by the

contribution of the Welsh mining communities to the first industrial revolution based on fossil fuel energy, located mostly in the south Wales coalfield in a challenging landscape of deep valleys. The availability of fuel and minerals drove the development of industries such as steel (Gower, 2012). These later developments changed south Wales with much incoming immigration and created cultural divisions between the south and the north still felt to this day. In some ways the history of south Wales has more in common with industrial communities in the north of England than with rural areas of Wales.

The West is a mix of Welsh-speaking farming communities and areas with longstanding English connections from the time of the Norman conquest (eleventh century) onwards. In the south, many of the coal, iron and limestone mines were owned by historical aristocratic landowners who made vast fortunes. These developments also prompted infrastructure to speed Welsh coal across the British Empire as it was then, for example the ports of south Wales at Cardiff and Barry (Davis, 1996). The production of steel in Wales also supported international British infrastructure across the Empire and beyond. In addition, the Welsh population supplied services and inspiration to the wider UK in the form of domestic service, army personnel, educators, writers, musicians, poets and playwrights.

14.2.2 Agriculture

In agriculture, Wales also suffered from the ‘English disease’ of the turn to sheep which has led to upland deforestation and destruction of biodiversity (Davies, 1996). Vast fortunes could be made in the wool industry and rural workers were displaced from their subsistence livelihoods, in order to extend sheep farming. More recently, industrial agri-business has taken hold in Wales to a great extent with pollution problems arising from artificial phosphate fertilisers and the loss of soil and fertility caused by massive farm machinery. The Welsh family farm is struggling with the multiple demands of the market, subsidies regimes and policy and regulatory requirements (Morris, 2021). The impact of the shift to agri-business production models on Welsh wildlife has been huge, and also contributes to climate change (Wales Wildlife Trust, 2019). As farming emissions come to be taken more seriously in climate agreements internationally there are more drivers in place supporting a transition of farming to more agro-ecological models (Institute of Welsh Affairs, 2019).

14.2.3 Fishing and Coastal

Wales has a great deal of very beautiful coastline and historic fishing and port communities were centres of trade when much transport was seaborne owing to lack of good roads. Fishing is suffering from the over-fishing of the recent past and major port activities are still linked to fossil fuels including oil into Milford Haven for fuels and

into Barry dock for use in the plastics industry. Ports also include holiday and business traffic between Wales and Ireland. The coast, including various important islands, has become a major centre for tourism from Victorian (Queen Victoria, reigned from 1837–1901) times, encouraged by the arrival of the railways. The tourism industry includes nature tourism and the state of the environment and of populations of charismatic animals such as seals and puffins are a key concern for the industry as well as for conservationists. This includes the state of the marine environment where diving is popular (Wales Wildlife Trusts, 2020). In this respect, Wales can be seen to have the potential for schemes similar to Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) which has had success in parts of Africa for example. Whilst tourism provides jobs these are still often seasonal and increasingly there is a great deal of pressure on the housing stock. The campaign against second homes continues to be a feature of Welsh political life, with housing for locals made even more difficult by the recent pandemic-inspired flight from city living (Brennan, 2021).

14.2.4 Culture and Religion

The rise of non-conformist churches and the development of the Welsh bible also made a big contribution to the radical and ethical roots of social change (Gower, 2012), keeping alive forms of spirituality and identity, reflected in music and song. Wales has always had a high value for literacy and learning and the cultural dimensions of identity have kept robust partly through these traditions and their association with the wider Celtic revival in both Ireland and Scotland (Paxton, 2020). For example, many miners in Wales spoke Welsh and some had poetry societies, in addition to the Miners' Institutes and Libraries (Millard, 2020). As a key source of energy for the UK Wales was subject to sometimes brutal control by centralised UK government. For example, in the Welsh valleys it is well remembered that the British army was ordered to open fire on striking Welsh miners in 1910 in Tonypandy (Williams, 1973). The miners were striking to protest the way that a cartel of mine-owners were keeping wages low, just one example of many historical injustices that have helped to form the diverse identities of Wales.

14.2.5 The 'Modern' Economy

The UK Thatcher government of the 1980s decided to break the hold of the mining unions on UK energy supplies, closing the mines thereby of a large amount of the skilled industrial workforce of Wales. This was enabled by the rapid globalisation of development and cheaper production costs elsewhere (Gower, 2012). As Britain lost the wider Empire neo-liberal agendas developed London as a hub of global finance and the financial activity of the city has become the biggest net provider of revenue for the UK (Westminster) government. London became the exchange

centre for Euro-Dollars and thus an important intermediary between the growing EU economy and the US, a fact which will be important in understanding the potential for economic collapse of the Brexit project. Economically, with its industrial base destroyed, Wales was thus reduced to an economic supplicant with social services, and unemployment benefits supplied by the centralised Westminster government (Davies 1996). The balance of revenue from and to Wales is in dispute however, one fertile source of disagreement is the lack of specifically Welsh economic data (Independence Commission, 2020).

With the link between energy supply and Welsh labour power broken, the need to exercise such a high degree over Wales became less pressing for the wider UK. Increased demands for parity for the Welsh language and more national self-government were gradually heard. However, it took a great deal of campaigning action by Cymdeithas Yr Iaith Gymraeg (Welsh Language Society) to gain a TV channel in Welsh (S4C), with a highly respected Welsh cultural figure Gwynfor Iwan, threatening a hunger strike and forcing the end of the British (UK) government. Calls for independence resulted in a referendum on independence in 1997 with a majority against at that time (Gower, 2012).

Economically, failure to appreciate the need to plan for new and clean technology, along with market fundamentalism, has meant that much money has been wasted in Wales by those trying to attract corporate finance to older industrial areas. Rural areas of Wales have struggled in the face of international competition, often being kept solvent in more recent times by EU subsidies. Car-based tourism has flourished in Wales, but along with this has come pressure on local housing and a dismal level of local public transport and infrastructure for local people. Finally, Wales and the rest of the UK has experienced the terrible effects on communities of Westminster-led economic austerity, following the 2008 financial crash. In summary, this presents a history of extraction and exploitation of communities and nature (Independence Commission, 2020).

Although Wales is proud of its industrial history, and the linked stories of human solidarity and community, the early industrial revolution exacted a terrible toll on the Welsh environment. The spoil heaps of the mines (many still unsafe particularly with climate change induced high rainfall), the imposition of monocultures of forest plantations (known as the 'Green Desert' as they support so little wildlife), and the flooding of valleys to provide water for cities, being some well-known examples (Davies 1996). More recently, the parlous state of biodiversity in Wales is being headlined, with the recognition that iconic landscapes such as the Brecon Beacons are severely deforested and impoverished in terms of wildlife. The phenomenon of 'empty landscapes' has been recognised and rewilding of parts of Wales is now more under open discussion with some encouraging examples underway although some prefer other terms (Cambrian Wildwood, 2020).

14.2.6 Devolution and Brexit

The model of UK governance over the past 30 years has been progressive devolution and the Welsh Government has control over Education, Health, Environment and a range of other areas. The wide support for the Senedd (formerly the Welsh Assembly) and the official status of the Welsh language have meant that Welsh capacity for self-directed political change has greatly increased. However, as the implications of Brexit become more apparent, it is clear that the developing Welsh and Scottish devolution settlements, and the Northern Ireland Peace Agreement, have grown up within the frameworks of EU membership.

For some forces in the UK Brexit presents an opportunity to recentralise the UK and re-establish a greater degree of control. The recent Brexit bill was used to make provision for an extraordinary re-balancing of power towards the centre and consequent damage to the internal settlement of the UK. The provisions for the 'internal market' contained in the Brexit bill were couched in 'neutral' economic language but the implications for the power of the Welsh and Scottish governments to shape the economy are profound. It has been stated in the Welsh Assembly that these measures drive a coach and horses through the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and the Welsh Government's commitment to the Wellbeing Economy (Senedd 21).

One clear example of the effect on the prospects for the Wellbeing Economy is the question of the replacement for the EU structural funds. During the Brexit debate, it was promised that Wales would not miss out on the EU funds it used to gain, which were under the control of the Welsh Government. What was not said was that these replacement funds would be centrally controlled by Westminster and based in the old neoliberal market logics now presented as 'Global Britain.' The Welsh Government's commitments to progressive environmental and social policies is thus under threat as these will mean nothing if any measures can be over-ridden by Westminster in the name of 'neo-liberal UK market logics.'

Here, we have a clear, ongoing example of how political frameworks with the power to make change directly influence the viability of the Wellbeing Economy project. This shows how the development of meaningful subsidiarity and self-governance has to be considered a vital aspect of the Wellbeing Economy enabling frameworks, considered further below.

The recent elections for the Welsh Senedd have made it politically more difficult for this planned centralisation to be aggressively pursued for now. The predicted surge for the conservatives following the general UK polls did not happen to any great extent. Instead, the current Welsh Government, largely run by Welsh labour, had a ringing endorsement from the electorate. Why was this? many are crediting this win to the care-focused and cautious approach to the pandemic from the Welsh Government which is widely seen as more successful than in England. However, there may also be some recognition that the Welsh Devolution settlement is under attack. Can it be perhaps that the vote for the current Welsh Government was also in part a defensive reaction and a re-assertion of the desire for at least an effective

degree of self- government? At present the union in the United Kingdom is held to be voluntary, and whilst this is still the case, negotiation and mediation will need to take the place of undermining legislation by stealth disguised as purely ‘economic’ enablement (McAllister, 2022).

14.3 The Foundations of the Wellbeing Economy in Wales

But what does this history tell us about the resources and potential for Wales to be play a significant role in the development of the Wellbeing Economy? This section will review some of the more significant elements before proceeding to an analysis that identifies some generic features that could help us understand potential and strategy elsewhere. This review is not intended to imply that the road is easy in Wales, nor that really substantial progress has been made as yet, but rather that some of the necessary ingredients seem to be in place and could be built on further.

14.3.1 *Does Wales Have a Culture of Equality?*

The continuing struggle to maintain, rediscover and create forms of community and wellbeing in Wales has succeeded in keeping alive forms of social solidarity which are a real strength in times of difficulty. Wales was a huge force in the development of the labour movement, with many Welsh cultural and political figures contributing to the post WWII social contract which included the National Health Service (NHS) and the fledgling welfare state (Gower, 2012). The political calls for independence have often been heard alongside strong anti-racist and internationalist attitudes and action, although Welsh nationalism can have its bigoted and exclusionary aspects. The campaign for Welsh independence has yet to fully establish a cosmopolitan vision of an inclusive form of Welsh identity that the Scottish National Party (SNP) under Nicola Sturgeon has made so attractive (Scothorne, 2021). Wales did narrowly (52% to 48%) vote for Brexit and there has been prejudice against some EU workers who are believed to have lowered wages, especially in the skilled trades.

Wales has many innovative organisations in civil society in addition to some ground breaking not-for-profits and a generally socially conscious public. As noted, one very important tendency in Welsh history and society is the relatively strong support for equality. This is relative to England and hence is perhaps more akin to norms in Nordic countries rather than anything more radical. There is a growing awareness of intersectional equality issues in addition, although much remains to be done. As we have seen dramatically in American and other examples, where extreme climate impacts strike, inequality greatly worsens without specific measures being taken. There will be an increased need to support all communities in developing resilience but support will be especially needed for weaker communities, otherwise future events will produce a worsening social tragedy. There are some signs that

these points are gradually being taken on board in Wales and resilience is one of the Wellbeing goals as outlined below.

14.3.2 Innovative Organisations

One way to consider social change is to look at the intersection of different social sectors—government, civil society and business and the roles they might play—but also what enabling and enforcing actions might be required across these sectors. In Wales, there is a range of very influential organisations that are now **hybrid organisations**—that is they comprise elements of all three sectors. Examples that are big in Wales are housing associations; health trusts; universities; and other social/not-for-profit businesses such as Welsh Water. All these organisations have a relationship to public money and some form of social accountability to produce public benefit. From traditional economic perspectives, the balance of the Welsh economy towards such organisations has been criticised as needing to be rebalanced more towards private enterprise. However, in seeking to build a more social and ecological economy, many of these organisations are a valuable asset as they have a track record of positive social innovation and partnership working. We will need to learn from these experiences and skills if we are to respond effectively to climate and nature emergencies and to build resilience in a Wellbeing Economy.

These organisations and their spending power, have been the basis for the development of interest in the Foundational Economy (Welsh Government, 2021a). The model here is to use the power of public money to help support local economy and not-for-profit economy developments in the wider goal of an economy that exists to provide public value. Similarities with developments in former industrial communities in the north are of interest here, the Foundation Economy has also been called the ‘Preston Model’ based in community wealth building. Of significant interest here is that the Cardiff Business School, housed in the wider eminent Russell Group (group of prestigious universities in the UK) of Cardiff University, has been reoriented around the concept of ‘public value.’ This change of orientation reflects and supports the wider commitments in Wales to Wellbeing, developments which have been underway for some time.

14.3.3 The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act

The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, WFGAct (2015) was the outcome of an extensive period of consultation and development, linked to the constitution of the then Welsh Assembly (2006). In the same period the Welsh Government brought commitments to Sustainable Development and addressing Climate Change into the constitution. ‘The Wales we Want’ National Conversation (Cynnal Cymru, 2006) helped to give legitimacy and bring more voices to the table in setting up these

commitments. The WFG Act was also the result of intense personal commitment of politician Jane Davidson, explored in her (2020) book ‘future gen: Lessons from a Small Country’, and the activity of a loose coalition of NGOs and agencies all committed to sustainable development.

The constitution also importantly included a commitment to Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship or ESDGC. These measures, although not being strongly mandatory, have formed the background to the adoption of Wellbeing Economy commitments and form part of the political legitimacy for the concepts in Wales. The Wellbeing Framework of the Welsh Government guides reporting and policy development and comprises the following key goals:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- A globally responsible Wales

These goals also help enable and support commitments to the UN Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs (Wales SDGs, 2021).

14.3.4 WEAll Cymru and Advocacy

The Welsh Government signed up to the Governmental Wellbeing Economy Alliance (WeGo) in 2020 in a move that was widely welcomed by Welsh progressive groups. A civil group was also formed, the Wellbeing Economy Alliance Cymru in order to spread awareness in civil society more widely and to help build the social consensus to really make these commitments mean something. In common with the wider WEAll approach, WEAll Cymru (2021) has constructed itself as a broad network, recognising and amplifying the existing work of a wide range of already existing organisations, many of whom were central to the development of the WFG Act. There is still a long way to go in developing many of the key themes of the Wellbeing Economy in Wales, some of which are identified below in the analysis.

One direct action that the WEAll Cymru has taken recently is to develop joined-up advocacy for Wellbeing at the 2021 Senedd Elections. This took the form of a hustings where party representatives were invited to respond to a series of pointed questions. The hustings were very well attended and this was one of the lively political events in the run up to the elections, raising the profile of the Wellbeing Economy at the same time as pushing for more action (WEAll Cymru, 2021a). At the time of writing WEAll Cymru is relatively new, but the signs are good that it can become a hub for agreement and joint action across a wide range of progressive civil society groups. Of note here is that Oxfam Cymru (2020) has produced a Donut Economics analysis of the situation in Wales, outlining the scale of the challenge in terms of environment and

equality. Also World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Cymru (2017) is ahead in recognising the links between biodiversity crisis and climate change and advocating for joined up solutions that have greater equality as a key feature. Finally, it is important that the Welsh Government (2021b) has made a big commitment to Circular Economy and although this is in its early stages there are some good civil society organisations which are supporting and extending the debate (Circular Economy Wales 2021). One further development springs from the history of different approaches to community wealth such as investments in cooperatives. Recently, we have seen the development of a Welsh Bank, Banc Cambria (2021) which is committed to financial inclusion. In addition, proposals for innovative forms of finance for funding the scale of the transition to zero carbon that is needed have been proposed by the Wales Green Party (2021) amongst others. There is also an acknowledged need for a wider systemic understanding of how all these different elements can support each other, in order to make good progress to link up these various agendas.

14.4 Analysis of Generic Elements

This section contains some reflections on the political aspects of the development of the Wellbeing Economy agendas in Wales with some possible lessons for other areas of a general nature.

14.4.1 Wellbeing Economy Can Help to Support a Vision for a Different Future

Considering both the Welsh and Scottish devolved governments' commitments to a Wellbeing Economy we can see that this helps to give form and substance to the distinctiveness of the national projects which they each outline. Wherever constitutional change is happening there are opportunities, but there is a need for solid implementation plans to really make plans work. The existence of an international Wellbeing Economy agenda, together with associated developing areas of expertise and agreement in various position papers helps to give both the Welsh and Scottish government more credibility in their attempts to carve out a distinctive approach to economy within the current UK constitutional settlement. In other words, the Wellbeing Economy helps make the case for the salience of more locally embedded and responsive forms of economy that could be seen as part of an 'economic democracy' agenda. This might lead us to consider that a Wellbeing Economy approach may meet resistance from very strong states that resist forms of more local autonomy. This consideration highlights the need for development of further agency for real local economic democracy. Where strong states are resistant this might be accomplished under the heading of building resilience for local areas to cope with the

problems of climate change and biodiversity loss. Locally informed action is priceless when it comes to citizen support and engagement and this may be a bargain that even strong states might come to recognise as necessary.

14.4.2 Wellbeing Economy as Distinctive is not Necessarily Strong on Environment

The case for the links between greater equality and economic democracy identified above and real action on nature/biodiversity and climate crises is still being made. This needs to be stronger and more evidenced. This is one reason that the current alliance between the Scottish Greens and the Scottish National Party (SNP) is to be welcomed. This might be a point for the Wellbeing Economy Alliance to prioritise in terms of international exchange, learning and strategy. This consideration highlights the importance of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act in Wales which makes specific links between equality and the health of the natural environment. However, it remains to be seen whether the Welsh Government will live up to its environmental commitments and so far the record of achievement is not good. Even though much more could be done with soft power the Welsh Government needs to gain more effective regulatory powers in order to really make this work.

14.4.3 Leveraging Existing Green Shoots and Creating Alliances

Knowing who to engage with in any context means a real knowledge of the history and potentials of the area and context. In the Welsh case there is less of a cultural schism between civil society organisations such as NGOs and other civil associations such as unions than there can be in some other locations. The acceptance of the need for ‘just transition’ that recognises the importance of workers’ rights and involvement in change is one feature of this which again might be a learning point for others. The importance of the Foundation Economy approach as a part of a Wellbeing Economy set of strategies could also be a feature to be included more centrally in Wellbeing Economy debates and literature. This recognises the creativity of organisations linked to the labour movement and the long history of such initiatives in different areas. Wellbeing Economy is not all ‘new’ by any means.

South Wales post-industrial – including the South Wales Valleys and coastal industrial towns.	Urban and administrative centres, cities and university towns.
More prosperous rural areas – retirees and those commuting to more highly paid employment from desirable rural locations.	Smaller struggling rural areas including tourist locations and farming and market towns.

Fig. 14.1 Different areas of Wales

14.4.4 Addressing the Particular Make-Up and Problems of Specific Areas

The example of Wales helps us to see that in order to really gain traction for Wellbeing Economy approaches it is necessary to identify the problems and issues of different regions, even in a small country. How can we explain the difference that a Wellbeing approach would really make to each area? The different kinds of Welsh communities could be simply categorised as shown in Fig. 14.1.

All these different kinds of communities would need to see direct improvements to Wellbeing in order to really embed new economy and Wellbeing Economy approaches. This suggests a ‘menu’ approach of measures which could be debated and prioritised differently in different geographical regions.

14.4.5 Working Across Regions and Sectors for a Wellbeing Economy

Further, we need to consider how to work with the many different sectors of the economy and how to begin to develop networks that can work across sectors, linking together various different kinds of knowledge. Some kind of mapping and logistical function is necessary across networks to help make Circular Economy a reality, identifying the possibilities for material flows and cooperation. The kinds of Wellbeing principles on which action is based need to be fleshed out more in terms of what they really mean for action. For example, commitments to equality suggest a firm commitment to ‘just transition’ processes that recognise the agency and interests of workers in all economic sectors.

14.4.6 Joined-Up Action and Systems Thinking Across Scales

Interdisciplinary systems approaches can recognise the complexity of tasks such as that of WEAll, but also bring tools and approaches to manage and think through the complexity. Spreading the awareness and use of systems approaches is a key aim of the Wales Systems Forum which has proposed a broad landscape mapping exercise

to the Welsh Governments' Build Back Better forum. Systems approaches can be very illuminating, but only in conjunction with embedded knowledge from economic actors, including all those many great organisations that have been working for so long to change the Welsh economy for the wellbeing of all.

This chapter has largely been about the small country of Wales and the Wellbeing Economy Alliance. However, as we know we are all part of a global economy which runs on certain dominant (or 'reserve') currencies). No more localised actions or innovations can work completely without wider reforms being brought into play. Wider questions of the possible and/or necessary synergies between more localised and macro-economic reforms will need to be addressed. The call to action from an alliance of smaller countries may help to push this wider agenda in conjunction with progressive alliances of countries in different global regions.

14.5 Conclusions

This chapter has discussed the example of Wales in some depth in order to give insights to how and why a Wellbeing Economy approach has been successfully initiated here, and some idea of its future prospects. In so doing links have been made between political history and current issues, demonstrating how the Wellbeing Economy is helping political actors to achieve some of their goals and set out an alternative vision, supported by a wider international alliance. Some generic points have been identified, and it is hoped that others may draw some of their own conclusions about elements that may be transferable, and to question more deeply what might be the already existing grounds and green shoots on which Wellbeing Economy commitments might be built in their own context. The chapter has concluded with some general points about the value of systems tools and approaches in helping to really bring Wellbeing Economy topics off the page and into reality. These tools and approaches can be powerful when combined with the extensive local knowledge and motivation that exists wherever we find communities and individuals working for a better future.

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