Manufacturing Mid Wales

- Sam Saville
- Marc Welsh
- Aberystwyth University
- Global-Rural
Manufacturing Mid Wales

- Urban-rural shift – Keeble et al
- Spatial specificity
- Rural Regional Development
Newtown the laboratory

- Solving ‘problem of mid-Wales’
- New Towns Act 1964
- Reflexive or recursive regions

“The scale of economic change, and the intensity of Welsh Office attempts to deal with its consequences, was dramatic. Wales acted as a laboratory for the development of regional economic policies aimed at achieving rapid impact”. Gooberman 2012 p.3
Sheep and Socialism

Newtown 1883

Robert Owen
1771-1858

reformist – utopian – cooperative – social(ist)
Rural manufacturing, globalisation and transformation

- Incorporation into international textile industry = vulnerable to disruption in the global economy
- Transatlantic financial crisis 1837 - hit Newtown mills
- Communications and industrial revolution – centrality of national and international markets
- Peak population of 7,000 people in 1881
- 1881 census - residents born in British Guiana, Canada, East Indies, France, Germany, Gibraltar, India, Ireland, Jamaica, Switzerland and the United States
Global Newtown

- The Royal Welsh Warehouse
- 1861 - first mail order catalogue.
- 1876 - Euklisia Rug (sleeping bag) – 60,000 sold to Russian army
- Florence Nightingale / Queen Victoria
- 1880 > 100,000 customers world wide
Regional decline

For many years reference has been made to the “Mid Wales problem”. It is a problem which covers several different and complex issues but is perhaps best summed up, simply, in the word “depopulation”.

Development in Mid Wales. A review of the work of the Mid Wales Industrial Development Association 1959
The Problem of Mid Wales

- Regional depopulation
- Welsh Land Enquiry Commission 1914
- Problematization of rural Wales
- Rural depopulation > characteristic of industrial societies in the 20th century
Problematicizing the problem

- **Post-war**
  - Welsh Reconstruction Advisory Council 1944
  - Council of Wales 1953
  - Welsh Agricultural Land Commission 1955

- **Convergence and consensus within Wales that:**
  - a) industry as solution to ‘problem of mid Wales’,
  - b) business would not relocate without facilities already in place – ‘advance factories’,
  - c) coordinating and financing body needed

- **National politics rejected move as undermining national economic planning**
A ‘Quick Fix’: regional planning for rural industrial development

- MWIDA 1957
- English Midlands
  - Overspill
- development strategy
  - relocation / training / nucleation
- Planning boom – regional planning
  - ‘Growth poles’

Beacham Committee 1964

“irrespective of the level of population, a policy of reducing the existing scatter by nucleation into larger and fewer settlements should be implemented. This would enable improved services and social amenities to be provided at a lower cost.”
TreOwen – Owen’s Town

“My anxiety is to see that the first new town in Mid-Wales is so placed as to be able to attract industry and workers there, including some of the 100,000 Welshmen who left Wales to seek work in the Midlands conurbation. If this is done and is a success its influence will extend to other parts of Wales.”

[Jim Griffiths, Hansard 1965]
New Town Master Plan – 1968

new NEWTOWN
new HOMES new JOBS new TOWN
Emergent Consensus

- Mid-Wales Rural Region needs development agency
- 1975 – Welsh Grand Committee
- 1976 – Development Board for Rural Wales established

“After beginning its work, the Association soon found that the area’s industrial and general development were inextricably linked…At its most simple, factories needed people, people needed houses, houses needed services and so on”

D.P. Garbett-Edwards, Chief Exec, Mid Wales Development Corporation, 1972
Development strategies

“IT was no good going for …the new financial services kind of jobs. I mean, we were not going to attract them to Mid Wales… Manufacturing was kind of seen very much then as the poor relation of job creation, but I mean it was right for us. So we did go pretty big for manufacturing”.

Chair of DBRW 1990-1993
Attracting business

- Financial incentives:
  - Reduced rent
  - Capital equipment grants
  - Training grants
  - Subsidised building

- Attractive rural lifestyle

- Housing and community facilities

- Local workforce
Attracting business

Mid Wales

- 4 million sq feet of business space provided by DBRW – nearly 500 factories built.
- DBRW annual funding £11-30 million (at 2012 prices)

Day and Hedger 1990: Bulk of funding in Newtown and Welshpool

Table 3. Distribution of MWD development activity by local authority district, 1977–88 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Factories</th>
<th>Factory space</th>
<th>Social projects</th>
<th>Grant aid</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brecknock</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>17.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ceredigion</td>
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<td>10.6</td>
<td>23.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Merionydd</td>
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<tr>
<td>Montgomery</td>
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<td>49.6</td>
<td>38.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Radnor</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Problem solved?

Counter-urbanisation – a complementary trend.

Newtown reached its target population… eventually.
Manufacturing to the rescue

% of Workforce employed in manufacturing

- Montgomeryshire - heartland of manufacturing in Mid Wales – 4,500 people, nearly 19% of the workforce.

- Manufacturing share of UK GDP declined dramatically
  
  1970 = 25%  
  1990 = 18%  
  2007 onwards = 10%

- Jobs declined – 1980 25% of all jobs – 2010 down to 8%
Laura Ashley

- 5 Factories in Wales from 1960s.
- Newtown Factory 1984 – 500 jobs, growing to 2000
- Early 2000s - consolidation still 200-300 jobs in Newtown.

Control Techniques

“Newtown has grown up through the funding but has remained here because it’s simply based here and the logistics and the people around here that know about this stuff”.

Control Techniques Interview
Crisis of Identity?

Newtown still has significant manufacturing activity but...

Fears

- That it becomes a ‘ghost town’
- That the town centre dies
- Change is being prevented by the older generation
- The town will have a natural death
- That it becomes forgotten
- Town used as a depository for drug problems, ex-convicts or other vulnerable people

Worried about drugs coming into the town

- We’re going to be a dead town
- That the bypass causes decline of town
- That the next generation have to move away as there are no career paths here
- The ongoing 'brain drain'

- That the window of opportunity with the bypass will be lost

MORE EMPTY SHOPS

- Will be an increase in anti-social behaviour
- Will be too many migrants
- Things like post office and banks will have gone, replaced by pubs and charity shops

- Teenage delinquency
- That no-one will interact with each other anymore
- Build more housing estates without the jobs to support them
- Local businesses will struggle

People will become fearful of difference

- That people’s values will change - less community minded, more anti-social behaviour
- That social isolation increases

- Facilities and resources will be diverted to other towns e.g. Welshpool

CONTINUE TO HAVE LONG DISTANCES TO TRAVEL FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT

Overdevelopment
What can we conclude?

- Newtown/DBRW consequences
  - Innovator – ‘social development’
- Ongoing critique:
  - Nucleation – spatial disparities
  - Top-down
  - Inward investment

- Protecting rural services in era of austerity
Conclusions

- Institutions – cultural, economic, political, logistical
- Spatial theories – depopulation, nucleation, regional planning
- Key Actors – politicians, committees, councils, MWIDA, MWDC, DBRW, EU
- ‘Rural Wales’ – materiality, peripherality, functionality

- Interplay in place – complex, path dependent socio-economic landscape

- A manufacturing rural region?
- ‘Problem of Mid Wales’
Vulnerability to global trends

BRD closure 1981 – 430 jobs lost, employed up to 1000 at it’s peak.

1. Technology change – smaller cars with front wheel drives
2. Growth in imports into UK car market
3. Fall in exports due to foreign exchange rate
4. Recession