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Reframing urban and regional 'development' for 'left behind' places

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The recent wave of populism has focused attention on 'left behind' places as hotspots of discontent. Seeking to remedy their neglect in urban and regional studies, the aim of this paper is to engage with the problems of 'left behind' places and to stimulate fresh thinking about alternative approaches. Reflecting the complex and inter-connected issues facing such places, it argues that a new conception is required to address issues of belonging and attachment. The paper outlines the basis of an expanded neo-endogenous development approach, identifying the foundational economy, income and livelihoods, social infrastructures and social innovation as key policy concerns.

Keywords: regional inequalities, populism, 'left behind' places, regional policy, development, belonging
JEL Classifications: R58

Introduction

The recent wave of populist discontent across Europe and North America has catapulted social and spatial inequalities to the forefront of domestic political agendas. 'Left behind' places, particularly former industrial regions, have become the economically and politically salient shorthand for key hotspots of disadvantage and discontent (Hendrickson et al., 2018; Rodríguez-Pose, 2018). Votes from such places contributed to Brexit in the United Kingdom (UK) and the election of Donald Trump in the United States (US), as well as to the growth of parties opposed to the European Union (EU) across Europe (Dijkstra et al., 2020; Martin, 2021). Such discontent reflects voter's experiences of relative economic decline as a result of long-term processes of deindustrialisation and economic restructuring, aggravated by falling real wages and austerity policies since the

global financial crisis of 2007–2008 (Gray and Barford, 2018). Over the past couple of decades, the concentration of advanced technology and finance in large metropolitan regions has fostered new rounds of regional divergence as economically lagging and declining regions have become increasingly disconnected from these crucibles of knowledge and innovation (Feldman et al., 2021; Unger et al., 2019).

This paper argues that 'left behind' places have been neglected by spatial policy over the past couple of decades (Martin, 2021). A 'dominant narrative' of agglomeration derived from urban economics and 'New Economic Geography' (NEG) has privileged 'superstar' cities as the places best able to prosper in the knowledge economy (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018). As such, the current concern with lagging-behind and declining regions is both welcome and overdue. However, research has yet fully to engage with the development problems of such 'left behind' places and address the aspirations and needs of their residents. Engagement with the diverse needs of 'left behind' places is a prerequisite for the formulation of any place-based policies that seek to harness their 'overlooked' economic potential (ibid, 201). Recognising the limitations of conventional regional policy approaches, fresh ways of understanding and explaining the economic, social, environmental and political circumstances and problems of 'left behind' places are sorely needed, alongside the exploration of new ideas and policy approaches.

Seeking to remedy their neglect in urban and regional studies, the aim of this paper is to engage critically with the problems of 'left behind' places and to open up what is meant by their 'development'. The ambition is to stimulate fresh thinking about new approaches for designing more inclusive and sustainable place-based policies. We argue that such thinking requires a reframing of urban and regional development theory and its underlying conception of the economy. Reframing is necessary to overcome the limitations of conventional, growth-oriented economic thinking and its narrow policy prescriptions for 'left behind' places. Reflecting the complex and interconnected nature of the issues facing such places, a new conception is required to provide a wider understanding of economy beyond market exchange and economic growth to incorporate issues of belonging and attachment (Sandbu, 2020; Tomaney, 2015). This paper seeks to open up dialogue and stimulate thinking about defining what 'development' might mean for 'left behind' places and their residents. Informed by the notion of neo-endogenous development, which is based on the needs and priorities of local people while recognising the role of broader extra-local forces (Ray, 2001), it develops a bottom-up understanding of place-based development that emphasises the assets, resources and social practices of 'left behind' places.

The remainder of the paper is structured in five parts. The next section defines what is meant by 'left behind' places. This is followed by an account of their neglect by urban and regional development policy. The paper then turns to reframe development for such places, based on the concepts of neo-endogenous development, belonging and attachment. It subsequently relates this theoretical discussion to policy debates, outlining key elements of an expanded neo-endogenous development policy framework for 'left behind' places. A final section concludes the paper.

What are 'left behind' places?

The term 'left behind' places has come to prominence as part of a geography of discontent (McCann, 2019). It has been used by various actors to denote the kinds of economically lagging and declining places, particularly former industrial and rural regions, which have expressed feelings of marginalisation and abandonment through increased support for populist parties and movements (Guilluy, 2019; Rodriguez-Pose, 2018). The emergence of such

places as loci of discontent is reflective of the intensification of social and spatial inequalities in the decade following the global financial crisis, particularly in the US and UK (Florida, 2021; Martin, 2021). Economic insecurities, declining living standards, anxieties about future prosperity and cultural resentments have coalesced to generate a populist backlash against elites and mainstream institutions in Europe and the United States, particularly from 'left behind' people and places (Dijkstra et al., 2020; Ford and Goodwin, 2014).

The phrase 'left behind' provides a popular and economically and politically resonant and useful shorthand for academics, politicians and policymakers internationally (Hendrickson et al., 2018; OCSI, 2019). Fundamentally, 'left behind' places represent a contemporary manifestation of long-standing processes of geographically uneven development (Harvey, 1982). It adds to the historical lineage of other terminology expressing such uneven development in terms of spatial 'disparities', 'divides', 'gaps' and 'imbalances' (Dunford and Perrons, 1994; Martin, 1988). Policy responses to address the problems of 'left behind' places include the notion of 'no place left behind' in the US (Walker and Williamson, 2020) and the discourse of 'levelling up' in the UK (Tomaney and Pike, 2021). These expressions too are part of a longer history of regional policy articulating aims such as reducing geographical disparities, closing divides, catching-up to eradicate gaps and rebalancing spatially (Armstrong and Taylor, 2000; Gardiner et al., 2013; Martin and Sunley, 1997).

As a concept and analytical category, however, 'left behind' places is beset by basic gaps in its specification. It is often not precisely clear who, what or where is 'left behind', or indeed 'left behind' what? Multiple domains have been emphasised including economic disadvantage and limited job opportunities, social and cultural marginalisation, political neglect and reductions in public service provision and infrastructure investment (Dijkstra et al., 2020). Depending upon the national setting, the geographical scales at which 'left behind' places are manifest cover a range of spatial units including regions, towns and neighbourhoods (Jennings and Stoker, 2019; OCSI, 2019). The time scale and periods over which 'left behind' places are measured and expressed also vary. Who or what has been doing the 'leaving behind' of such places is not always spelled out beyond amorphous powerful actors and institutions and a mixture of connected and multiple causes including globalisation, technological change and metropolitanisation (Gormar et al., 2019; Hendrickson et al., 2018). In response, we conceptualise the production of 'left behind' places in terms of the relational processes of metropolitanisation, based on the agglomeration of firms and workers in major cities, and peripheralisation through the mechanisms of out-migration, infrastructure and knowledge network disconnection, dependence upon larger cities for funding and services, and discursive marginalisation (Leibert and Golinski, 2016).

'Left behind' places should be seen as central to the research agenda of a revised urban and regional studies concerned with regional equity (Martin, 2021). Whilst analytically under-specified, the term encapsulates a critical dimension of contemporary spatial inequalities (Hendrickson et al., 2018; Rodríguez-Pose, 2018). It refers to places experiencing economic stagnation or decline, particularly former industrial districts and rural areas marginalised by the concentration of skilled knowledge economy jobs in cities (Feldman, 2021; Florida, 2021). The concept of 'left behind' places is multi-dimensional, reaching beyond the economic to encompass social, demographic, political and cultural concerns. Key identifying characteristics include: relative economic under-performance and decline, expressed in below average pay, employment and productivity; lower levels of educational qualifications and skills; higher levels of poverty and disadvantage (compared to national averages);

out-migration, ageing and demographic shrinkage; poor health; limited connectivity and investment in social and economic infrastructure; reduced service provision; political disengagement, neglect and discontent; and a lack of civic assets and community facilities (Davenport and Zaranko, 2020; Oberst et al., 2019; Tomaney et al., 2019; Tomaney et al., 2021). While not all of these specific characteristics will be evident in every 'left behind' place, it is the combination of economic disadvantage, lower living standards, population loss/contraction/low-growth, a lack of infrastructure and political neglect and disengagement that can be said to define a place as 'left behind'.

Places 'left behind' by urban and regional policy

Economically lagging and declining places have attracted limited attention in urban and regional studies over the past couple of decades (Hendrickson et al., 2018; Rodríguez-Pose, 2018). While distinct in their intellectual lineages, conceptual orientations and understandings of the economy, influential theoretical approaches such as the New Economic Geography (NEG), urban economics and Evolutionary Economic Geography (EEG) have fostered rather narrow, growth-oriented understandings of the economy and economic policy, emphasising processes of growth, competition, agglomeration and innovation (see, for example, Boschma, 2017; Cheshire et al., 2014; Martin et al., 2016). Such understandings tend to privilege more competitive and dynamic places where levels of innovation and productivity are highest, drawing theoretical attention away from lagging and declining areas (Martin, 2021; Rodríguez-Pose, 2018).

Yet empirical and policy-related research on economically lagging places, particularly former industrial regions, has persisted (Beatty and Fothergill, 2020; Bennett, 2015; Martinelli et al., 2018). This reflects their continued importance as targets of spatial policies supported by subnational, national and supranational institutions, which have generally aimed to promote increased growth, innovation and entrepreneurship (Feldman et al., 2021), framed by overarching concepts such as 'smart specialisation' and often informed by the experience of more prosperous regions (Barzotto et al., 2020). It is important to outline the limitations of conventional growth-oriented policy approaches to 'left behind' places, in order to inform the basis of an alternative approach in the next section of the paper.

First, prevailing policy frameworks remain largely based on a conception of economy as economic growth typically measured by changes in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or Gross Value Added (GVA). Yet this starting point provides an overly narrow understanding of the economy (Johal et al., 2014). Moreover, as the yardstick for assessing 'development', economic growth condemns low or slow growth places to the 'left behind' category, fostering efforts to 'catch-up' and 'close the gap' with national averages and better performing places. Work looking 'beyond GDP' has argued for 'a shift of emphasis from a "production-orientated" measurement system to one focused on the well-being of current and future generations' (Stiglitz et al., 2009, 10). This research has inspired some urban and regional researchers to provide broader conceptualisations of 'development' with stronger emphasis on social and environmental as well as economic dimensions and their interrelations (Fuller et al., 2010; Perrons 2012; Pike et al., 2007).

Second, and consistent with the underlying attachment to economic growth and GDP, urban and regional policies have remained fixated with the tradeable, competitive sectors of the economy. Accordingly, goods and services sufficiently competitive to be sold outside the urban or regional economy in question are prized for development, providing the external demand to generate economic growth. Informed by export base theory, the basic or tradeable sector is distinguished from its residentiary or

non-tradeable sector based upon local derived demand (Ha and Swales, 2012). The tradeable sector is the focus of economic growth-oriented policy, favouring the 'leading edge' of competitive firms in sectors such as advanced manufacturing and knowledge-intensive business services. By contrast, the residentiary sector is viewed as secondary, reflecting its dependence upon the income generated by the basic sector. This view persists despite this sector's significant role in supporting local economic activity and household incomes, particularly in economically lagging regions lacking competitive export sectors (Bentham et al., 2013; Foundational Economy Collective, 2018). As a consequence, prevailing policy approaches have largely ignored the 'long tail' of lower value-added sectors such as social care, hospitality, leisure, public services and retail in which most workers are employed in lagging regions (Sissons et al., 2019). Productivity enhancing measures are typically less effective when extended to these labour intensive, low wage activities (Froud et al., 2020).

Third, over the past couple of decades, cities have been identified as key engines of economic growth and innovation by academics, governments and international economic organisations (Glaeser, 2011; World Bank, 2009). Based on the NEG and urban economics, the underlying argument is that the geographical agglomeration of economic activity in cities fosters innovation and productivity gains, as concentrations of firms and skilled workers generate knowledge spill-overs (Martin, 2015). According to Rodríguez-Pose (2018, 191), this 'dominant narrative' 'puts forward the idea that big cities are the future and that the best form of territorial innovation is not to focus on declining places – perceived as having low potential – but to bet on what is perceived to be the winning horse: the largest and most dynamic agglomerations'. It reflects the broader shift from the spatially redistributive regional policies of the post-war era to post-Keynesian spatial policies designed to concentrate productive capacities and infrastructural investment in the most globally competitive city-regions (Brenner, 2004).

From an NEG and urban economics perspective, spatially unbalanced economic development should be accepted, at least as a temporary condition, since redistributive place-based policies will undermine the operation of agglomeration economies and thereby reduce overall national growth (Martin, 2015). People-based policies are favoured instead, encouraging disadvantaged people in lagging regions to move to more prosperous areas to access economic opportunities (World Bank, 2009). Responding to this critique, place-based policies targeting lagging regions have persisted and evolved, incorporating economic interventions related to infrastructure, skills, innovation and business support, alongside institutions and social inclusion (Barca et al., 2012). More recently, the emergence of the new geography of discontent has prompted calls for a revival of place-based policy (Tomaney et al., 2019), even from some former critics (Austin et al., 2018).

The pre-occupation with cities means that urban and regional policy is characterised by a form of 'city centrism', based on the idea that city centres are the principal motors of economic growth and productivity for their wider regional economies and the assumption that growth will trickle down or out across the wider city-region (Pike, 2018). Originating in the entrepreneurial urban strategies of the 1980s and 1990s, city centrism has been reinforced by the subsequent knowledge economy discourse, with the economics of agglomeration and skill-biased technological change providing a compelling theoretical argument (Glaeser, 2011). Yet growing concerns about the increased spatial concentration and inequalities of the knowledge economy in 'superstar' cities have emerged in recent years (Feldman et al., 2021; Unger et al., 2019). At the same time, the limitations of the orthodox economic assumption of inter-regional labour mobility that underpins people-based policies have become starkly apparent in the face of the immobility of many

less skilled people in lagging-behind places (Lee et al., 2018; Rodríguez-Pose, 2018).

The marginalisation of lagging and declining places by urban and regional policy means that their economic potential has been underutilised (Rodríguez-Pose 2018). Existing place-based policies are often based on a diagnosis of such regions as deficient in the underlying assets required to foster economic growth such as entrepreneurialism, capital stock, educational qualifications and skills and knowledge (Stephens et al., 2013). Likening regional development policy to gardening rather than engineering (Wojan, 2017), the cultivation of the neglected human potential of 'left behind' places requires a move beyond the narrow economic metrics of growth, productivity and competitiveness (Moore and Woodcraft, 2019). Such yardsticks have marginalised these places as under-performing, condemning them to either playing an often unrealistic game of 'catch-up', or to a future of managed decline (Pike et al., 2016). A broader approach that incorporates the social, political and environmental as well as economic dimensions of 'development' promises to generate a fuller understanding of the social and economic activities, infrastructures and assets found in such places and open-up new angles for policy to address their predicaments.

Reframing 'development' for 'left behind places'

Growing spatial inequality leading to economic, social and political instability calls for a broader conception of 'development' and an expansion of policy beyond urban cores. Our approach in outlining a new conception of 'development' begins from the actually existing problems of 'left behind' places. Alongside elements of material disadvantage, evident in lower levels of growth, income and employment (Beatty and Fothergill, 2020; Rodríguez-Pose, 2018), people in 'left behind' places feel neglected and unrepresented by dominant political and economic actors and institutions (Hendrickson et al., 2018; Mattinson, 2020). In response, different forms of development policy are required which recognise and address this condition or feeling of 'left behindness' as well as material deprivation and poverty (Furlong, 2019). In reframing 'development' beyond a narrowly economic approach, we emphasise issues of place attachment and belonging, linking to wider debates on development in the global North and South (Pike et al., 2014; Rist et al., 2011).

A key starting point for this reframing of development is the notion of endogenous development which means making 'people's visions, values and potentials' the basis for development, rather than subjecting them to externally defined development programmes (Rist et al., 2011, 120). Endogenous development speaks more directly to the conditions of 'left behind' places in the Global North than the concept of indigenous development which is closely associated with post-colonial territories in the global South (Maiava and King, 2007). It has broader reach beyond the contexts of indigenous communities, referring to a bottom-up approach in which 'development policy is based on the interests and goals of the local society' (Vazquez-Barquero and Rodriguez-Cohard, 2016, 1139). Although these interests and goals will be locally specific, the identification of five general principles of human need provides an important foundation for endogenous development initiatives: the need to feel good about oneself; the need to belong and feel secure; the need to feel in control of one's life; the need to be free, active and independent; and the need to support one's family (Maiava, 2001). Whilst originally advanced in the context of indigenous development, these principles have a broader relevance for informing the pursuit of bottom-up development across a range of marginalised communities and territories.

Over the past couple of decades, the simple dichotomy between endogenous and exogenous forms of development has been subject to increasing criticism, particularly in terms of

the difficulties of operating autonomously from external forces (Gkartzios and Lowe, 2019). In response, the concept of neo-endogenous development has been advanced, largely in rural studies, based on the recognition of extra-local forces, whilst retaining a belief in the potential of local areas to shape their future (Ray, 2001). According to Ray, this approach to development based on local resources and local participation can be animated from three directions: actors within local society; from above by national governments or supra-national organisations; and, from the intermediate level, for example by non-government organisations operating at regional or local authority scales.

In the context of rural England, Bosworth et al., (2016) define the rural development problem that neo-endogenous development is designed to address as: low service provision; unbalanced communities (ageing and inequality); remoteness, isolation and lack of critical mass. As outlined earlier, these problems are also characteristic of other types of 'left behind' places, particularly former industrial districts beyond the major cities, underlining the broader relevance of the neo-endogenous approach. It can be extended and tailored to the contemporary condition of 'left behindness' through an engagement with recent work on belonging and attachment.

In an important contribution, Sandbu (2020) conceives of political upheavals in Europe and North America in terms of 'the end of belonging', suggesting that some citizens of western democracies have been 'left behind' by recent economic changes, consequently lending their support to a populist politics of 'illiberalism'. This new focus on the notion of belonging is crucial, although the term is left somewhat undefined by Sandbu. The affective and collective dimensions of belonging are overlooked, as are the complex ways in which people form attachments to place and the uses they make of them. Yet these attachments form the setting in which people frame what they want for themselves and their communities. While Sandbu's focus on the consequences of economic restructuring is important, his work lacks a deep understanding of the complex relations between economic, cultural and political shifts. This gap is especially problematic when thinking about the predicaments of, and potential policy responses for, 'left behind' places (Tomaney et al., 2019).

Such complex and tangled relationships may be better understood from a geographical perspective. Geographers have long identified the importance of 'sense of place' (Withers, 2009) or 'topophilia' (Tuan, 1974) – the affective bonds between people and their immediate human and physical environment – as the context within which cultural and political values are formed. Such affective bonds have been, at times, disparaged as a recipe for nostalgia and introversion (Tomaney, 2014). Yet they also produce local solidarities that can help address practical problems through, for instance, the production and maintenance of social relations. Political philosophers, such as Sandel (1998), contend that the civic resources people need to cope with social and economic forces of change lie in the places and stories, memories and meaning, incidents and identities that situate us in the world and give our lives their moral particularity. Social psychologists consider how place attachments remain important even in an era of globalisation and (for some) hyper-mobility (Di Masso et al., 2019). Sociologists suggest that while place attachments may deepen with age, they reflect the commitments that all people make to where they live. They can take the form of an 'elective belonging' in which mobile individuals attach their biographies to particular places in order to give meaning to their lives (Savage et al., 2005). Economists, however, have had little to contribute on this question, beyond a focus on the economics of subjective well-being, happiness or identity (Weimann et al., 2015).

Other ideas such as attachment theory conceptualise the importance of connectedness between people in shaping patterns of (arrested)

human development (Bowlby, 1982). In this psychological literature, the loss of human attachments results in trauma and arouses feelings of grief. Bereavement, for instance, is often a source of psychological stress. Extending the concern with attachment and loss beyond the psychology of the individual, the disruption of place attachments can engender collective feelings of loss (Marris, 1986). This has been largely overlooked in recent political discourse, but becomes more pertinent to understanding places in times of crisis. Seabrook (2005, 237–8), for instance, states that 'the pain of passing of provincial life has been denied … because everything that succeeded it has been tendentiously and insistently portrayed not as a mixture of the gains and losses that accompany all social change, but as irresistible progress towards a beckoning future over which dispute is not possible'.

Recent work provides further insight into these relations of attachment and belonging in the context of 'left behind' places. Drawing on focus groups with voters in the Midlands and North of England, Mattinson (2020) attributes shifts in their political attitudes to a sense of loss and resentment arising from relative economic decline and a feeling of neglect (cf. Dijkstra et al., 2020; Rodríguez-Pose, 2018). Voters describe being isolated and distant from the rest of the country and poorly connected to adjacent cities where material opportunities are perceived to lie. Mattinson found that the corollary of loss in some 'left behind' towns was a passionate sense of belonging. The case of Stoke-on-Trent stands out with voters describing the effects of the loss of local industry using the language of grief. Stoke 'has a proud past that its people very much regard as their own history' (Mattinson 2020, 61). Situated in the historic industrial geography of the Staffordshire Potteries, nearly everyone in Stoke has a parent or grandparent who had worked in the ceramic industry. The loss of such industries is felt personally and emotionally and expressed as a loss of identity.

Despite their importance in shaping political attitudes and voting behaviours in such 'left behind' places, feelings of attachment and loss are rarely the focus of analysis in urban and regional studies, and to date have had even less of a role in informing understandings of what development might mean. While the literature discussed above is largely concerned with how economic decline is associated with a loss of attachment and belonging, there are suggestions that the relationship may also operate in the other direction, with a loss of belonging contributing to further economic decline and impeding recovery through a lack of confidence, trust and skills (Abreu and Jones, 2021; Klinenberg, 2018; Mattinson, 2020). These feelings of loss and a lack of belonging may not, of course, be shared by all residents of 'left behind' places, which, like other kinds of places, incorporate multiple social identities (Massey, 1994; Tomaney et al., 2021). Age is one important dimension of social differentiation, with the work of Mattinson suggesting that such feelings of attachment and loss are particularly acute amongst older residents. Gender is another dimension requiring further research, with many former industrial areas characterised by highly gendered patterns of work that continue to shape their development (Bennett, 2015).

Pain (2019) considers the long-term dispossession of Horden, a former pit village in County Durham in North East England, involving the slow violence of cumulative events from the loss of mining industry to the local council's sale of formerly publicly-owned social housing. Drawing on feminist and post-colonial theories of power which connect intimate and collective experiences, such cycles of both fast and slow changes – violence in this reading – are understood to become hard wired in such places; positioned as chronic urban trauma. In policy terms, Pain suggests that top-down interventions can no longer *be done to* these places, but economic, social and psychological recovery must be generated from the social networks and support already there among residents.

Deteriorating community facilities and services are an important feature of many 'left behind' places, often linked to economic decline and reduced state support (MacLeod and Jones, 2018; OCSI, 2019). Little attention has been given to the value of investments – often small scale – that can rebuild such social infrastructures, especially those that underpin the forms of attachment and belonging that characterise healthy communities. In the UK, a recent poll by Survation suggested that 'places to meet and other community facilities which bring people together' was the first ranked priority by respondents in 'left behind' places (Local Trust, 2020). But scarcely any work has been done to define and assess the social infrastructure requirements of economically lagging and declining places that accord with different understandings of 'development' and meet the needs of their communities, such as food poverty, absence of green spaces and endemic loneliness.

Some research is starting to address these issues. In a former pit village in County Durham in North East England, Tomaney et al. (2021) found that older members of the community lamented the loss of a thriving and cohesive village, while younger members valued strong community ties and saw the potential to rekindle the more appealing aspects of the past. There was agreement that, beyond the pit, much of what had given the village its identity was a kind of social infrastructure that supported a rich home-made associational life and fostered a sense of belonging. Historically, much of this infrastructure was organised and controlled locally by communities, civic groups and trades unions (Tomaney, 2018). Today, key assets that reproduce village identity, such as the secondary school, have been lost and the village has a more complex social structure than it did a generation ago. It continues to have a rich array of associational life and a strong sense of belonging, but the facilities that support this are stretched as the national and local state have rationalised or withdrawn services. What is missing in the village are the infrastructures that could help nurture and develop the social capital that supports its vitality, engenders a sense of belonging and provides spaces where development needs and common futures can be articulated and pursued.

As we have argued in this section, the problems of 'left behind' places incorporate a loss of belonging and identity as well as reduced economic opportunities, demographic challenges, and poor connectivity and infrastructure. While this second set of symptoms has animated a succession of regional development and regeneration policies, questions of belonging and identity have been ignored and the 'left behind' condition of such places unresolved and even reinforced in some cases. In response, the concept of neo-endogenous development provides an important foundation for advancing bottom-up forms of development, accompanied by a concern with issues of belonging and place attachment to broaden the underlying conception of development and tailor it to the contemporary condition of 'left behind' places.

A new policy approach for 'left behind' places

This section extends the expanded neo-endogenous approach outlined above by translating it into policy, covering aims, orientation and substantive foci. Rather than ideological and theoretical purity, this approach will require pragmatism and tuning in to the *real-politik* of formulating policy interventions on the ground in different settings. Given the complex and inter-related problems faced by 'left behind' places and the lack of ready-made 'off-the-shelf' fixes or models, policy experimentation is necessary (Morgan and Sabel, 2019). Reflecting the neo-endogenous understanding of development, our approach can be described as 'place-based' in the sense that it addresses the specific problems and potentialities of 'left behind' places (Martin et al., 2021).

With regard to its aims, our approach is open to post-growth thinking, which breaks with

the prevalent economic growth paradigm in order to shift towards environmentally sustainable lifestyles and economies (Jackson, 2009). Many economically lagging and declining regions have experienced deindustrialisation and demographic shrinkage (Franklin, 2020), accounting for the limited success and increasing exhaustion of policies that have sought to counter such decline through the pursuit of growth (Feldman et al., 2021; Kinossian, 2018). As such, 'left behind' areas face something of a development policy paradox whereby their relative under-performance over time generates an acute perceived need for economic growth among policymakers wedded to the growth paradigm, while simultaneously making it very difficult to achieve.

Based on the principle of endogenous development, this policy paradox should be negotiated and resolved by local actors seeking to address the problems of their areas and identify appropriate development opportunities and orientations (Bosworth et al., 2016). Rather than having growth or post-growth priorities imposed on them by external actors, local actors and communities are best placed to determine development goals and strategies based on local assets and needs (Morgan and Sabel, 2019). In line with the neo-endogenous approach, such local action cannot be divorced from broader extra-forces, requiring national and subnational government to provide the resources, powers and support to enable 'left behind' communities to articulate their definitions of development.

Our expanded neo-endogenous development approach spans economic and social policy; see Figure 1. It also aims to bridge the distinction between 'alternative' and 'conventional' approaches to local and regional development, recognising that this distinction provides a rather simplified representation of the spectrum of economic development policies. Our approach does not seek wholly to abandon or reject conventional growth-oriented development strategies, which may be based on local priorities and needs. Conventional forms of policy such as 'hard' infrastructure provision, innovation and business support are likely to be of continued relevance to 'left behind' places. They are not necessarily at odds with alternative goals of well-being, quality of life and enhanced service provision. We highlight the foundational economy, income and livelihoods, social infrastructures and social innovation as key policy areas for neo-endogenous development to focus upon in the context of 'left behind' places (Figure 1).

The foundational economy breaks with the 'singular' GDP-oriented view of the economy to offer a new 'zonal schema' categorisation into the 'tradeable' or conventional sector, the 'overlooked economy' of more mundane activities, the foundational zone of 'material and providential essentials', and the 'core economy of family and community' (The Foundational Economy Collective, 2020, 2–3).[1] Accounts of the foundational economy have concentrated overwhelmingly on the foundational zone itself, overcoming the fixation of conventional policy with the tradeable zone. The foundational agenda is to build more grounded local and regional economies, requiring the 'mundane, sheltered activities of the foundational economy' to be managed for the benefit of all citizens, prioritising 'material well-being, security and socio-cultural participation' (Engelen et al., 2017, 419). The problem of sustaining and developing the foundational economy varies between places with lagging and declining areas often struggling to fund and support foundational services due to declining tax revenues and incomes, making them dependent on central government transfers (ibid, 417). More broadly, the missing geographical dimensions of the foundational economy need further work, unravelling the largely unresearched degrees and kinds of spatial universality and differentiation of providential and material services and their configurations in particular places (Table 1) (Martynovich et al., 2020). Together with the core economy, the foundational zone can be

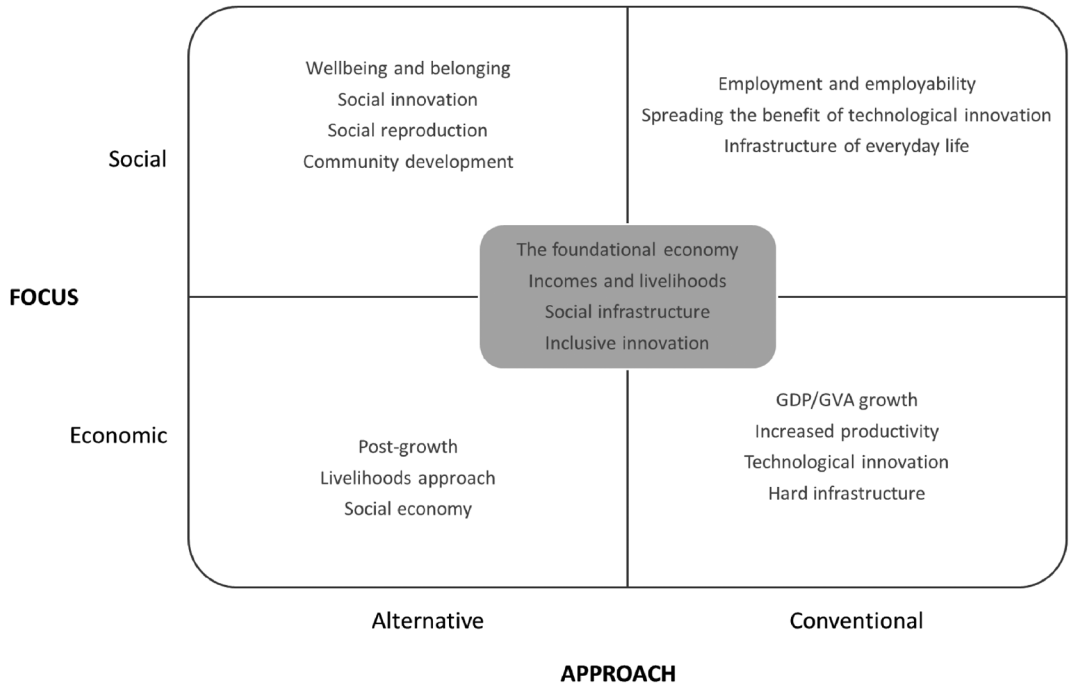

Figure 1. *Towards a neo-endogenous development policy for 'left behind' places.*
Source: Authors' own elaboration.

seen as a source of attachment and belonging, requiring collective liveability and well-being to be prioritised over private profitability and growth (The Foundational Economy Collective, 2020).

Incomes and livelihoods are important issues for neo-endogenous development to address in 'left behind' places, overlapping with the conventional policy focus on employment and income, but rejecting the orthodox economic fixation with productivity as the basis of long-term prosperity and living standards (Froud et al., 2020). Residual income is identified as a key measure of foundational liveability, defined as disposable income after tax and expenditure on three essentials (housing, utilities and transport) (Calafati et al., 2021). While this does not radically alter the rank ordering of UK regions, for instance (Perrons, 2012), their lower costs of living and factor prices can be seen as potential economic and social assets for lagging and declining regions, alongside quality of life considerations (Kinossian, 2018).

Table 1. *The missing geographies of the foundational economy.*

	Providential services	Material services
Geographically universal?	Education Health Security	Energy Waste Water
Geographically differentiated?	Care Culture Sport and leisure	Banking Broadband Food Housing Public Transport

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Our interest in livelihoods is inspired by research in development studies (De Haan, 2012), focusing on the socio-economic practices that people employ to 'make do' and 'get

by' (Stenning et al., 2010). Neo-endogenous development policy should be informed by a better understanding of the livelihood and employment practices of residents of 'left behind' places and the barriers and possibilities they encounter (Dobbins et al., 2014). Based on the goals of material well-being and security, this understanding would enable policymakers to better target people's needs and priorities, seeking to lower barriers and expand opportunities. It would also serve to make the often routine and 'residentiary' sector which employs large numbers of people in 'left behind' places more visible, compared to the long-standing pre-occupation with high productivity sectors which employ relatively small numbers of people (Sissons et al., 2019). One important question concerns the relationships between household livelihood strategies and access to external redistributive transfers and services in the context of austerity and the restructuring of welfare states (MacLeod and Jones, 2018; Martinelli et al., 2018).

Social infrastructure is another key concern, reflecting an increased awareness of its importance in the context of the coronavirus pandemic (Inderst, 2020). Traditionally, social infrastructure was defined as the assets and systems delivering the 'softer' services of social care, education, health and housing (ibid.). It was distinguished from the 'harder' economic infrastructures of energy, telecommunications and transport. Complementing necessary investments in economic infrastructure, our broader understanding of development emphasises the creation or adaptation of social infrastructures in the form of community facilities and meeting places to foster reconnection, reduce isolation and create spaces for conviviality, responding to the identified social needs of 'left behind' places (OCSI, 2019; Tomaney et al., 2021). There is a degree of overlap between this focus on social infrastructure and the UK Government's provision of funding for 'the infrastructure of everyday life', with a particular emphasis on towns, as part of its policy of 'levelling up' regional growth (HM Treasury, 2021, 1). Yet the UK government's incorporation of social infrastructure within a top-down, fragmented and orthodox growth-based approach (Tomaney and Pike, 2021), contrasts with our neo-endogenous approach and broadened definition of development that emphasises questions of belonging and well-being.

Housing can be seen as a critical dimension of social infrastructure. The growth of community-led housing provision approach is highly relevant to left behind places, which have been the target of housing-led regeneration schemes addressing low demand and sub-standard housing stock. Such 'slower' forms of housing development, often led by sustainable building practices, can not only provide quality, affordable housing, but also enhance people's sense of belonging and attachment (Jarvis, 2015). The concept of self-help housing, based upon the small-scale but long-standing practice of communities refurbishing and re-using empty homes, is of particular interest to 'left behind' places. Whilst this form of housing development can generate economic, social and environmental benefits (Thompson, 2017), it faces continued difficulties in reconciling grass-roots action and top-down policy and funding frameworks, in addition to the geographical unevenness of take-up due to regional variations in house prices (Mullins, 2018). This indicates that a supportive policy and funding environment is needed to support the community development of housing and enable the associated social benefits to flourish in 'left behind' areas.

Our neo-endogenous approach to the development of 'left behind' places is also concerned with social and inclusive forms of innovation. Inclusive innovation refers to efforts to spread the benefits of technological innovation to lower-income groups, particularly in large metropolitan areas (Lee, 2020). Social innovation, by contrast, refers to innovations that address social needs and foster more inclusive relations between individuals (Marques et al., 2018). The broader understanding of

development articulated here is rooted more squarely in the concept of social innovation, aiming to meet unmet needs and address broader societal challenges such as ageing, climate change, and educational and health inequalities (MacCallum et al., 2009). A central challenge is to find new ways of providing and adapting services and social facilities in lagging and declining places, connecting to key foundational economy sectors including care, hospitality, public services and retail. Here, innovation might entail improvements in human interactions, skills and relations between service providers and users. This approach has the potential to invert the established concept of inclusive innovation by starting from social need and connecting to related economic sectors, rather than trying to add social inclusion initiatives to dynamic knowledge-based clusters driven by agglomeration economies and the monopoly power of leading tech firms (Feldman et al., 2021).

As indicated earlier, our engagement with alternative frameworks does not necessarily entail the rejection of all elements of established growth-oriented development policy. We seek a more pragmatic understanding and dialogue – guided by community-centred, problem-oriented and experimental principles (Wills and Lake, 2020) – rather than a binary framing of failing conventional and superior alternative approaches. There will be continued pressures for 'left behind' places to identify new economic opportunities and roles to address their economic difficulties and improve their living conditions. This may involve the adaptation of conventional economic development policy measures such as business support, improved transport connections and skills and training, building on local assets and capabilities. Such growth-oriented thinking is deeply rooted in many established policy actors and organisations, meaning that it is unlikely to be abandoned, despite strong critiques (Krueger et al., 2018). Given the acute challenge of formulating policy for 'left behind' places, further work is required to address the divide between conventional growth policies and alternative frameworks (Kinossian, 2018). Fostering dialogue between the two approaches is not intended to result in formal integration or seamless connection, but to inspire fresh ideas in a more open and iterative blending and infusing of policy experiments.

While the neo-endogenous framework outlined above emphasises bottom-up development, it should be seen as multi-scalar, requiring local and national state support. Given levels of distrust of government in many 'left behind' places (McKay et al., 2021), this is likely to be a highly challenging task involving sustained commitment to community development and local regeneration (OCSI, 2019). Multi-level and porous forms of organisation will be needed to facilitate state, civil society and citizen engagement (Morgan and Sabel, 2019). State support for 'left behind' places should be underpinned by a broader commitment to spatial justice that aims to enhance well-being and maintain service provision across regions (Gormar et al., 2019). This support should be accompanied by national- and supranational-level policies to address the spatial polarisation of income and opportunity between 'superstar' cities and 'left behind' places, involving the curbing of monopoly power and the regulation of finance (Feldman et al., 2021).

Conclusions

This paper has argued for a reframing of development thinking and policy for 'left behind' places, moving beyond narrow conceptions of the economic to outline the basis of a broader agenda. Reflecting the complex and inter-connected nature of the problems confronting such places, the argument is shaped by an engagement with the concepts of attachment and belonging that have attracted little interest in urban and regional studies thus far. From this perspective, the disruption to collective place attachments through processes

of deindustrialisation, economic restructuring and social change has generated feelings of dispossession and loss (Pain, 2019), particularly among older residents of 'left behind' places (Mattinson, 2020). Repairing this sense of loss and dispossession and its relation to discontent and even despair is, we argue, an important part of a reinvigorated regional policy agenda for 'left behind' places (Martin, 2021). Sceptics may counter that this is the realm of social rather than spatial policy; but such a view is becoming outdated and neglects the growing relationships between economic and social policy, and increased recognition of the economic importance of health and well-being (Veneri and Murtin, 2019). This new regional policy agenda requires a long-term strategy for cultivating development from within, based on underlying needs and goals (Maiava, 2001; Ray, 2001). Informed by work on belonging and attachment, the foundational economy, incomes and livelihoods, social infrastructure and inclusive innovation are key elements of this neo-endogenous approach.

While the paper has sought to establish the conceptual basis of a neo-endogenous development policy framework for 'left behind' places, further research is required to inform, test and challenge these ideas. Four aspects are highlighted here. First, a fuller conception is needed of the nature and direction of the relationship between economic decline and belonging in 'left behind' places: does decline lead to a loss of belonging or vice-versa; or should this be seen as a more circular and mutually reinforcing spiral of deterioration? Can we distinguish between belonging to the local community and belonging to the wider political system and what can be done to rebuild these relationships (Abreu and Jones, 2021; McKay et al., 2021)? Second, we still lack understanding of the livelihood practices and strategies that households and residents engage in to sustain what foundational economy scholars term the 'core economy' of family and community. Third, we need to specify the missing geographies of the foundational economy and better understand the relationships between its spatial universality and particularity and how these are expressed in modes of governance. This task is important as the foundational economy not only plays an important role in stabilising the economies of 'left behind' places, but also has the potential to support place-specific needs and aspirations through the spatial differentiation of services (Engelen et al., 2017; Martynovich et al., 2020). Finally, there is considerable scope to explore how to maintain and even enhance levels of service provision and state support for 'left behind' places in response to the effects of austerity policies, which may require new forms of collaboration between local and national actors and institutions.

Endnotes

[1] The foundational economy can be seen as one of a number of progressive concepts based on participative, needs-based principles that have emerged in recent years, including community wealth building, shared prosperity and universal basic services (Brown and Jones, 2021; Coote and Percy, 2020; Moore and Woodcraft, 2019). There is a need for more dialogue between these distinct but overlapping ideas, and neo-endogenous development offers a potential framework for fostering such dialogue.

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