Preface

Beyond Devolution and Decentralisation has been a long-standing enterprise, conceived in 2000 and begun in earnest in 2001. The research project upon which the book is based was financed by the Economic and Social Research Council under the title of 'Devolution and Decentralisation in Wales and Brittany' (Grant number L 219 25 2007). I thank the council for its support. With assistance from colleagues on the research project, a total of 104 interviews in Wales and 101 interviews in Brittany were conducted from April 2001 to March 2004. These interviews were taped and transcribed, and lasted between thirty minutes and one hour. Thanks are due to all the interviewees in the two countries for their co-operation. Beyond that Market Research Wales and Efficiency 3 were commissioned to carry out a comparative public-opinion survey in Wales and Brittany in June and July 2001. A representative sample of around 1000 (1008 in Wales, 1007 in Brittany), selected by quotas of age, gender, socio-economic group and locality, was interviewed in each region.

Beyond Devolution and Decentralisation compares the politics, policies and polity building dynamics of devolution in Wales and decentralisation in the French region of Brittany. Through investigating two historic regions (Wales and Brittany) in two neighbouring European Union states, the aim was to achieve a deeper understanding of processes of comparative regional governance in Europe. Empirically, the book draws conclusions from in-depth fieldwork within the two regions and reports the findings of the comparative opinion survey. Theoretically, the intent was to contribute a fascinating comparative case study to the understanding of the various dimensions comprising regional political capacity.

Comparison of Wales and Brittany plays itself out at a number of levels, each of which has a rather different intellectual rationale and supporting body of literature. This study seeks to establish comparative dynamics in Wales and Brittany. What weight should be given to national institutional traditions in both countries? How important are regionally specific explanations and how can these be conceptualised? Can distinctions be drawn between policy issue-areas (regional languages and training) and, if so, what does this tell about the operation of regional institutions in the two countries? What lessons can policy-makers draw from observing practice elsewhere? How does public opinion view the prospect of greater regional autonomy, and what are the acceptable parameters within which public policy is formulated in the two regions? Throughout the book, empirical answers are sought for these questions of comparative analysis.

In addition to the mass survey, the research endeavoured to uncover the dynamics

of devolution in Wales and decentralisation in Brittany through extensive face-to-face interviews. These interviews were semi-structured, combining a small number of routine questions with a range of institutional and policy-specific questions aimed at attaining a maximum of information in areas of great technical complexity and institutional uncertainty. This method was especially pertinent in Wales, due to the new institutional framework put into place by devolution. I sincerely thank everybody who agreed to be interviewed during the 2001–2002 period, a formative stage in the development of the devolved institutions in Wales and a period of expectation in Brittany as well.

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Alistair Cole, Cardiff, 27 January 2005