

Brexit disruption and trans-border leadership in Europe

Gibney, John; Liddle, Joyce ; Shutt, John

DOI:

[10.1080/00343404.2021.1900556](https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2021.1900556)

License:

Creative Commons: Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs (CC BY-NC-ND)

Document Version

Peer reviewed version

Citation for published version (Harvard):

Gibney, J, Liddle, J & Shutt, J 2021, 'Brexit disruption and trans-border leadership in Europe', *Regional Studies*, vol. 2021, no. 00, pp. 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2021.1900556>

[Link to publication on Research at Birmingham portal](#)

Publisher Rights Statement:

"This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in *Regional Studies* on 25/03/2021, available online: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2021.1900556>

General rights

Unless a licence is specified above, all rights (including copyright and moral rights) in this document are retained by the authors and/or the copyright holders. The express permission of the copyright holder must be obtained for any use of this material other than for purposes permitted by law.

- Users may freely distribute the URL that is used to identify this publication.
- Users may download and/or print one copy of the publication from the University of Birmingham research portal for the purpose of private study or non-commercial research.
- User may use extracts from the document in line with the concept of 'fair dealing' under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (?)
- Users may not further distribute the material nor use it for the purposes of commercial gain.

Where a licence is displayed above, please note the terms and conditions of the licence govern your use of this document.

When citing, please reference the published version.

Take down policy

While the University of Birmingham exercises care and attention in making items available there are rare occasions when an item has been uploaded in error or has been deemed to be commercially or otherwise sensitive.

If you believe that this is the case for this document, please contact UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk providing details and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate.

Brexit disruption and trans-border leadership in Europe

Authors:

*John Gibney, Department of Management, Birmingham Business School, University of Birmingham, B15 2TT, United Kingdom.

E-mail: j.gibney@bham.ac.uk

Joyce Liddle, Newcastle Business School, Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8ST, United Kingdom.

E-mail: joyce.liddle@northumbria.ac.uk

John Shutt, Newcastle Business School, Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8ST, United Kingdom.

E-mail: john.shutt@northumbria.ac.uk

Note: *corresponding author

Available online at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2021.1900556>

ABSTRACT

The turbulence of Brexit threatens to undermine England-EU trans-border cooperation at the sub-national scale. This paper discusses the lived experience of city and regional leaders involved in developing cross-European cooperation during the early phase of the Brexit ‘project’. It contributes to the idea of relational leadership as a framing device for studying leadership in trans-border cooperation in the England–EU sub-national setting, and surfaces challenges faced by sub-national leaders in trans-border cooperation during significant policy turbulence. Two main findings of the research have wider relevance for emerging city and regional (place) leadership theory and practice. First, the unanticipated shock caused by Brexit to the supranational policy environment is impacting significantly on sub-national leaders’ ability to maintain good trans-border working relationships; and second, continuing non-prejudicial dialogue and meaningful conversations between sub-national partners are an antidote to the negative legacies of such policy disruption.

Keywords: Brexit, relational leadership, trans-border cooperation, dialogue

INTRODUCTION

The UK's vote on 23 June 2016 to leave the EU shone a spotlight on the Daedalian nature of UK–EU leadership relations. This paper explores the lived experience of city and regional leaders navigating the ongoing knowledge exchange and learning legacies during the early phase of the Brexit 'project'.

Understandably, there is considerable interest in the post-Brexit future of sub-national development across England and the EU (Bachtler, 2017; Bailey & Budd, 2017; Bell, 2017; Chen et al., 2018; North, 2017; Billing, McCann, & Ortega-Argilés, 2019; Taylor, 2019). This is because in the UK, it is clear that there is likely to be significant economic disruption at the sub-national scale as a result of Brexit and irrespective of the nature of any final UK-EU trade 'deal. For Thissen et al;

“ - the UK's losses of regional competitiveness are more certain and less sensitive to the exact design of a Brexit deal than the potential gains in regional competitiveness of other regions, and this is partly due to the fact that the larger losses are concentrated in the UK - Brexit is likely to exacerbate UK interregional inequalities, and these changes will heavily counteract the leveling-up (Zymek and Jones 2020) agenda of the UK government” (Thissen, van Oort, McCann, Ortega-Argilés & Husby, 2020:23).

However, while there is a growing academic debate around the local and regional consequences in England, little conceptual or empirical attention has been paid to how Brexit is altering the softer *relational realities* of pan-European collaborative working at the sub-national scale. In other words, the turbulence of Brexit threatens to undermine England-EU trans-border cooperation at the sub-national scale. Two opposing views, and intermediate positions between them, might be suggested: that Brexit will constrain, or even destroy, existing England–EU sub-national relationships; or that new post-Brexit policy mechanisms will replace the old, while existing relationships are maintained.

This paper draws on the findings of an abductive qualitative enquiry (Dubois & Gadde, 2002) into sub-national leadership experiences through the early phases of the Brexit ‘project’. This posed two main questions. First, how is the Brexit ‘project’ impacting on leadership relations, specifically in England–EU trans-border cooperation at the sub-national level? Second, how does relational leadership (RL) theory help to illuminate the challenge(s) faced by sub-national leaders?

The evidence suggests that although non-prejudicial trans-border dialogue at the sub-national level may help transcend problematic legacies, the changing supranational political and economic context presents some new leadership challenges for city and regional policy makers and practitioners working on England–EU trans-border cooperation. Two main findings have wider relevance for city and regional (place) leadership theory and practice. First, the unanticipated shock caused by Brexit to the supranational policy environment is impacting significantly on sub-national leaders’ ability to maintain good trans-border working relationships; and second, continuing and non-prejudicial dialogue and meaningful conversations between sub-national partners are an antidote to the negative legacies of such policy disruption.

The paper is organised as follows. Firstly, the literature on RL with relevance to trans-border cooperation between EU cities and regions is reviewed. Secondly, we consider what a significant break in policy continuity such as Brexit means for England–EU trans-border cooperation. Thirdly, we present the research approach and method. The research findings are then presented and discussed, and the paper concludes by proposing a research agenda aimed at advancing our understanding of the practice of sub-national RL-type leadership for trans-border knowledge exchange and learning.

WHAT IS RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND WHAT DOES IT ADD?

Leadership at the sub-national scale (sometimes referred to as place leadership) – its character, purpose and practice(s) – is now recognised in the regional studies field as an important explanatory feature of successful place-based policy development and implementation in the national setting (Collinge, Gibney & Mabey, 2010; Beer and Clower, 2013; Sotarauta, Beer & Gibney, 2017; Beer, Ayres, Clower, Faller, Sancino & Sotarauta 2019; Vallance, Tewdwr-Jones and Kempton, 2019; Beer, Mckenzie, Blažek, Sotarauta & Ayres, 2020; Sotarauta and Beer, 2021). However, while the question of ‘how to do trans-border cooperation at the sub-national scale in the EU’ is addressed in recent EU-related leadership policy and development literature (Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform, 2017; McMaster, 2017), only limited conceptual attention has been paid in the field of regional studies to sub-national leaders’ experiences of trans-border cooperation in Europe beyond the boundaries of local place(s) and the nation state (see, e.g., Collinge & Gibney, 2010). Accounts of sub-national leadership experiences at times of significant breaks in supranational policy continuity are also lacking. Drawing on relational leadership (RL) theory, this paper begins to address these gaps in the place leadership literature by suggesting the importance of enabling ongoing and non-prejudicial dialogue and meaningful conversations between city and regional partners in trans-border cooperation.

In the world of trans-border economic development, there is a strong case for continual investment in dialogue across boundaries, both physical and imagined. As Raelin (2012, p. 5) suggests, ‘People join a dialogue provided they are interested in listening to one another, in reflecting upon perspectives different from their own, and in entertaining the prospect of being changed by what they learn. It often leads to collaborative action.’ In other words, as humans, we are essentially relational beings and we create meaning(s) and action(s) together (Gergen, 2009). What we do, why we do it and what we might achieve at times of economic

and social transition are at least partly explained by features and qualities of our relationships and interactions with one another (Drath, 2001; Uhl-Bien, 2006; Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; Uhl-Bien & Ospina, 2012; Raelin, 2016).

Relational leadership (RL) theory, and its practice, challenge the notion that social progress results primarily from the traits or heroic behaviours and actions of a bounded, self-actualising and all-knowing individual leader (Gergen, 2009; Uhl-Bien & Ospina, 2012), and proposes instead that the ‘co-creation of everything’ emerges from a multiplicity of everyday human interactions (Gergen, 2009; Raelin, 2016). For Uhl-Bien (2006), the dynamic social process of leadership is explained by human interactions and negotiation rather than hierarchy and authority: ‘a “relational” orientation starts with processes and not persons, and views persons, leadership and other relational realities as *made* in processes’ (Uhl-Bien, 2006, p. 655, citing Hosking, 2007).

Influenced by Bakhtinian dialogical philosophy, the RL ‘turn’ in leadership discourse advocates dialogue as a foundational currency in human relations, allowing for shared meaning(s), understandings and mutually beneficial interactions that contribute to the ‘ongoing intersubjective shaping of social circumstances and surroundings’. In ‘ideal’ human encounters, people meet and interact with one another as equals and ‘without rank’ (see Shotter, 2016, p. 133, citing Bakhtin), and together create new and previously unforeseeable potentialities that could not be achieved through authoritarian, hierarchical or purely transactional engagements with others. In this sense, leadership is conceived as more than a functional, skills-based influencing or manipulative practice (Raelin, 2016). Rather it is ‘a way of being-in-the-world that embraces an intersubjective and relationally-responsive way of thinking and acting’; hence ‘those engaged in relational leadership are aware of the importance of the flow of present moments in making sense of complexity, resolving

problems, shaping strategic direction and practical action’ (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011, pp. 1445–1446).

From the perspective of ‘doing’ leadership as a relational practice, Shotter suggests some pertinent framing conditions (see Figure 1).

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

In other words, particular ‘ways of thinking and being in the world’ set the ground rules for how people engage with *others* as equals, and come to know them and *their otherness(es)* for the purpose of collaborative exploration and discovery.

Given the importance of learning from others’ experiences of city and regional working across borders (Hachmann, 2016), how might UK and EU sub-national leaders respond to the challenge of maintaining and extending trans-border knowledge exchange and learning at times of policy disruption? As those in leadership roles encounter and relate to each *other* and *their otherness(es)*, they are central to shaping beneficial trans-border relationships.

In relation to engaging with others at a most basic level, the RL proposition is relevant to England–EU trans-border knowledge exchange and learning, where sub-national policy makers and practitioners confront cultural ‘borderlands and fault lines’ (Dunlop, 1999, p. 57), ‘negotiating difference’ in the blending confluence(s) of national, local, political and organisational cultures and their languages. This is sensitive territory, as the new era of England–EU sub-national working risks being infused with the contaminated political legacy of difficult Brexit-related negotiations and the ‘othering of the European’ that has saturated popular debate in the UK since the Brexit vote in June 2016. At the same time, economic and political relationships will alter significantly (Bailey & Budd, 2017; Chen et al., 2018; Billing et al., 2019). Consequently, human interactions, trust, reconciliation(s) and engagements with

(EU) *others* and their *othernesses* beyond familiar domestic UK political, economic, cultural and linguistic boundaries will become more dynamic.

Shotter appeals for a leadership approach that favours non-prejudicial dialogue. His call for open-ended conversation and discussion with *others as equals*, for the purpose of creating and shaping mutually beneficial partnerships, is relevant in a cross-Europe context. This conceptualisation of leadership foregrounds the communicative dimension in relationship-building activities required of leaders who occupy formal roles in city and regional development settings. Framing sub-national leadership in this way reminds us of the importance of promoting mutually beneficial dialogue between partners, which is especially pertinent in periods of supranational policy turbulence.

WHAT DOES BREXIT DISRUPTION MEAN FOR TRANS-BORDER KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AND LEARNING AT THE SUB-NATIONAL LEVEL?

Important sub-national relationship-building activity has been fostered over the last four decades between cities and regions across Europe (MacNeill, Jeffery, & Gibney, 2007; Moore, 2008; Sykes & Shaw, 2008; Knodt, Greenwood, & Quittkat, 2011; Marlow, 2017; Huggins, 2018a, 2018b). Policy and practice have adjusted to a situation in which easy working across national boundaries has become normal. Ongoing dialogue and conversation at the heart of partnering activity have driven ready flows and exchanges of ideas, knowledge and trans-border learning on and around socio-economic, technological and environmental ‘good’ practice across the EU, and has been a beneficial (Hachmann, 2016) but underestimated feature of the wider UK–EU sub-national development experience. Importantly, this pan-European sub-national ‘coming together’ through continuing dialogue has confronted ‘dichotomizing tendencies of thinking about differences’ and helped ‘unfix mindsets and unmap polarized notions of geography’ (Dunlop, 1999, p. 58). Central to the ‘negotiation of difference’ (ibid.), open-ended dialogue also plays a role in countering

isolationism, divisive identity-based rhetoric and growing xenophobia and ‘othering’ in contemporary political leadership discourse (Goodwin, 2011; Wodak, Khosravi-Nik, & Mral, 2013; Sanders, 2019). Currently, Brexit-inspired friction in UK–EU political discourse at all levels is occurring at a time when innovative solutions to complex social, economic, scientific, technological and environmental policy problems require ongoing ‘good’ dialogue and conversations between sub-national territories, unconstrained by centralising polities. These problems can only be solved through mutually beneficial trans-border exchanges of knowledge and learning, continually shaped and re-shaped through open-ended dialogue.

The potential benefits of trans-border learning are generally recognised in the knowledge exchange and policy transfer literature (Dolowitz & Marsh, 1996, 2000), and in the literature on EU transnational working more specifically (Malik & Cunningham, 2006; Dühr & Nadin, 2007; Colomb, 2007; Hachmann, 2016). Formal and informal processes of knowledge transfer and learning have been an added-value feature of EU sub-national policy initiatives for over four decades. Trans-border learning has permeated myriad EU cooperation projects, including city and regional developments (Hachmann, 2016). Knowledge exchange and learning have characterised EU funding regimes such as the EC R&D Framework Programmes, Horizon 2020, Regional Innovation Strategies and Structural Funds/Cohesion Policy programmes (ESF and ERDF),¹ as well as sector-specific economic development initiatives, including Urban Innovative Actions, LEADER and the trans-border partnering activities promoted by several iterations of INTERREG. This learning has had a significant impact on economic development policy, programmes, project design and financial engineering in city and regional development in the UK. Few developments in UK national and sub-national infrastructure, business tourism, creative-knowledge economy, science, technology, workforce development and innovation can claim to have been solely ‘invented

¹ See, for example, the ERDF/EU Cohesion Policy on transnational knowledge exchange activity promoted through the ‘TAIEX-REGIO Peer 2 Peer’ platform (http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/how/improving-investment/taiex-regio-peer-2-peer).

here'. Put simply, since 1995, programmes such as INTERREG (sometimes referred to as European Territorial Cooperation, ETC) have helped to build important communities of practice and learning networks between people, projects and policy-making across UK-European borders.

So has trans-border cooperation been a product of EU membership, and is it likely to disappear once UK membership of the EU and the associated funding disappear? One view is that while 'the culture of centralization within the English polity' complicates relationships between EU and UK sub-national bodies (Huggins, 2018b, p. 149), planned and spontaneous knowledge exchange and learning have nevertheless played through the 'rationalistic logic' (Huggins, 2018a) of UK–EU sub-national networking. This 'softer', tacit and opportunistic learning amongst sub-national partners has been enabled not only by institutional arrangements, but also by informal personal and group conversations and interactions (Colomb, 2007; Hachmann, 2016).

An alternative view suggests an uncertain future for UK–EU trans-border knowledge exchange and learning in the urban and regional development field. While the EU appears poised to enact a wholly re-invigorated approach to sub-national economic growth and territorial cohesion agendas, with 'massive structural transformation over the coming decades that will create major new opportunities for the EU' (Bachtler, Oliveira Martins, Wostner, & Zuber, 2019, p. 6), the influence and impact of the EU's territorial Europeanisation agendas seem likely to wane in the UK as its 'privileged insider' access to EU funding for sub-national trans-border knowledge partnering reduces over time. In addition, the scale of domestic UK funds available, particularly for UK–EU city and regional trans-border cooperation initiatives, seems unlikely to replace what was available pre-Brexit from the EU's many territorial development funding regimes. Further, any co-financing monies for

cooperation projects are more likely to reflect central government priorities rather than those of the UK's sub-national territories.

In summary, it is unclear (at the time of writing) whether the pace and scale of trans-border policy and programme cooperation between cities and regions will be maintained and resourced at pre-Brexit levels. The extent of trans-border knowledge exchange and policy learning between UK and EU sub-national authorities and agencies risks further curtailment as the UK's sub-national territories are nudged by central government to support a new generation of bilateral trade agreements and inward investment promotion activities. Ongoing government thinking around the UK's new Brexit-inspired 'Global Britain' business strategy (House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, 2017) promises to shift outward focus away from the EU toward securing economic, scientific, technological and education and skills links with the Anglophone world (the US, Canada, New Zealand and Australia) as well as the developing economies of India, China, Southeast Asia, the Arab Gulf, Africa and Latin America.

There is nothing wrong with this, of course, if it does not mean choosing between the EU and the rest of the (sub-national) world when resources for international partnering activities are already scarce. However, one consequence of a reduced EU focus is its potential impact on easy and ready trans-border knowledge exchange and learning activities between UK and EU cities and regions. Furthermore, an *othering* tone in the Brexit debate, replete with accusations of 'fake news', contested statistics and allegations of possible disrupting/corrupting third-party interference in the UK democratic process, is adding to the fractious political atmosphere within the UK between 'Leavers' and 'Remainers', and also between central government and the UK's less-favoured sub-national territories beyond London and the South East. An unhelpful blaming tendency on all sides of difficult Brexit negotiations has polluted national-level UK–EU relations, and a pernicious psychodynamic

legacy may echo through subsequent decades (see, e.g., Elliott, 2018). The European Commission and the UK government have approached the Brexit ‘question’ from different directions. The Commission sees the UK as seeking to secure commercial advantage from leaving the Single Market. Through greater freedom to negotiate advantageous bilateral trade deals with many of the EU’s geopolitical and economic competitors, it threatens to become a significant economic competitor to the EU in its own right. On the other hand, the EU is accused variously of looking to subvert the democratic legitimacy of the Brexit vote, meddle in UK–Ireland border affairs, weaken UK sovereignty around the question of immigration, constrain the UK’s ‘new’ economic internationalisation agenda, and tie the UK into a failing supranational political and economic project.

Little leadership research has been done at the sub-national scale, in terms of nationally-bounded place leadership studies of how sub-national leadership is affected by, and reacts to, external shocks and significant and unexpected breaks in supranational policy continuity. Put simply, Brexit is a test of whether longstanding negotiated relationships at the sub-national level are resilient enough to survive such shocks, and whether dialogue between sub-national partners for knowledge exchange and learning exists only when national governments allow it. In other words, is mutually beneficial dialogue and conversation between sub-national leaders self-sustaining, or is it simply subservient to the international policy priorities of national leadership?

RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHOD

Our research approach was abductive, thematic and qualitative in character, ‘constantly going “back and forth” from one type of research activity to another and between empirical observations and theory ... to expand understanding of both theory and empirical phenomena’ (Dubois & Gadde, 2002, p. 555). Twenty-eight formal, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted at the most senior level (from December 2017 to November 2018)

with policy makers, policy advisors and local economic development practitioners directly responsible for negotiating and progressing Brexit related (sub-national) policy responses.

The schedule involved:

- Twenty interviews with the most senior level executive and policy leaders in local, regional and combined authorities, local enterprise partnerships (LEPS), universities and chambers of commerce in two regions in England (11 interviews were conducted in Greater Birmingham; and 9 interviews in the North East of England);
- One interview with a London-based senior level UK Trades Union Congress (TUC) official directly responsible for Brexit affairs;
- Five interviews at Director/Secretary-General and senior advisor level with Brussels-based city and regional policy advocacy organisations dealing respectively with pan-European and England-EU sub-national development affairs, EU regional innovation policy and European cities policy;
- The EU funding programmes Directors in two separate Regional Councils (located in i) Northern and, ii) West coastal France) working currently with local and regional partners located in south east coastal England on a wide range of trans-border programmes.

Early interviewees were chosen purposively, as we wanted to hear from senior policy makers, advisors and practitioners occupying formal leadership roles, and who were closely involved in post-Brexit economic development ‘visioning’, policy reviews, ‘future resourcing’ and

strategic investment and policy-planning activities. The two regions in England were chosen purposively, as both have benefited very considerably from EU urban and regional development funding regimes over the last four decades, and have longstanding and extensive experience of trans-border knowledge exchange and learning projects across the EU. The interviews were conducted face-to-face, or via Skype if distance was an issue.

A project abstract and semi-structured topic guide were e-mailed to interviewees in advance. The topic guide questions encouraged reflecting on experiences (see Figure 2 in Appendix A), with some variation to accommodate the interviewees' organisational and geographical locations.

Drawing on lessons of thematic analysis from previous qualitative studies (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Dubois & Gadde, 2002; Nowell et al., 2017), the interview data were analysed in three stages. First, a general reading of all interview data was conducted to obtain an overall sense of the 'dominant experiences' reported. Second, a more detailed reading of each individual transcript was undertaken to allow for deeper manual coding of dominant experiences across the data. These were then brought together into *four main themes*. The draft findings and discussion section were read alongside a set of unannotated primary interview transcripts to verify the trustworthiness of the thematic interpretations. This final verifying reading was carried out by a researcher who had not been involved in the previous phases of manual coding and thematic review of the data.

For context, the most recent academic literature on the sub-national implications of Brexit was reviewed, alongside policy literature on the potential economic and political impacts at the sub-national level in England (CER, 2014; CEP, 2016; IPPR, 2016; LGA, 2017; Cambridge Econometrics, 2018; The UK in a Changing World, 2018; Birmingham City Council, 2018; North East Brexit Group, 2018). To complement the regional policy literature review and gather UK-wide contextual perspectives to help interpret the qualitative

interview data, the researchers attended eight sub-national Brexit policy impact workshops, seminars and conferences as both observers and contributors between 2017 and 2019. Regarding the trustworthiness of the research and its interpretations, the authors presented their early findings at three international academic research conferences/seminars in 2018–2019 to gauge critical peer reactions. A final draft of the paper was critically reviewed by four experienced senior academics (see Acknowledgements).

To ensure anonymity, quotations in the discussion below are referenced alphanumerically (e.g., A1, C2), with As referring to interviewees in the English sites and Cs to interviewees based in Brussels and the two Regional Council sites in France.

DISCUSSION: SURFACING THEMES IN (SUB-NATIONAL) TRANS-BORDER COOPERATION

Our research findings are nuanced and sometimes paradoxical. The sample of interviewees was Europhile, given the nature of England–EU partnership work, and there is more in the data than can be presented in a single paper. Nonetheless, the participants’ accounts surfaced four dominant themes:

Theme 1: Keenness to connect and engage in dialogue and learn ‘with (sub-national) others’

Theme 2: Dominating presence of the (UK) centre and de-democratisation of UK–EU government affairs

Theme 3: Loss of ‘privileged insider’ access to EU knowledge and learning

Theme 4: Reduced access to resources for trans-border cooperation.

These are addressed in turn below.

Theme 1: Keeness to connect and engage in dialogue and learn ‘with (sub-national) others’

The interviewees generally subscribed to a ‘no-frontiers’ worldview of knowledge exchange and learning. Their approaches to creating and maintaining ‘good’ and mutually productive trans-border working relationships with sub-national partners resonate with the Shotterian dialogical-relational ‘ideal’ (Shotter, 2016). Interviewees generally agreed on the importance of learning from others, and were keen to share their own experiences with others, learn from others’ experiences, create and maintain a collaborative learning atmosphere and relationships of equals with others, and encourage reciprocity and responsiveness in continuing dialogical exchanges with others.

The accounts confirm that a great deal of relational goodwill currently exists across the (sub-national) practice world of trans-border knowledge exchange and learning, and that trans-border working is regarded as important for both personal and professional learning. There was evident passion for investing in trans-border knowledge exchange and learning in the world of sub-national practice:

We want to maintain that political dialogue. We want to maintain a shared ambition ... [a] shared set of objectives in tackling Europe’s problems (A4).

Regarding the development and maintenance of working relationships with other sub-national partners:

Regardless of all this, we are still committed to working with each other and we’re still committed to sustaining, maintaining ... all those open collaborative wonderful relationships that we’ve built up over all these years, we’re not going to dismantle them as a result of Brexit (A3).

...and there is an understanding that you’re trying to talk to each other as equals (C4).

However, the message for UK central government was sometimes less positive:

I think the [UK] government of the day will have to prove itself again, but I don't think [UK] sub-national government will have to prove itself again. I think we've been in the game too long and [EU] people know where we're coming from (C1).

Paradoxically, the 'shock' of the UK Brexit vote appears to have somewhat re-energised sub-national trans-border relationship building. The importance attached to safeguarding and growing existing relationships and links was clear, as viewed by EU sub-national partners:

I think ... actually it has had a positive effect on the way we work together, because especially with [name of UK region], they really wanted to keep the link outside the island, let's say, the island of Great Britain. And our links already exist. So they put lots of energy into this cooperation (C5).

At one level, these outlooks are unsurprising. Most interviewees spent a great deal of their daily professional lives developing England–EU trans-border knowledge exchange and learning programmes and projects. Many were multilingual and had considerable pan-European and wider cross-cultural exposure, either personally or through close family, friends and professional networks.

Theme 2: Dominating presence of the (UK) centre and de-democratisation of UK–EU government affairs

Echoing Huggins' (2018b) concerns about hampering of the sub-national, democratically elected voice in the Brexit debate, the interview data suggest that a re-energised centralising polity is at work in the world of UK–EU government affairs:

It's a London Brexit: they've got their own stuff they want to deal with. They want to protect the financial markets in London. They want to do their deal and 'all you cities and regions, all you're doing is going to complicate matters; you know that we know best, so leave it to us. We [UK central government] don't want to discuss it, we don't want to open up, it's a private discussion.' ... There isn't a dialogue (A3).

And in terms of the sub-national voice in the Brexit negotiations:

They don't care. The position of most civil servants that we have ever worked with in London is that they don't care at all [about UK–EU city and regional transnational cooperation]. When you're talking about Brexit, this type of thing gets lost because, you know, it's not anything to do with customs, it's not anything to do with citizens' rights, it's not anything to do with a £40bn financial settlement – you know, it complicates things for London, which ... favours centralisation, despite whatever they might say (C4).

Given their reported lack of voice in the Brexit discussions, sub-national stakeholders are having to work around UK central government to continue discussions with EU institutions and ensure their access to policy learning and policy-making intelligence over the longer term:

We do not trust Member State[-level] negotiations to achieve the sorts of outcomes that would be relevant or beneficial for [UK] cities. We need to build on the relationships we already have, opening doors to [names of EU bodies and senior EU officials]. We'll battle away to get that voice [for UK cities] more of an established voice. It can't be a voice in the formal negotiations at nation state level, but it can be a voice in forging city relationships [across Europe] that we sustain beyond Brexit (A11).

There is a concern that, post-Brexit, the power to influence EU government affairs will be pulled back from cities and regions to the centre in the UK, and it will be difficult to maintain the sub-national voice in Brussels:

They [UK central government] can't tell us that we can't be here, so we are in that sense protected; but they could make it difficult for us, and difficult to access people and information. They can do their best to block us and block our influence. So you know, it is a bit of a concern for us at the moment (C6).

Local authorities, in particular, are thinking about how they may need to re-frame and re-think to ensure access to EU-level discussions and debates relating to their local policy concerns:

For example, we'll lose also our MEPs from [name of UK region], so we won't be able to directly go to them and have direct influence through them. So ... we'll have to make sure our relationships with MEPs from other countries are much stronger, and that means thinking as well much more carefully about what we can bring. So I think we're going to have to be much clearer ... much more targeted and much more prepared (C6).

With the likely loss of access to 'conventional' EU funds for trans-border projects (from EU Cohesion Funds, INTERREG Programmes, etc.) after Brexit, local government is particularly concerned that opportunities for trans-border knowledge exchange and learning may be radically curtailed, reduced to the pre-EU level of 'town twinning' activities. Yet it feels it has an important role to play in European matters post-Brexit:

So there's specific pieces of work on different legal fields, be it public procurement, state aid, regional development, but there's also wider governance questions that we're trying to tackle about how councils can ensure a strong role in law making post Brexit. The common [local government] cause is about trying to get the best out of Brexit for local communities and for the people that the councils serve (C1).

Local government, as the democratic local voice in England, clearly fears being sidelined by a re-energised centralising polity in EU government affairs – 'cut out' not only from the opportunity to create and benefit from pan-European relationships that allow for knowledge exchange and learning, but also more widely from meaningful involvement at the 'intimate heart' of any new UK–EU policy-shaping and decision-making process. As part of the proposed new UK industrial strategy (HM Government, 2017), central government appears to

favour prioritising higher education-sector access to resources, allowing research-active universities in England to continue to participate in EU R&D programmes (e.g., remaining Horizon 2020 programmes, and European Research Area programmes beyond 2020). City and regional economies may benefit from some of the learning embedded in these R&D-focused programmes, and England's research-led universities are regarded as 'anchor' institutions in the proposed UK industrial strategy (HM Government, 2017), making important contributions to sub-national economies, and to national wealth-creation and prosperity agendas (Charles, 2003; Vallance, Tewdwr-Jones, & Kempton, 2019). However, from a critical perspective, they are not impartial, transparent or democratic institutions (Canaan & Shumar, 2008; Rustin, 2016; Pelletier, Kottke, & Sirotnik, 2019), they are becoming increasingly marketised and globally oriented, and they are only one of a number of institutional voices in England's sub-national territories.

After a decade of dealing with the impact of austerity on public services, local government in England, in particular, fears becoming marginalised by centralising forces in national-level UK negotiations around Brexit, and is seeking to ensure that the local community voice is also heard at the decision-making table, enabling R&D efforts to contribute more directly to local economic development, creativity and public-service innovation. Local government in England is re-thinking how it can exert more territorial influence on UK-EU R&D governance and funding affairs by working through Brussels-based advocacy bodies such as Eurocities to shape funding priorities. It is also seeking to integrate a re-energised trans-border policy influencing effort in Brussels with a renewed strategy of partnership building with local universities:

So we are already playing in that [EU R&D funds] space, and I've always said for many, many years that we should raise our game, because there is significant funding in this sphere of EU [R&D] funding. We don't get anywhere close to attracting as much

as I think that we should, whether it be around intelligent transport systems ... or innovative procurement, knowledge and innovation in public service. And we do believe that the [EU R&D] framework funds do provide money for demonstrator-type piloting and testing of more innovative forms of public service where we can work collaboratively with higher education institutions (A12).

Theme 3: Loss of ‘privileged insider’ access to EU knowledge and learning

Interviewees raised concerns around medium-term access to EU ‘privileged insider’ policy and programme intelligence, and the personal relationships required to sustain this. There are clear signals that sub-national partners may be less intimately involved in EU-level discussions around the design of sub-national policy, programmes and projects:

On a personal basis, I’m still treated as someone who [EU-level] people want to work with. I get asked to do certain things ... continuing through with those [personal] relationships. On an institutional basis, however, and if you talk to [name of EU-level institution], it’s come to a point where the EU are now very much looking beyond Brexit and beyond 2020. [EU] institutions are now looking more and more at a scenario that will not have the UK involved (A2).

At the same time, their physical (as opposed to virtual) absence in Brussels was seen as eroding sub-national influence in the corridors of power in Brussels:

I’ve been to meetings in my area of research and innovation and various things, to conferences, where I’m the only UK person and nobody comes from the UK. And you see, it’s been a massive drop. I think one of the problems is the [financial/austerity] crisis – the money: you’ve always had the view that if you go over to Brussels it’s a jolly, right? This is where the Brits are just absent now, so they don’t have the sort of corridor intelligence, you know, the watercooler intelligence – you [could] say they [are] less informed (C3).

And on the question of the UK sub-national presence in Brussels beyond Brexit:

It's not in six months, you have to – it's one, two, three, four, five years with somebody that you've built up, you've worked together, you know and trust each other, you trust each other with secret information and that sort of thing and you exchange things. Now if those relationships are not there... (C3).

To compensate, some sub-national organisations are seeking to (re-)make and reinforce their routes into EU-level policy and decision making through EU-level advocacy associations and other forums, to ensure that the flow of policy intelligence and pan-European knowledge-exchange and learning opportunities are not compromised by Brexit:

What I'm saying is, maintaining membership of a [EU-level] city-led network organisation that is embedded into the governance of EU policy making – Eurocities is able to comment and influence on EU policy regulation and funding. It means that UK cities [can] access that influence – access that the UK government doesn't have. So that's one area that I think is critically important, because we need to take account of what's still going on [that is] important to us in terms of our relationships in Europe (A4).

However, for UK sub-national territories to continue to benefit from pan-European mutual exchange and learning, a Brussels-based advocacy association suggested:

They will have to work hard [at] keeping in contact with their [EU] peers, let's say. I think they will have to work hard to invent or propose different ways or new ways in which cities could still benefit from the EU. They should remain active in [EU] networks. They will have to work harder (C2).

There was a sense that the dominance of the Brexit debate in the UK is also affecting the 'ambience' of England–EU trans-border cooperation in more subtle ways not always explicitly voiced by EU partners:

Everything is kind of couched in this backdrop of Brexit, so it's the elephant in the room, you can't escape it. But it's not always explicit, and I think our relationships are still good. I get the impression as well that there's a kind of boredom. A lot of people [our EU partners] are not really following it as closely as we are as Brits. We're completely caught up in everything that's going on and all of the political dramas that are taking place, and I think a lot of Europeans on this side have tuned out a little bit (C6).

Theme 4: Reduced access to resources for trans-border cooperation

Interviewees expressed optimistic views on whether adequate and bespoke 'ring-fenced' resources would be made available for England–EU trans-border knowledge exchange and learning collaboration at the sub-national scale, although there was a view that personal relationships would remain important:

It's beyond money. It's partly influenced and enabled by money but not solely or always enabled by money (A4).

Nevertheless, the question of how sub-national trans-border cooperation will be funded in the future, and what, if anything, might replace EU funding were key concerns for sub-national partners both in England and on the EU mainland:

I think something that has really changed and is really important for [name of UK regional authority] is also how current and future European funding programmes or European policy might be reflected in the future domestic arrangements once we're out of the EU. So ... there's a whole element in also ensuring that we're active in the negotiations that are starting now, happening now on the future European funding programmes, to ensure that they're still [available] for regions on this side of the Channel – because some of that is going to be reflected, we expect, in the future domestic policy (C6).

I think the interest in working with partners from the UK, or from UK universities, in working with others in [name of EU mainland regional authority] would still exist, but would they have the money and the way to do it without the EU money? ... [for] cooperative research, we know this money really helps them work together. I'm not sure they do work together because of the money [alone]. The money allows them to have the time, to have the means to travel, for instance, to really work together (C5).

More bluntly, issues may arise when sub-national partners in England seek to have a say on EU-funded projects or related thematic priorities in trans-border projects:

At some point [on the co-funding question] I think it makes things a bit tense, because we just want to say, or I heard some colleagues say it, 'come on [UK partners], you're leaving, so you're not going to tell us what we have to do with the EU money' (C5).

Reflections

Despite the personal and professional commitment of our sample of sub-national leaders to continuing dialogue with partners across and through Dunlop's metaphorical and literal 'boundary lands', our research suggests that trans-border knowledge exchange and learning are not immune to turbulence in the wider world of UK–EU relations. Dialogue at the trans-border sub-national scale is constrained and complicated by (as yet) unanswered political concerns around likely realignments of EU 'insiders' and 'outsiders', and by (as yet) unanswered questions concerning the emerging dynamics of 'transnational cooperation versus competition' in wider England–EU relations. It is also clear from the interview data that the ability to maintain and grow sub-national relationships with EU partners may vary spatially. Some cities and regions in England are investing in a new generation of relationship-building activity, both in Brussels and more widely across the EU, to offset the loss of 'privileged insider' access post-Brexit. Others areas appear less likely to be able to find the resources necessary for pan-European relational work, and over the longer term may

find themselves disadvantaged in policy and economic development intelligence, with only second- or third-order access to sub-national policy shaping. Moreover, the interviewees' accounts suggest a degree of territorial favouritism in the encouragement of (sub-national) transnational knowledge and learning activity. In other words, the framing conditions of any policy support secured from the 'UK centre' for European-focused trans-border knowledge and exchange activity, and thus levels of territorial awareness and preparedness, seem to differ qualitatively, say for Newcastle and the North East of England compared with London, Kent and the South East of England.

Clearly, the challenges of a 'new' centralism in EU government affairs, loss of 'privileged insider' access to funding and policy intelligence and fear of being sidelined or excluded from pan-European flows of knowledge and learning are exercising the minds of leaders, policy makers and strategists in England's cities and regions. The data also suggest that this is a highly charged emotional time on both sides of the English Channel. Words (and hence perspectives) such as 'disaster', 'bereavement', 'pity', 'sorrow', 'guilt', 'anger' and 'tiresome' appeared throughout the interviews and in informal conversations and sub-national Brexit impact events attended by research team members between 2017 and 2019. However, encouragingly, words such as 'together', 'cooperation', 'solidarity', 're-building', 'bridges', 'conversation', 'dialogue' and 'listen(ing)' were also heard.

A Shatterian relational worldview of leadership is generally evident in the interview data. The interviewees wished to continue to cooperate with their England/EU neighbours, and the practice of RL-type approaches was observable in interview accounts of behaviours and actions. However, the deep historical 'well' of relational goodwill – the seeking of common democratic cause and associated dialogue between sub-national partners as equals – is coming under severe pressure. Across the sub-national world of trans-border knowledge exchange and learning, the data reveal clear tensions between personal commitment to

engaging in non-prejudicial working with *the other*, and a wider, ongoing Brexit ‘project’ that appears at times constraining and insecure.

While RL theory is a useful guiding device for our research on the dynamics of human (leadership) interactions in these types of settings, the RL worldview has utopian tendencies and may underestimate the place of power, conflict and contradiction in dialogue(s) and conversations between partners (De Cock & Böhm, 2007; Raelin, 2012). The interview data provide clear evidence of the limits to dialogue (and to trust and patience). They also reveal that an altered policy environment post-Brexit will present new decision-making challenges for city and regional development leaders involved in trans-border knowledge exchange and learning (who to partner with – and why?), for which there appears to be diminishing policy support from UK central government. Moreover, recent research and policy literature on the combined sub-national economic and social consequences of a decade of public finance austerity in the UK (Loopstra & Lalor, 2017; Social Metrics Commission, 2018; UN, 2019), now exacerbated by the political disruption caused by Brexit, predicts a worsening of spatial inequalities in the UK, leading Billing et al. (2019) to conclude that ‘Brexit is likely to make the UK’s interregional inequalities far worse than they already are, with many Leave-voting regions being especially vulnerable’.

Substantial improvements to leadership, regional investment and institutional capacity will be required at the sub-national scale if regional disparities are to be overcome in England (Billing et al., 2019, p. 756; Liddle & Shutt, 2019; Menon, Portes, & Bevington, 2019; Shutt & Liddle, 2019). The combined long-standing economic and social-spatial inequalities and stresses suffered by the most vulnerable places in England (Hudson, 2020), added to concerns about the UK central government’s commitment to increasing post-austerity investment levels at the sub-national scale, threaten to impact significantly on city and regional leaders’

ability to enable sustainable prosperity and wealth spread, let alone to engage in trans-border knowledge exchange and learning with partners across Europe.

In summary, themes 2, 3 and 4 surfaced from the interview data suggest, in different ways, that external shocks and significant disruptions to supranational policy continuity, such as Brexit, test the resilience of longstanding negotiated relationships at the sub-national scale, and question whether ongoing dialogue and meaningful conversations between sub-national partners for knowledge exchange and learning exist only when sanctioned by (UK) national government. On a more positive note, theme 1 (keenness to connect and engage in dialogue and learn ‘with sub-national others’) confirms continued common cause and goodwill at the sub-national level.

Overall, however, given the disturbance of the Brexit ‘project’, whether productive relationships between sub-national leaders can be self-sustaining is uncertain, as they may simply prove to be subservient to the international policy priorities of (UK) national leadership.

CONCLUSION

This paper has considered the contemporary lived experience of senior level (formal) city and regional leaders in two regions in England who are navigating the ongoing knowledge-exchange and learning legacies of the early phase of the Brexit ‘project’. We have sought to address two main questions: how is the Brexit ‘project’ impacting on leadership relations in England–EU trans-border cooperation at the sub-national scale; and how does RL theory help to illuminate the nature of the challenge(s) faced by sub-national leaders?

With regard to the first question, we have found that while England–EU trans-border cooperation at the sub-national scale is likely to survive the disruption, the turbulence of Brexit signals a very different context. A greatly altered legal, policy and economic environment presents a number of significant strategic challenges for city and regional

leaders (Billing, McCann, & Ortega-Argilés, 2019; Liddle & Shutt, 2019; Hudson, 2020; Thissen, van Oort, McCann, Ortega-Argilés & Husby, 2020), who are seeking to pursue mutually beneficial trans-border dialogue(s) and conversation(s) with one another for the purpose of maintaining and extending knowledge exchange and policy learning.

With regard to the second question, we have proposed that RL theory, provides a new framing device that offers additional explanations in regard to our understanding of the dynamics of England–EU cross-border leadership. Specifically, RL theory reminds us of the importance of asking questions about the nature, and the outcomes, of human interactions (between individual leaders and groups of leaders) in trans-border cooperation. In other words, in trans-border settings and during turbulent times, how, and why, should regional leaders seek to understand one another? How, and why, should regional leaders collaborate with and respond to others? How, and why, should regional leaders go about the activity of negotiating difference(s), as well as opportunities, across borders? In particular, the emphasis that RL places on the importance of maintaining ‘good’ dialogue and meaningful conversations between formal co-actors across borders allows us to foreground the specific communicative dilemmas (i.e. how the practice(s) of dialogue at the sub-national scale are either constrained or enabled by wider national and supranational forces) faced by sub-national leaders in trans-border cooperation during supranational policy disruptions; and where the over-arching policy context is shaped by the unpredictable actions of central government, often without any significant reference to local experience and needs.

Our findings also add an underestimated trans-border knowledge exchange and learning dimension to the study of city and regional leadership at times of significant supranational policy disruption. More practically, the research suggests that, in order to remain connected with political, policy and economic intelligence beyond national boundaries, England’s city and regional leaders are beginning to make creative, geostrategic use of their political,

business and friendship ‘back channels’ in Brussels, and more widely across continental Europe. In our two England city-region case study areas, local leaders are re-thinking their EU relationship-building activities and looking to focus on key European continental partner territories and priority knowledge themes, where mutual gain can be achieved with much more limited resources for sub-national trans-border partnering than in the pre-Brexit era.

Paradoxically, there is evidence that at least some sub-national leaders in England are re-energised by the challenges of Brexit. However, in re-thinking approaches to England–EU sub-national trans-border partnerships, the loss of ‘privileged insider’ access and the uncertain medium-term relational legacies of Brexit cannot be ignored, as varieties of *othering* continue to play through popular and mainstream political discourse at all levels. Some tension is evident in wider UK–EU political and economic debates, and not everyone at the UK centre appears convinced of the merits of ‘negotiating difference’ and co-creating opportunity through ‘dialogues of equals’. The research confirms that ‘big’ international policy shocks impact on sub-national leaders, and these impacts may constrain and disrupt non-prejudicial dialogue between partners in trans-border sub-national settings.

Our findings are limited by the overall sample size and the generally Europhile interview sample that is to some extent self-selecting due to the nature of interviewees’ professional roles. Nevertheless, they do flag up an important future research agenda. Before we can say that RL actually exists as a practice in sub-national trans-border knowledge-exchange and learning environments, we need more strongly evidenced case examples of RL in action in different types of city and regional settings. Assuming that RL is a real and observable phenomenon, we need also to better understand what happens during a wider variety of ‘big’ international policy transition events and crises that impact on cities and regions, in order to be more confident about what difference RL-type practices might make to trans-border knowledge-exchange and learning outcomes over time.

Finally, to complicate the UK-EU trans-border leadership question since the original field work was conducted, we need to recognise that the Covid-19 health pandemic, and the likely unequal impacts of its aftermath, is further de-stabilising the wider UK-EU context (Bailey et al, 2020). Combined with the Brexit ‘project’, the global pandemic threatens unprecedented social and political disruption at the sub-national scale over the coming decade as cities and regions across Europe compete to promote their economic recovery. At the very least, to advance understanding, and to compare and contrast what is happening more widely at the sub-national level with UK-EU trans-border cooperation – and how longstanding sub-national leadership relationships are changing and adapting - we need to gather more evidence on the impact of any longer term Brexit-related disruption on trans-border knowledge exchange and learning in the UK’s devolved territories of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to Alan Murie, Paul Edwards, Chris Collinge and Alyson Nicholds for reactions to an earlier version of the paper. Two anonymous referees and the journal editors have also provided helpful suggestions. Interpretations are entirely those of the authors, and all the usual disclaimers apply.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The authors report no potential conflict of interest.

REFERENCES

- Bachtler, J. (2017). Brexit and regional development in the UK: What future for regional policy after structural funds. In D. Bailey & L. Budd (Eds.), *The political economy of Brexit* (pp. 129–157). Newcastle upon Tyne: Agenda Publishing.
- Bachtler, J., Oliviera Martins, J., Wostner, P., & Zuber, P. (2019). *Towards cohesion policy 4.0: Structural transformation and inclusive growth*. Abingdon: Taylor and Francis.
- Bailey, D., & Budd, L. (Eds.) (2017). *The political economy of Brexit*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Agenda Publishing.
- Bailey, D., Clark, J., Colombelli, A., Corradini, C., De Propris, L., Derudder, B., Fratesi, U., Fritsch, M., Harrison, J., Hatfield, M., Kemeny, T., Kogler, D.F., Lagendijk, A., Lawton, P., Ortega-Argilés, R., Otero, C.I. and Usai, S. (2020) Regions in a time of pandemic, *Regional Studies*, 54 (9), 1163-1174.
- Beer, A., & Clower, T. (2013). Mobilizing leadership in cities and regions. *Regional Studies, Regional Science*, 1, 1–16.
- Beer, A, Ayres, S, Clower, T, Faller, F, Sancino, A & Sotarauta, M. (2019) Place leadership and regional economic development: a framework for cross-regional analysis, *Regional Studies*, 53, (2), 171-182.
- Beer, A., Mckenzie, F., Blažek, J., Sotarauta, M. & Ayres, S. (2020) *Every place matters: towards effective place-based policy*, *Regional Policy Impact Books*, 2 (1), Regional Studies Association. Abingdon (UK): Taylor & Francis.
- Bell, D. (2017). Regional aid policies after Brexit. *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, 33(S1), 91–104. doi:10.1093/oxrep/grx019
- Billing, C., McCann, P., & Ortega-Argilés, R. (2019). Interregional inequalities and UK sub-national governance responses to Brexit. *Regional Studies*, 53(5), 741–760. doi:10.1080/00343404.2018.1554246
- Birmingham City Council (2018). *The impact of Brexit on Birmingham and the West Midlands: Initial analysis*. Birmingham: Birmingham City Council.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa
- Cambridge Econometrics (2018). *Greater London Authority: Preparing for Brexit*. Cambridge: Cambridge Econometrics Limited.
- Canaan, J. E., & Shumar, W. (Eds.) (2008). *Structure and agency in the neoliberal university*. Abingdon: Routledge.

- Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform (2017). *Leadership for cross-border cooperation*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- CEP (2016). *The local economic effects of Brexit*. London: Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics and Political Science.
- CER (2014). *The consequences of Brexit for the City of London*. London: Centre for European Reform.
- Charles, D. (2003). Universities and territorial development: Reshaping the regional role of UK universities. *Local Economy*, 18(1), 7–20. doi:10.1080/0269094032000073780
- Chen, W., Los, B., McCann, P., Ortega-Argilés, R., Thissen, M., & Van Oort, F. (2018). The continental divide? Economic exposure to Brexit in regions and countries on both sides of the Channel. *Papers in Regional Science*, 97(1), 25–54. doi:10.1111/pirs.12334
- Collinge, C., & Gibney, J. (2010). Place-making and the limitations of spatial leadership: Reflections on the Øresund. *Policy Studies*, 31(4), 475–489. doi:10.1080/01442871003723432
- Collinge, C., Gibney, J., & Mabey, C. (Eds.) (2010). Introduction: Leadership and place. *Policy Studies*, 31(4), 365–522. doi:10.1080/01442871003723242
- Colomb, C. (2007). The added value of transnational cooperation: Towards a new framework for evaluating learning and policy change. *Planning, Practice & Research*, 22(3), 347–372. doi:10.1080/02697450701666712
- Corley, K. G., & Gioia, D. A. (2004). Identity ambiguity and change in the wake of a corporate spin-off. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 49, 173–208. doi:10.2307/4131471
- Cunliffe, A. L., & Eriksen, M. (2011). Relational leadership. *Human Relations*, 64(11), 1425–1449. doi:10.1177/0018726711418388
- De Cock, C., & Böhm, S. (2007). Liberalist fantasies: Žižek and the impossibility of the open society. *Organization*, 14(6), 815–836. doi:10.1177/1350508407082264
- Dolowitz, D., & Marsh, D. (1996). Who learns what from whom: A review of the policy transfer literature. *Political Studies*, 44(2), 343–357. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9248.1996.tb00334.x
- Dolowitz, D., & Marsh, D. (2000). Learning from abroad: The role of policy transfer in contemporary policy-making. *Governance*, 13(1), 5–23. doi:10.1111/0952-1895.00121
- Drath, W. (2001). *The deep blue sea: Rethinking the source of leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Dubois, A., & Gadde, L.-E. (2002). Systematic combining: An abductive approach to case research. *Journal of Business Research*, 55(7), 553–560. doi:10.1016/S0148-2963(00)00195-8

- Dühr, S., & Nadin, V. (2007). Europeanization through transnational territorial cooperation? The case of INTERREG IIIB North-West Europe. *Planning, Practice & Research*, 22(3), 373–394. doi:10.1080/02697450701666738
- Dunlop, R. (1999). Beyond dualism: Toward a dialogic negotiation of difference. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 24(1), 57–59. doi:10.2307/1585771
- Elliott, F. (2018). Jeremy Hunt faces backlash over EU ‘Soviet prison’ speech. *The Times*, 1 October. Retrieved from <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/don-t-try-to-lock-us-in-your-prison-hunt-tells-eu-97p2kbrvb>. Gergen, K. J. (2009). *Relational being: Beyond self and community*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Goodwin, M. (2011). *Right response: Understanding and countering populist extremism in Europe*. London: Royal Institute of International Affairs.
- Hachmann, V. (2016). *Knowledge development in transnational projects*. Abingdon: Routledge
- HM Government (2017). *Industrial strategy: Building a Britain fit for the future*. London: HMSO.
- Hosking, D. M. (2007). Not leaders, not followers: A post-modern discourse of leadership processes. In B. Shamir, R. Pillai, M. Bligh, & M. Uhl-Bien (Eds.), *Follower-centered perspectives on leadership: A tribute to the memory of James R. Meindl* (pp. 243–263). Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.
- House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee (March 2018). *Global Britain sixth report of session 2017–19*. London: House of Commons.
- Hudson, R. (2020) Life post-Brexit in the Divided Realm, *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 1-6. (Article [first published online](#): October 23, 2020).
- Huggins, C. (2018a). Subnational government and transnational networking: The rationalist logic of local level Europeanization. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 56(6), 1263–1282. doi:10.1111/jcms.12740
- Huggins, C. (2018b). The future of cohesion policy in England. *Cuadernos Europeos de Deusto*, 58, 131–153. doi:10.18543/ced-58-2018pp131-153
- IPPR (2016). *Brexit North: Securing a united voice at the negotiating table*. Manchester: Institute for Public Policy Research.
- Knodt, M., Greenwood, J., & Quittkat, C. (2011). Territorial and functional interest representation in EU governance. *Journal of European Integration*, 33(4), 349–367. doi:10.1080/07036337.2011.582279
- LGA (2017). *Beyond Brexit: Future of funding currently sourced from the EU*. London: Local Government Association.

- Liddle, J., & Shutt, J. (Eds.) (2019). *The North East after Brexit: Policy and impact*. Bingley: Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Loopstra, R., & Lalor, D. (2017). *Financial insecurity, food insecurity, and disability: The profile of people receiving emergency food assistance from The Trussell Trust foodbank network in Britain*. Salisbury: The Trussell Trust.
- MacNeill, S., Jeffery, C., & Gibney, J. (2007). Changing dynamics of regional representation in Brussels: A case study of Birmingham and the West Midlands, 1984–2004. *Regional Studies*, 41(3), 403–414. doi:10.1080/00343400601135351
- Malik, K., & Cunningham, P. (2006). Transnational policy learning in Europe: Attempts to transfer innovation policy practices. *Innovation: Organization & Management*, 8(3), 262–272. doi:10.5172/impp.2006.8.3.262
- Marlow, D. (2017). How can urban and local leadership teams navigate the impending international relations revolution? A practitioner viewpoint. *Local Economy*, 32(4), 273–280. doi:10.1177/0269094217708965
- McMaster, I. (2017). UK cross-border and transnational cooperation: Experiences, lessons and future. EPRC Research paper 100, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow.
- Menon, A., Portes, J., & Bevington, M. (Eds.) (2019). *The Brexit scorecard*. London: The UK in a Changing Europe. Retrieved from <https://ukandeu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/The-Brexit-Scorecard.pdf>
- Moore, C. (2008). A Europe of the regions vs. the regions in Europe: Reflections on regional engagement in Brussels. *Regional & Federal Studies*, 18(5), 517–535. doi:10.1080/13597560802351564
- North, P. (2017). Local economies of Brexit. *Local Economy*, 32(3), 204–218. doi:10.1177/0269094217705818
- North East Brexit Group (2018). *Leaving the European Union: A review of evidence about opportunities, challenges and risks to the North East economy and its key sectors with recommendations for action*. Newcastle upon Tyne: North East Local Enterprise Partnership.
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 1–13. doi:10.1177/1609406917733847
- Pelletier, K. L., Kottke, J. L., & Sirotnik, B. W. (2019). The toxic triangle in academia: A case analysis of the emergence and manifestation of toxicity in a public university. *Leadership*, 15(4), 405–432. doi:10.1177/1742715018773828

- Raelin, J. (2012). Dialogue and deliberation as expressions of democratic leadership in participatory organizational change. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 25(1), 2–27. doi:10.1108/09534811211199574
- Raelin, J. A. (Ed.) (2016). *Leadership-as-practice: Theory and application*. London: Routledge.
- Rustin, M. (2016). The neoliberal university and its alternatives. *Soundings*, 63, 147–170.
- Sanders, P. (2019). Leadership and populism: A parallel reading of Hannah Arendt and Franz Neumann. *Leadership*, 15(6), 750–767. doi:10.1177/1742715019837807
- Shotter, J. (2016). Turning leadership inside-out and back-to-front: A dialogical-hermeneutical account. In J. A. Raelin (Ed.), *Leadership-as-practice: Theory and application* (pp. 132–155). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Shutt, J., & Liddle, J. (2019). Are Combined Authorities in England strategic and fit for purpose? *Local Economy*, 34(2), 196–207. doi:10.1177/0269094219839956
- Social Metrics Commission (2019). *Measuring poverty 2019: A report of the Social Metrics Commission*. London: The Legatum Institute.
- Sotarauta, M., Beer, A., & Gibney, J. (Eds.) (2017). Making sense of leadership in city and regional development. *Regional Studies*, 51(2), 187–193. doi:10.1080/00343404.2016.1267340
- Sotarauta, M., & Beer, A. (Eds.) (2021). *The Handbook of City and Regional Leadership*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Sykes, O., & Shaw, D. (2008). Investigating territorial positioning by sub-state territories in Europe. *Regional & Federal Studies*, 18(1), 55–76. doi:10.1080/13597560701847977
- Taylor, A. (2019). *The realities, challenges and strengths of the external funding environment at LEP level*. Birmingham: University of Birmingham and the Smart Specialisation Hub. Retrieved from <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/business/research/research-projects/city-redi/external-funding-environment-at-lep-level.aspx>
- Thissen, M., van Oort, F., McCann, P., Ortega-Argilés, R. & Husby, T. (2020) The Implications of Brexit for UK and EU Regional Competitiveness, *Economic Geography*, published online October 2020. doi: 10.1080/00130095.2020.1820862
- The UK in a Changing World (2018). *Brexit: Local and devolved government*. London: ESRC and King's College.
- Uhl-Bien, M. (2006). Relational leadership theory: Exploring the social processes of leadership and organizing. *Leadership Quarterly*, 17(6), 654–676. doi:10.1016/j.leaqua.2006.10.007

Uhl-Bien, M., & Ospina, S. M. (Eds.) (2012). *Advancing relational leadership research: A dialogue among perspectives*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

UN (2019). *Visit to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland: Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights*. Human Rights Council 41st Session 24 June–12 July, Agenda item 3. New York: United Nations (General Assembly).

Vallance, P., Tewdwr-Jones, M, and Kempton, L. (2019) Facilitating spaces for place-based leadership in centralized governance systems: the case of Newcastle City Futures, *Regional Studies*, pp. 1-11, published online (open access): 26th April 2019.

Wodak, R., KhosraviNik, M., & Mral, B. (Eds.) (2013). *Right wing populism in Europe: Politics and discourse*. London: Bloomsbury.

Accepted - To Be Proofed

Figure 1: Framing relational leadership

1. We must assume as a starting point that the other(s) and their otherness are radically unknown to us – we must abandon our preconceptions;
2. We must ‘enter into’ dialogical relationships with the other and their otherness – that is, become involved/engaged with them;
3. We must ‘open’ ourselves to the other and their otherness – we must be responsive to difference;
4. Tact and courtesy are important as we develop dialogical relationships with others;
5. We may sometimes ‘follow’ the other but also provide opportunities for others sometimes to ‘follow’ us;
6. We must be prepared to be affected and moved as a result of our engagement/involvement in dialogical exchanges with the other/others;
7. At times we may be of a mind ‘with’ them as they may at times be of a mind ‘with’ us;
8. While we may not respond to every aspect of their influence, nor they to our influence, we are responsive to one another’s experiences and aspirations.

Source: adapted from Shotter, 2016, pp. 142–143

Appendix A: Figure 2: Interview topic guide (shortened extract)

1. To what extent have your Brexit-related discussions/dialogue(s) been easy and fruitful at local, national, interregional and EU level?
2. What has gone well in your Brexit-related discussions/dialogue(s) and other Brexit-related activities? Why has it gone well?
3. What has gone less well? Why has it gone less well?
4. Could you describe/characterise the state of the 'sub-national–national–EU' working atmosphere currently?
5. From where you currently sit, and thinking about the projects/programmes you are involved with, how do you see [business, policy, organisational, personal] relationships at the interregional and EU scale developing beyond Brexit? How might EU sub-national relations develop going forward?
6. What do you feel the medium- to longer-term implications of the Brexit 'project' are likely to be for sub-national development policy makers and practitioners in the UK?
7. How do you feel UK partners are currently regarded by their EU city and regional partners?
8. Can you illustrate the current 'mood', say with some examples of recent reactions/observations/insights offered by your EU partners?
9. Do you think you will need to operate differently in the EU at the sub-national scale? If so, how will you (that is to say, the behaviours and approaches of city and regional development 'leaders') be affected and why?
10. What (if any) are the opportunities going forward for sub-national/interregional working in the EU? What (if any) are the limitations?

Accepted - To Be Proofed