

Gazing beyond Brexitland - Still friends across frontiers?

*Olá, Salut, Ciao, Hallo, Labas, Yassou, Cześć, Hej! - und so weiter ...**

Our recent research into the ‘actual and real’ transnational experiences of city and regional development leaders in England, suggests we need to move far beyond the thinly veiled xenophobia and ‘othering’ that have washed through the early phases of the Brexit ‘process’.

Our research suggests that pan-European dialogue across the sub-national scale is essential to overcoming “*problematic psychodynamic legacies of Brexit*”. We call for leaders across England’s cities and regions to continue to invest, and engage in, non-prejudicial and open-ended dialogue with their European “*others as equals*” and “*without rank*” - for the purpose of collaborative learning, exploring and creating - and to shape the next generation of mutually beneficial solutions to complex and shared policy challenges across economy, society and environment. This means communicating with one another in tricky times and without prejudice...

Our research also suggests that England’s city and regional development leaders need to make creative use of the many political, business and friendship “*back channels*” in Brussels - and more widely across European locations - to influence and stay connected with the expertise that continental economic development policy and practice has to offer. They will need to focus on key partner territories and priority knowledge themes where mutual benefits can be achieved with more limited resources available for sub-national transnational knowledge exchange and learning than existed in the pre-Brexit era.

For England’s disadvantaged cities and regions, sharing learning about sub-national development policy and practice together with their many “*good friends across frontiers*” will become all the more important beyond Brexit - to help loosen the constraining grip of self-dealing “*centralising interests*” in the UK.

However, none of this type of re-energised trans-frontier relationship building activity will be without challenges and obstacles. The Brexit ‘process’ has highlighted that not everyone at “*the centre*” is convinced of the merits of “*negotiating difference and diversity*” and co-creating knowledge and learning opportunities at the sub-national scale through open-minded “*dialogues of equals*”.

If England’s disfavoured cities and regions are to benefit from easy and ready exchanges of knowledge and learning across Europe’s many different types of frontiers and boundaries - then centralising and superior “*ways of leadership being and acting*” in Westminster & Whitehall need to radically change.

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Go to:

<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/business/staff/profile.aspx?ReferenceId=19756&Name=dr-john-gibney>

*Related directly to the argument about the importance of maintaining and developing the quality of European trans-frontier dialogue(s) – see the unhelpful collapse in (some) state secondary school European Modern Languages teaching in England. For details go to:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-47334374>