

Economic geographies of Brexit

Guest edited by Johannes Glückler and Dariusz Wójcik

On 31 January 2020, the UK officially left the European Union following a narrow win of the Leave campaign in the referendum held on 23 June 2016. The process of leaving the EU is subject to the withdrawal agreement, including an 11-month transition, by the end of which the UK and the EU should agree the basis of their future relationship. As of mid-September 2020, there is a big risk of no deal being agreed by the end of 2020. Arguably, as a policy challenge, since March 2020 Brexit has taken second stage after the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting recession, in the EU but also the UK. That does not, however, make the actual and potential consequences of Brexit any smaller. It just makes the associated challenges even more complex and drains resources that could be used to address them.

Geography is central to understanding the antecedents and consequences of Brexit, as demonstrated in both quantitative and qualitative studies. Extant research has analyzed the factors that explain leave votes and has shown the significance of age, education, individual attitudes and local context. In this respect, there are similarities but also differences between Brexit referendum and anti-EU votes elsewhere in Europe as well as populist votes internationally. Quantitative studies forecasting the economic consequences of Brexit, have shown negative and geographically uneven impacts on the UK and the EU economies. Those include negative but muted impacts on the City of London and its position in global finance. As an unprecedented reversal of a close economic relationship, Brexit involves not only a denial of the laws of economic geography but also an irony: the UK is distancing itself from its neighbors, hoping to build prosperity on relationships with more remote economies. UK regions that voted strongly to leave are those that depend most on EU markets and have most to lose from Brexit.

Brexit is a decisive event for the political, social and economic development of the European Union. Nevertheless, it appears to be less and less an exception, but rather an outstanding example of increasing interregional decoupling. Civil society movements and political aspirations towards regional autonomy and separation in Scotland, Catalonia or South Tyrol, and more general tendencies towards national populism and international disintegration in Europe, the Americas and Asia, point to the need for a better understanding of the geographical conditions and consequences of political decoupling. Brexit has shown that withdrawal from the EU is not a one-off event but rather an unpredictable, arduous, and uncertain process that confronts those directly and indirectly involved with ever new decisions under conditions of ongoing uncertainty.

Because of the re-emergence of regional decoupling across the world economy, and because of its potential effects as critical junctures for regional, national and international economies, we recognize the need to further explore the economic geographies of Brexit. In this special issue we would like to focus on the nature and uncertainty of Brexit as a process over the last four years, as well as its short- and long-term economic effects at various scales of enquiry, from individuals and households (including EU migrants in the UK and UK citizens living abroad), workplaces, firms and other organizations, industries and economic sectors, local markets, cities, regions, and countries. We welcome papers that approach these topics from a variety of theoretical perspectives, including, but not limited to, relational and evolutionary economic geographies, financial geography, cultural economy, political-economic geography, institutional change, Global Production Networks and Value Chains, as well as economic geographies of everyday. We welcome original works based on qualitative, quantitative and mixed methodologies. While we expect most submissions to be theoretically-grounded and empirically-focused, we are open to conceptual papers that propose novel theoretical and

methodological frameworks for understanding the processes and consequences of Brexit. We also welcome studies that compare developments in the UK, EU and beyond.

Potential contributors should submit an abstract (of no more than 250 words) to glueckler@uni-heidelberg.de and dariusz.wojcik@spc.ox.ac.uk by 15 December 2020, and will be informed about the guest editors' decision by 31 January 2021. Full papers (of about 9,000 words) will be due for pre-submission to guest editors by 30 June 2021, and submission to ZfW – German Journal of Economic Geography by 30 September 2021.