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ABSTRACT

After the Brexit referendum in 2016, the United Kingdom has started the process of leaving the EU. In fact, it is not only a challenge for the British State but also for local governments and for British cities in particular. The aim of the article is to examine how the largest British cities have dealt with this process. We would like to check what the cities have done, in what way and what the current results are. In order to answer these questions we prepared a theoretical framework that helps us to distinguish different kinds of cities' strategies. We conclude that cities have mostly dealt with the Brexit process on their own, focusing on information actions.

Introduction

It is almost a truism to say that cities, in particular global cities have always been the centres of political, social, cultural, economic and organizational innovations. These characteristics of the cities are very often used as a prerequisite to the assumption of what if cities ruled the world as Benjamin Barber (2014) said in his famous book. In the light of this, researchers point out that cities play a crucial role in most global issues. Therefore, it is important to strengthen their role in the governance process in the world in order to find and implement efficient solutions to nowadays world problems.

As a result of EU Referendum Act 2015, the British decided in the Referendum 2016 to exit the UE. It started the Brexit process which without any doubts is the greatest challenge that the UK has faced since World War II. So far, Brexit has been analysed as a constitutional issue (Matthews, 2017, pp. 603–612; Moric & Mariano, 2018, pp. 1–6), as an aspect of migration policy (Becker, Fetzer, & Novy, 2017, pp. 601–650), and in terms of the (potential) impact of Brexit on UK's small and medium businesses (Brown, Liñares-Zegarra, & Wilson, 2019, pp. 761–770), of delivering social care services (Hackett, 2016, pp. 97–100), of international security and defence policy (Duke, 2019) or even of environmental, agricultural and fishery policy (Cardwell, 2017, pp. 311–335; Maddy, Owen, Paun,

& Kellam, 2018; Reid, 2017, pp. 3–5) that is very important from the UK point of view. Moreover, we can find out more broad-ranging publications that show the complexity of this process, highlighting both internal and external consequences of UK departure (Birkinshaw & Biondi, 2016; Dougan, 2017). It is worth underlining that the Withdrawal Agreement proposed by the Prime Minister Theresa May contains almost no references to implications characteristic of different UK regions in the light of sub-national distinctiveness. The only issues that can be found here are the problem of the (hard) Irish border and the Compatibility Rules for Regional State Aid. Other than that words like: 'region', 'city' or 'sub-national' do not occur in the Agreement (Ortega-Argiles, 2018). This fact might seem to contradict the widespread belief that Brexit will have substantial consequences for both regions and cities. Lack of references to cities and regions in the Withdrawal Agreement may be a proof that from the British Government's point of view, the process of leaving the EU is strictly limited to the national and international level. When it comes to the sub-state level, the issue most often examined is the influence of Brexit on the devolution process. In this context, McHarg and Mitchell (2017) argue that this process reveals major weaknesses of current political mechanisms of devolution (pp. 512–526). Moreover, Greer (2018) emphasises that Brexit has revealed huge differences between Westminster and other nations of the UK with regard to the way in which the devolution process is interpreted (pp. 134–140). Chloe Billing, McCann, and Ortega-Argilés (2019) focus on activities that UK sub-national governance bodies have initiated in preparation for Brexit. In conclusions, they suggest that the UK sub-national institutional system is largely unprepared for the post-Brexit realities. As a result of conflicting political intentions, regional authorities have different expectations, which might necessitate further reforms of the devolution process in the near future (pp. 741–760). Therefore, it is highly likely that the question about the political system in the UK will come on the top of the political agenda as soon as the Brexit ends. Some more insights about the dynamics of the devolution process during UK–EU negotiation have been given by Hunt and Minto (2017, pp. 647–662). Authors are particularly interested in the structures available for sub-states to advance their policy preferences, the ways in which sub-states use these structures and reasons why. Their main prerequisite is that if the structures for intergovernmental relations within the UK state are weak, a devolved region (in this case Wales) would seek to make significant strategic use of external channels to represent its interests that are distinct from those of the UK Government. What is worth mentioning in the light of scientific research mentioned above is that there is a very evident lack of interest in the position of local governments in the Brexit context. Only Toly (2017) focuses on the possible consequences on London's and metropolitan cities' position in the global context (pp. 142–149). The only examples of debate about local government during the Brexit process can be found in practical aspects. The first one is the Thirteenth Report of House of Commons – Housing Communities and Local Government Committee 'Brexit and local government' (Thirteenth Report of Session 2017–2019) while the second one consists of numerous warnings that have been prepared by Local Government Association threatened with uncertainty as to future availability of European funds (Local Government Associations, 2016).

Taking this into consideration, we would like to check what is the real role of the cities in the Brexit process. Our hypothesis is that if the cities do not have legal instrument to advance their priorities during the Brexit process, they would use their national and/or

international European partners to exert influence on the UK Government. In order to prove this statement, we have asked several questions. Can we find any evidence that the cities are playing important and/or independent role during the EU departure? Do they act alone or group together in order to exert influence on negotiation deal between the EU and the UK? Our alternative focus is on a gap in the literature to provide empirical evidence of what and how have the cities done in terms of their foreseeable status in national/ international governance.

Theoretical background

There is a large number of publications on cities and their impact on different aspects of reality. Some of them concentrate on the growing role of cities in international relations such as that of M. Amen, N. Toly, P. McCarney, K. Segbers (eds.), *Cities and global governance. New sites for international relations*, 2011; D. E. Davis, N. L. de Duren (eds.), *Cities and sovereignty. Identity politics in urban spaces*, 2011; S. Curtis (ed.), *The power of cities in international relations*, Routledge 2014; P. J. Taylor, B. Derudder, P. Saey, F. Wiltox, *Cities in globalization. Practices, policies and theories*, 2007 (this book actually contains just one brief chapter on the politics and international relations of cities such as The Hague, Geneva, Brussels and Vienna, considered mainly as headquarters of the international governmental organizations) and Ch. F. Alger, *The UN system and cities in global governance*, 2014. There are also research papers from more sociological field such as the seminal text *The global city* by Saskia Sassen (2001) that gave rise to the term 'global city', *Cities in contemporary Europe* edited by A. Bagnasco and P. Le Galès, 2000 or another seminal text – Jane Jacobs' *The economy of cities*, Vintage Books, New York 1970. One of the most important publications is a book of B. Barber, *If mayors ruled the world. Dysfunctional nations, rising cities*, Yale University Press, 2014. It may also be termed seminal as the author introduces and strongly supports the idea of cities ruling the world and partly replacing States as the former better handle global challenges such as climate change or even national security. All above-mentioned publications examine cities from different perspectives: mostly their growing economic and cultural role, cities in economic globalization, cities' social relations, their rather 'non-official' relations realized through private agents (such as for example firms and companies).

Currently, cities play an increasingly active role on the international stage. Since the 1990s they have been interacting and cooperating with international organizations in the sphere of sustainable development with increasing frequency and scope (Nijman, 2011, pp. 219–220). Cities frequently implement human rights conventions that have not been ratified by their host States. For example, the aim of the UNESCO International Coalition of Cities against Racism and Discrimination is to implement in the member cities international standards on anti-discrimination and anti-racism (Nijman, 2011, pp. 221–222). While the US did not ratify the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, it was adopted by Los Angeles and San Francisco. Similarly, Seattle and Salt Lake City committed to the obligations to fight global warming by reducing greenhouse gases emissions that result from the Kyoto Protocol although the US failed to ratify it (Frug & Barron, 2006; Nijman, 2011, pp. 222–223). As evident, cities make frequent attempts to internalise international law by adopting its standards, including it in their local law and enforcing it – thus in a

way transposing international law into local law. According to Janne Nijman (2011), cities are going to become much more intensely – though informally – involved in law-making at the international level (p. 224; self-reference).

Another possibility of cities acting on the international arena is establishing the offices of international relations or international cooperation. Great majority of cities have such offices, for example Seattle, Atlanta, Goteborg, Kyoto (Frug & Barron, 2006, p. 22; Nijman, 2011, p. 214), New York (Mayor's Office for International Affairs) and many others. Cities can also participate in international relations through the institution of sister cities/ twin towns, a concept intended to promote understanding between cultures as well as support trade exchange and tourism. This phenomenon, named 'city diplomacy' (van der Pluijm & Melissen, 2007), comprises direct contacts across the borders and mutual assistance between the involved cities.

Certainly, all British cities will be affected by Brexit, some of them negatively by, for example, higher costs of trade between the UK and the EU, and in the 'hard Brexit' scenario this impact will be even higher. However, as Brexit is surrounded by a large degree of uncertainty, it is difficult to make exact predictions on how local economies will respond to its likely negative impact.

Methodology

The aim of this article is to find out how cities are dealing with such exceptional challenge as the Brexit process. Is it a great chance to find out the growing independence of the cities that is very often emphasised in the scientific literature? In order to learn what kind of action has been taken by the cities the authors asked several questions: (1) which city may be perceived as the most involved city in the Brexit process; (2) in which sphere cities undertake possible actions (national or international level); (3) what is the main subject of action – providing information to citizens or conducting the cities own agenda; (4) what is the final outcome of cities' policies focused on Brexit. Several cities have been taken into consideration during the research: Edinburgh, Dundee, Cardiff, Belfast and London (Greater London Authority – GLA – and all-purpose London borough). We have considered these cities as the most representative sample that helps us to check different policies towards the Brexit process. The choice of these particular cities was also dictated by the availability of material and documents pertaining to the actions of the cities examined and by the space constraints of this article. In order to show differences between cities we prepared a table presenting two dimensions of this issue. The first one indicates two levels on which certain policies are implemented (national and/or international). However, we would like to emphasise that by national policies we understand in-State actions taken toward different players on both regional (such as local and/or regional authorities) and national level (etc. parliament and/or government). But when it comes to the international level we think about outside-State actions towards international institutions, mostly linked with EU (such as the European Commission and/or the Committee of the Regions). The second dimension shows two different types of actions that cities' authorities have conducted (information policy and/or implementing their own agenda). Analysis was made by using comparative method of study as well as desk research that allowed us to learn different kinds of actions taken by aforementioned cities.

Study results

The case of English cities – Greater London and London boroughs

London has had a special position in the United Kingdom for many reasons. Firstly, it is the capital city that plays important role on both the national and international level. Secondly, London is organised in an entirely different way than other local governments in the UK. Since 2000, the local government in Greater London has consisted of 32 all-purpose London boroughs, the City of London, and the Greater London Authority. As a result, we found it essential to conduct research on both levels of local governments – GLA and all-purpose London boroughs.

Greater London Authority

Regarding the Brexit process, two courses of actions have been taken by GLA. The first one has been introduced by the Mayor of London – Sadiq Khan. As a leader of the city, he has focused on four types of actions. The first one is the information campaign *London Is Open*, which is targeted at the EU citizens in order to show them that they are welcome in London. Tags in Heathrow Airport, videos in social media and adverts in public transport are only a part of communication included in this campaign. The second step was EU Londoners Hub – a special platform that provides information about the registration process for EU citizens, the possible impact of Brexit on EU Londoners, eligibility of Settled Status as well as advice and support for business. These types of actions have been supported by Mayor of London meeting people and campaigning in person. The third type of action taken by the Mayor of London was to appoint Mayor Brexit Expert Advisory Panel. This group consists of business leaders, investors and academics who have advised the Mayor on the risks, challenges and opportunities for London following the vote to leave the European Union. The idea of creating this type of service is to support the Mayor during the whole Brexit process as he has organised many meetings with public officials. Besides providing advice on a daily basis, Brexit Expert Advisory Panel has helped the Mayor to prepare the official response to the Government White Paper concerning the UK exit from the EU. London's Global & European Future (Mayor of London and Mayor Brexit Expert Advisory Panel, 2016) was an official document that provided input to the governmental plan to the Brexit process showing the most complicated issues. According to the abovementioned final answer to the Brexit, we can distinguish such issues as: (1) lack of clarity in terms of implementation of regulations that have been transposed into UK law; (2) securing rights for EU nationals in the UK; (3) cooperation in the fight against crime and terrorism. In each of these areas the Mayor raised the questions that seem to be crucial in terms of London's future. Presumably, the most tangible and devastating effect on London's economy would be caused by migration of workers who are EU nationals out of the UK. Moreover, the Brexit process prompted the London leader to show his attitude towards the future reform process. As he mentioned: 'The UK's performance and productivity has been hampered by an over-centralised state. The government has a clear opportunity to take advantage of this period of change and restructure the balance of power between Whitehall and local areas' (Mayor of London and Mayor Brexit Expert Advisory Panel, 2016, p. 10). This kind of argument gives a fertile ground to open a

discussion about next steps of the devolution process and legal regulations concerning London in particular.

A special role in the Brexit process is played by international relations between GLA and European partners such as Eurocities, POLIS (Cities and Regions for Transport Innovations), UITIS (Union Internationale des Transports Publics) and AIR (Air-quality Initiative of Regions). These international organizations connect cities and metropolitan areas at the European level, working in order to exert influence on EU institutions and share best practices among them. Given legal position and functions devoted to the GLA, the main points of interest of London government at the EU level has been transport and environment issues. However, many new questions appeared after the Brexit referendum in 2016. The Mayor of London insists that the UK government have to replace EU structural funds by Share Prosperity Fund in order to secure financing of investment projects. Moreover, GLA representatives have maintained on-going working contacts with the European Commission to predict any negative effects Brexit might have on London's position. However, the main institution responsible for promoting London on the global stage is London and Partners Agency, which is London's official promotional company. At present, more financial resources and people have been engaged in order to attract third parties to visit, study and invest in London. As a result, six new offices of the Agency have been opened since the Brexit referendum. To sum up the international endeavours of the GLA, it is evident that the key strategy of London's governance is to develop soft power on the global stage.

Not only the Mayor but also the London Assembly has taken action in terms of Brexit process. Firstly, the EU Exit Working Group has been appointed. The aims of this body are to: (1) co-ordinate the work of the London Assembly's committees in relation to the United Kingdom's vote to leave the European Union; (2) provide lead for the London Assembly in the Government's negotiations with the European Union; (3) consider the activities and approaches of other devolved administrations and relevant bodies across the United Kingdom in relation to the UK's vote to leave the EU. As a result, the Assembly has prepared five directives concerning UE citizens, a Brexit strategy to London, security after Brexit, health, and People's Vote as well. Needless to say, during the Assembly work on Brexit process, the councillors have remained very much committed to the need for further devolution of services and taxes to London (EU Exit Working Group Meeting of July 19, 2017, p. 16). The Assembly urged the Mayor to join the campaign for a 'people's vote' on the final terms of Brexit. Moreover, London's councillors set up two working groups (The London Resilience Forum and The London Economic Action Partnership) that have helped to find out possible solutions after Brexit. In pursuit of this, the London Assembly conducts research about the economic impact on London business. *Preparing for Brexit* is a comprehensive document prepared in association with Cambridge University (Greater London Authority, 2018) which shows several fields that need to be covered in order to protect London's economy. As mentioned in the report, the more severe the type of Brexit is, the greater the negative impact will be on London and the UK.

London boroughs

Despite the actions taken by the Greater London Authority, London boroughs have also been committed to the Brexit process. From local governments' point of view, the most important issues are actions and proposals made by the Government in terms of

exiting the EU. Most of London boroughs have highlighted the negative social implications on the local population. In pursuit of this, each of them prepared special report that showed more details about the possible consequence of Brexit process. Hackney Council showed a special attention to the EU workers by estimating that the current EU population of Hackney is approximately 15% which means that business in Hackney is dependent on EU workers (Hackney Council, 2017).

Croydon councillors prepared the answer to the Government Plan for Brexit in which they warned against potential impacts. The most complicated issues are as follows: (1) uncertainties about the residency rights of current EU citizens in Croydon; (2) wider uncertainties about the UK's economy and trade arrangements; (3) the Council has received funding for a number of initiatives from the EU, with some of these being partway through delivery (Croydon Council, 2018). Moreover, councillors appointed the Future Place Board that considered the local impact of Brexit. The Board is part of Croydon's Local Strategic Partnership and focuses on skills, employment and inclusive growth (Croydon Council, 2018).

In September 2018, councillors of Tower Hamlets appointed the Brexit Commission to examine the likely impact of the UK's departure from the European Union on the borough. The result of the Commission's work was an extensive report titled *Impact of Brexit on Tower Hamlets* (Tower Hamlets Council, 2019). The document detailed 24 recommendations for business, community organisations, public sector and third parties that can be affected by Brexit process. This kind of work was an solid foundation to build local partnership between cross-sector institutions and in the end give prospects for future cooperation (Tower Hamlets Council, 2019).

The rest of the councils have mostly focused on advising the EU citizens how to deal with new regulations. Therefore, they find themselves in a position to support the governmental information campaign. Such councils as City of London, Camden, City of Westminster, Enfield, Redbridge, Lewisham, Sutton, Merton, Brent, Harrow have prepared special toolkits and information supporting EU citizens and business partners. However, there is a lack of any other activity and willingness to exert influence on the Brexit process. Therefore, according to the gathered data, we can distinguish two roles taken by the London boroughs. The first one might be called 'moderator' that collects information and leads public debate in local circumstances. The second role is a 'passive compatriot' who waits for guidance from central government. All internet resources used during research process are mentioned in the references.

The case of a Northern Ireland city

Belfast

Although the situation of all the United Kingdom's regions in the light of the Brexit process is complicated, the plight of Northern Ireland is even more desperate. The majority of the Northern Irish electorate (56%) voted to remain in the European Union; hence the politicians and MPs representing Northern Ireland have a strong interest in obtaining at least a compromise deal. The most fundamental issue is the so-called 'backstop' – the insurance policy that ensures there will be no hard border on the Island of Ireland, hence Northern Ireland will be able to remain in the EU Customs Union and the Single Market.

'If any place in the British Isles risks being thrust into an economic and political crisis by the impending Brexit, Belfast is that place' – the statement of David Frum (2019), a writer at *The Atlantic*, illustrates the picture. The 1998 Good Friday Agreement made a positive contribution to resolving the conflict between Catholics and Protestants and put IRA attacks on hold, insofar as it was able. Since then the European Union has supported the Northern Ireland peace process. from EU funding to Northern Ireland in order to maintain the peace (Frum, 2019).

Apart from practical issues (the official Council website devoted one of its subpages to Brexit only – 'Brexit advice and support'), the Belfast City (2009) Council established a Brexit Committee focusing on matters surrounding the UK leaving the EU. The key responsibility of the Committee is to articulate the Belfast-specific issues during the process of negotiation and transition arrangements combined with monitoring of progress and up-to-date information. The Committee also undertakes all possible efforts to influence and contribute to regional considerations of the implications of Brexit. Cooperation with the Council, identifying and indicating any actions that it may take to mitigate any negative results on the one hand, and capitalising on any opportunities as a result of Brexit on the other. The Committee also follows closely any legislation changes arising out of Brexit and analyses its possible impact. Actions undertaken by the Committee are focused not only inwards (i.e. promoting social cohesion, monitoring the impact on migrant workers) but they also have an outwards dimension focused on maintaining positive relations with the EU. Another strategic area of interest for the Committee are all financial and budget aspects and implications arising out of Brexit (i.e. finding alternative to EU grants and funding opportunities). All actions undertaken and decisions made by the Committee are related to the objectives of the Belfast Agenda (the document created in a partnership with key city partners setting long-term ambitions for Belfast's future) and are focused on ensuring the ability of Belfast to continue to attract investments, and to increase trade with existing and potential trade partners as well as the growth rate (Brexit Committee Agendas).

As far as the Belfast Agenda is considered, in can be noticed that the key challenges for the city are 'the need to grow the population and increase the business base and the value of exports, whilst encouraging innovation and tackling the levels of economic inactivity in the city' (Brexit Committee Agenda of April 11, 2019). Although opinions about the eventual impact of Brexit differ, the majority agree that it will impact such issues as (1) business start rates; (2) business growth rates; (3) export opportunities and potentially different export destinations; (4) levels of investment; (5) employment levels; (6) demand for different skill sets.

The abovementioned challenges concerning Belfast are discussed in other major programmes such as the Belfast Region City Deal. The Belfast City Council has already prepared or is preparing a range of strategies devoted to the Brexit process (i.e. programmes of work for (1) Growing the Economy, (2) Working and Learning, and (3) International Relations for the period 2019/20).

Despite the already existing programmes, the Brexit Committee often emphasises that the future consequences of Brexit are still unknown. Hence there may occur a necessity to revise and adapt approaches to changing problems and opportunities. Therefore the Brexit Council has declared:

Depending on the scale of the impacts, it may also become an option to change the level of support that council provides to particular areas. Officers will continue to work with the city's major stakeholders and members to monitor these changes and discuss options for emerging issues as appropriate. (Brexit Committee Agenda of April 11, 2019)

The case of Scottish cities – Edinburgh and Dundee

Information on the two Scottish cities dealing with Brexit is rather sparse. While Dundee established an Advisory Team on Brexit and a website with information useful for citizens and businesses, Edinburgh convened a Brexit Working Group although it is difficult to find much information on the activities of this group (Corporate Policy … , 2018, p. 2; Swanson, 2018). Scottish cities are generally more anti-Brexit. Only post-industrial cities are more Eurosceptic, with some exceptions like Dundee that is rather pro-European (Elledge, 2016). For these reasons we will start with Dundee.

Dundee

The city of Dundee issued a few important reports on the consequences of Brexit for Dundee. In a report on *Brexit – Update and Implications* of 12 February 2018 it was held discussion of constitutional issues after Brexit has focused mainly on the impact on the devolved nations, mostly overlooking how local government could meet the challenges Brexit would pose for their communities. However, local government for many years has actively created ties with the EU: they have set up offices, accessed Union's funds, encouraged investments, and worked on best practices with EU sub-national government institutions. While there are concerns regarding Brexit that are specific for individual Councils and groups of Councils, numerous issues are shared by all local governments, such as the uncertainty about the rights of the EU citizens and in particular the future of EU nationals employed as health personnel and social care workers (Report on Brexit, 2018, p. 9).

Not long after the referendum, the City Council of Dundee analysed the number of EU nationals in the city, in particular those employed by the Council. The data came from 2011, i.e. from the last Census; however, the figures surely have changed since then. In 2011, the population of Dundee City comprised 147,268 people, 4% of whom (5522) were born in non-UK EU nation countries. This was a relatively low fraction of the population, in comparison to larger cities – Edinburgh had 20.5% of foreigners, Glasgow 12.9% and Aberdeen 10% (Report on Brexit, 2018, p. 13).

Considering the needs of city-typical businesses with regard to recruitment, the City Council of Dundee must take into account the fact that such sectors as care, construction, universities as well as tourism and hospitality are expected to face particular challenges as they depend to a significant extent on non-UK EU workers. Such difficulties due to skills gaps and dearth of suitably educated personnel will be particularly acute in the short term, before appropriate local force is trained (this potentially may be an opportunity for UK workers and unemployed). However, the city's reputation and position in the global ranking would suffer if any restrictions should be made in the academic sector, hindering the ability of city's academic institutions to hire quality staff (Report on Brexit, 2018, p. 13). Hence, the Council of Dundee is reassuring those affected by Brexit that they will receive the necessary support and information (Findlay, 2019, p. 3).

This report also recommended to create Brexit Advisory Team to 'advise on a strategy to mitigate the impact of Brexit and take advantage of any opportunities which may arise' (Report on Brexit, 2018, p. 16). A 7 January 2019 report also mentioned a new website about Brexit called *Preparing for Brexit* (Report on Brexit Update, 2018, p. 3) which contains links to information useful to citizens and businesses (Report on Brexit Update, 2019, p. 3).

In another report of 20 August 2018 there was general agreement on the utmost importance of lobbying the governments of the UK and Scotland to ensure that the city is apportioned its due share of the planned 'shared prosperity fund' which would replace EU funding (Report on Brexit Update, 2018, p. 3). Hence, it indicates to one of the possible actions of the local authorities, namely lobbying the regional or central governments. The UK Government has made a commitment to continue participation in the Erasmus+ programme as well as certain other European programmes. The recently published White Paper confirms that the UK Government is open to contributing to EU funding programmes that facilitate expertise and information exchange (like Interreg programme). As the main EU funding programme facilitating expertise and information exchange between local authorities from the whole EU and participating third countries, Interreg allows local authorities to research best practice, develop and test new approaches and implement new policies (Report on Brexit Update, 2018, p. 3).

Edinburgh

Edinburgh, as a capital of Scotland, heavily relies on financial services. As such it is afraid of people and businesses leaving Edinburgh (Tempest, 2016). Some backlash against Brexit is visible in the case of Edinburgh. As Councillor Cammy Day, Deputy Leader of the City of Edinburgh Council, declared his satisfaction with the adoption by the City Council's Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee of a motion stressing that Edinburgh will continue to build links with EU partner cities and EU institutions and will ensure that Edinburgh will 'resist any barriers for those who wish to work, study and enjoy Edinburgh' (Council agrees … , 2017). Furthermore, the same Committee lists the following principles that could ameliorate the effects Brexit may have on the economy and the citizens of Edinburgh:

- EU citizens in Edinburgh (as well as visitors from outside the EU) should be welcomed and provided with advice services.
- It is necessary to work with key employers in the city, including National Health Service, universities, finance, and legal services, to facilitate recruitment and retention of skilled employees.
- The city should work with the EU to resist travel barriers, and support visitors coming to Edinburgh to study or as tourists.
- Close links should be maintained with European cities, particularly twin and partner cities, as well as with the EU institutions (here it is worth remembering that Edinburgh is an active member of a city network Eurocities). Eurocites is regarded as a key platform for strategic relationships with European cities and exchanging good practice (Corporate Policy … , 2018, p. 5, point 3.10.9).

The first two principles are rather of a domestic nature, while the other two of an international character. Actually, only the latter two entail a possibility of international actions aimed at mitigating Brexit and, maybe, showing some backlash from the city of Edinburgh. Another way of maintaining good relations with European cities, EU cities including, is the twin or sister cities network. Among the twin cities of Edinburgh are Aalborg, Munich, Kraków and Nice (Corporate Policy … , 2018, p. 6, point 3.10.10).

In August 2018 Edinburgh's Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee issued a document 'Managing transition to Brexit in Edinburgh' on probable impacts of Brexit on Edinburgh's relations with the European Union institutions, cities, businesses and citizens. The aim was to maintain the position of Edinburgh as an 'open and welcoming international city' (Corporate Policy … , 2018, p. 2, point 1.1.1). The Committee recommended a string of actions aimed at mitigating the impact of Brexit on Edinburgh's economy and local community. Importantly, the Committee expressed its opposition to the erosion of the rights of EU citizens (Corporate Policy … , 2018, p. 2, point 2.1). It is particularly important as more than 39,000 non-UK EU citizens live in Edinburgh, more than in any other Scottish city (Corporate Policy … , 2018, p. 3, point 3.6.1). 5% of jobs in Edinburgh are performed by workers from the EU States. This percentage is even higher in sectors such as tourism, health and social care and financial services (Corporate Policy … , 2018, p. 5, point 3.6.2). In higher education this ratio amounts to 17% of all University of Edinburgh staff (Corporate Policy … , 2018, p. 4, point 3.6.3).

One of the crucial instruments to mitigate the consequences of Brexit for Edinburgh is the Edinburgh Economy Strategy. It includes actions that will support Edinburgh's resilience of the post-Brexit economy such as focus on economy, skills and places – the latter meaning concentration on infrastructure and quality of life in Edinburgh and conditions attracting people and businesses as well as investments (Corporate Policy … , 2018, p. 4, point 3.9).

The case of a Welsh city – Cardiff

Information on the Welsh main city dealing with Brexit is rather sparse, which predominantly conveys official Welsh or UK Governments information only. The situation can be compared to the Scottish cities mentioned above. Welsh cities are generally leaning more towards staying within the European Union partially because they depend on the EU citizens as workforce, and partially because of their quite significant export to the EU countries.

Therefore, Wales can be placed among regions more vulnerable to such drastic changes. Hence in the long run the implications of Brexit are likely to affect the region and its cities in a poignant way. Many papers and reports (Borchert & Tamberi, 2018; Brexit – implications … , 2017; EU Transition … , 2017) argue that the sectors that are likely to be most negatively affected by Brexit are concentrated in London (financial services) and Wales (84% of machinery and transport equipment produced there is exported to the EU – i.e. Airbus).

After the referendum took place in June 2016, the Leader of the City of Cardiff Council, acting as the Chair of the Public Services Board (PSB), established a multi-officer working group with the representatives of the local authority, health and higher education. The main purpose of the group was to identify the opportunities and risks for the city, as well as to prepare proposals how to respond to the negative impact of leaving the EU.

The final outcome of the effort the working group made was a paper *Brexit – implications for Cardiff*. A few basic threats were identified in the report among which the following can be found:

(1) Impact on people – EU-born residents make up about 4% of Cardiff total population. The report recognises the strength that comes from the diversity and show their concern about non-UK inhabitants and workers.
(2) Impact on Cardiff's economy – Wales economy benefits from the membership in the European Union. About $^2/_3$ of Welsh exports go to the EU countries, which places these cities in the top most reliant British cities on the EU market.
(3) Healthcare and the NHS – Cardiff's health service staff is reliant on professionals coming from among others EU countries.
(4) Impact on Cardiff's universities – many students, researchers and teachers come from across the EU to study and teach in Cardiff and Wales.
(5) Impact on European Funding – Wales economic strategy and investment programme are strictly tied with the European funding. Wales is a net beneficiary of European Funds, therefore it will be crucial to maintain the comparable level of funding (Brexit-implications … , 2017).

The Cardiff Public Service Board endorsed the proposals of answers and responses to the abovementioned threats. The Board insists that Cardiff must be put at the heart of Wales' post-Brexit economic strategy. Undisturbed access to the Single Market must be the UK Government's top priority for the negotiation process. The rights of EU citizens in Cardiff and Wales as well as Cardiffians and Welsh in general in the EU must be guaranteed and protected at the same level. In sectors most reliant on EU workers, undisturbed operations must be secured. The final conclusions are focused on maintaining Cardiff a successful international city continuing to attract international investments, trade, events and – above all – people.

The current leader of Cardiff City Council, Councillor Thomas also shows his individual persisting concern about the possible disadvantages of Brexit. At the beginning of his term, a list of commitments for Cardiff was announced. In *Capital Ambition. Our commitments for Cardiff* (Capital Ambition … , 2018, p. 2) the following part draws attention:

> Cardiff's role as the economic power of the city-region and its relationship with the surrounding local authorities must continue to broaden and deepen. This Administration is committed to working closely with the Welsh Government and city-region partners, with local organisations and communities, to help create prosperity and tackle poverty in both the capital city and the Valleys.

Later on Councillor Thomas declares that he will build on the role of Cardiff in delivering for the Welsh and UK economies by working with other Welsh cities, UK Core Cities and Welsh Local Government Association (Capital Ambition … , 2018, p. 2).

On 13 March 2019, the leader of Cardiff City Councillor Thomas was one of the signatories of so-called 'No-deal letter'. The leaders and mayors of the Core City (the association of 10 urban areas – Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham and Sheffield – delivering 28% of the combined economic output of England, Wales and Scotland, 26.5% of the UK economy as well as a home

Table 1. Types of cities policies towards Brexit process.

| | Types of actions | |
Level of actions	Information policies	Implementing their own agenda
National (directed inwards)	Edinburgh, Dundee, Cardiff, London boroughs, Belfast	London (GLA)
International (directed outwards)	London (GLA) – global stage, Edinburgh – international stage	

Source: Own studies.

to almost 19 million, i.e. 30.7% of the combined English, Welsh and Scottish population) wrote a letter to all MPs ahead of the crucial vote on British leaving the EU that comprised a call to avoid a disastrous 'No-deal' exit from the European Union. The authors of the letter brought up the Government's recent forecast that

> (…) a No Deal exit would shrink the economy by up to nine per cent over the next 15 years, significantly reduce the flow of goods through Dover and increase food prices and the risk of shortages. [The Core City leaders] argue that the effects of a No Deal would be felt more significantly in cities due to density of population and historically higher levels of deprivation.

In the letter Cardiff particularly was

> (…) concerned about the impact on its financial services sector, the main driver of jobs in the city and in the Capital Region over recent years, with analysis by the Centre for Cities placing Cardiff's financial services sector as one of the most vulnerable of all UK cities in the event of a no deal Brexit. (CoreCities, 2019)

Discussion

British cities have found the Brexit process to be one of the most powerful challenges for their future. The vast majority of them have taken actions in order to collect information about possible outcomes and inform their EU citizens about required registration duties. Information actions that have been taken by the cities partially depend on governmental communication activities. Actually, it can be pointed out that the cities have been waiting for any guidance from the UK government giving them any opportunity to join the Brexit process. The table below shows what kind of policy each of the researched cities has implemented so far (Table 1).

With two exceptions, all cities have entirely focused on information policies towards national actors. Equally, they have been warning about very similar things. Securing economic situation, preventing migration of EU citizens (especially these employed in health and social care services), transferring to new UK law as smoothly as possible – these are the most important issues that the cities are focusing on. In many cases, cities have established special bodies to collect and spread information about the Brexit process. The reason why cities are doing this is the fact that local authorities are worried that their voices have not been sufficiently taken into account during the discussions on Brexit consequences. All the mayors of the UK cities are determined to show their willingness to host EU citizens. Some differences can be shown with regard to Belfast, where the key concern not only for Belfast but the whole Northern Ireland is the possibility of establishing a hard border. What is worth highlighting is the fact that the cities are mostly working separately. There is no organised cities' action towards government and/or EU institutions whatsoever. The only example of cooperation is a letter to the Prime Minister

from Core Cities UK Association that was released at the beginning of the Brexit process (CoreCities, 2016).

However, there is also the GLA that has shown a completely different attitude to the Brexit issues than other local governments. Greater London as an international (global) city has used different kinds of policies to exert the influence on both governmental and EU institutions. Such policies include not only information action but also independent companies lobbying in order to guarantee EU citizens possibly the best circumstances to stay in the city. Moreover, the Mayor of London encourages London and Partners Agency to open six new offices across the world in order to promote the city.

Edinburgh is the second example of a city that embraces international communication channels during the Brexit process. The most important contact in this case is Eurocities, which represents the European cities in cooperation with EU.

In the light of the conducted research we can say, with some surprise, that the issue of Brexit has not been the subject of cooperation among British cities. Given the highly unitary character of the British state and the correspondingly limited forms of tools urban politics has at its disposal, such situation may be considered as rather unsurprising. Yet at the same time, it may be viewed as quite surprising due to the fact that Brexit is an extraordinary process, and as such it requires extraordinary tools – especially tools that have not existed in the past. It is the first time the process of leaving the EU is taking place, so it may be expected that in emergency circumstances British cities will reach for emergency instruments. Therefore, it is a field that still needs to be covered to figure out why and how cities cooperate in order to bypass the state. However, it is without any doubts that UK local authorities have been left entirely alone facing the whole process. There are no legal regulations that would encourage the cities to engage in the Brexit process whatsoever. While UK regions have been taken part in the Join Ministers Committee, it is impossible to show such kind of arrangement for the cities. One of the reasons for doing so is the fact that the British local government seems to be one of the most centralized local administrations in Europe. However, taking into consideration the fact that Brexit affects the cities in different extent, some institutional mechanisms seem to be highly recommended. Therefore, it is hard to resist the temptation to say that the reason why future Brexit (no) deal implementation will be so hard is the lack of any concord between UK central and local government. Maybe it is high time to change this. Giving all circumstances presented above, the only answer to the question asked in the title is – British cities are shadow compatriots that do not know how to deal with the Brexit issue. It is a very surprising outcome due to the fact that it is hard to imagine more serious external factor that shapes the future of British cities than exiting the EU. Despite the fact that no-deal scenario is becoming more and more possible, nothing have changed in order to engage local governments in the UK departure. A new expectations have appeared as Boris Johnson, former Mayor of Greater London Authority, became the Prime Minister. In the light of this event, it is more likely that central and local relation will change in the foreseeable future and a new wave of devolution and decentralization reforms appear.

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