

BREXIT IMPACTS

Disengaging policy

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Credit: Christopher Furlong Staff / Getty

The United Kingdom is scheduled to leave the European Union on 29 March 2019, which will entail the untangling of over 40 years of EU law and regulation within that country. Environmental issues and policies, in both the UK and EU, will be acutely affected due to the ‘Europeanization’ of the United Kingdom’s regulatory regime over those decades.

Charlotte Burns at the University of Sheffield and her colleagues shed light on the mechanisms that will likely drive this process. Using interviews and building upon existing theories of policy and polity, they discuss two different concepts at work: disentangling, through the process of codifying EU regulation into national law to prevent a weakening of environmental standards; and de-Europeanizing, which reflects a divergence in how the EU and United Kingdom approach the making of environmental standards in the first place. The authors illustrate de-Europeanizing with histories of how the United Kingdom has consistently sought to reduce costs to business and advance voluntarist rather than regulatory regimes in the development of environmental laws. However, the need to maintain standards for trade with the EU, alongside possible issues concerning decentralized and devolved powers within the United Kingdom, will likely make true de-Europeanization difficult in coming years.

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