Populist Responses to Austerity and Cultural Change:

Brexit, Trumpism and Beyond

<u>**Special Series Editors**</u>

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The year 2016 may well go down in history as the West's 'mad as hell' moment, diverting global politics onto a spur that neither polls nor 'experts' were able to predict (Smith, 2016). Whilst populism in general has been on the rise since the 1960s (Inglehart and Norris, 2016; Zakaria, 2016), Europe and USA have now come under an unprecedented sway of a new right-wing form known as 'heritage' populism, which emphasises the nativist preservation of material and cultural heritage and is characterised by 'unbridled demagoguery, xenophobia, condemnation of the elite, and stigmatizing rhetoric' (Reynié, 2016: 48). This form of populism is said to exploit and be fuelled by anger and anxiety of those most disadvantaged by the West's growing economic inequality in the context of globalization and neoliberal austerity policies, and of those lashing back at the rapid progressive cultural erosion of traditional norms, privileges and status in the context of multiculturalism and liberalism (Inglehart and Norris, 2016; Zakaria, 2016).

In 2016 this form of populism has scored two major political victories. On the 23rd of June the electorate of the United Kingdom voted by a slim majority to leave the European Union, setting the course for what has become known as 'Brexit' (however, Scotland, Northern Ireland, London and most metropolitan areas with universities voted overwhelmingly to remain). This momentous event has been called the largest popular rebellion against the establishment within the UK in modern history – a dramatic (and traumatic) comeback of, in particular, those groups and sections of the population most affected (and disaffected) by the worst of the austerity measures (Wahl, 2016; Worth, 2016) instituted in pursuit of neoliberal ideals of market fundamentalism (Pettifor, 2016). The shock waves generated by Brexit stretch to political, economic, institutional and organisational turbulence, and anxiety and fear, as the potential enormity of the impact on individuals, organisations, institutions and nations starts to unfold. The Brexit vote can be seen as a 'moment of suspended disbelief', creating a discontinuity where previous norms and rules of engagement no longer automatically apply, and where earlier accepted values and practices are up for negotiation (Guldi, 2016). Britain is now poised in the balance between conflicting and competing futures – such as the restoration of welfare state as advocated by Labour Party Leader, Jeremy Corbyn versus further neoliberalisation, as well as darker, more dystopian scenarios (ibid.).

Brexit is still very much a phenomenon-in-the-making – being 'so polyvalent a notion and so complex a process that its present meaning is hard to define and its future trajectory hard to discern' (Jessop, 2016:7). However, with the questions of the unity of the United Kingdom and the continuation of the EU very much on the agenda, it is undeniably a phenomenon of global significance (Galbraith, 2016; Patomäki, 2016; Wahl, 2016). Moreover, Brexit may become known as the first pebble in the avalanche of similar events, having been widely reported to have given a boost to populist parties on both sides of the Atlantic and thus contributed to the second major right-wing populist victory of 2016 – the Trump vote in the US presidential election on the 8th of November. This later event at the heart of the world's leading superpower looks set to change the world's history even more dramatically than Brexit, 'Trumpism' sharing with the latter key characteristics of 'heritage' populism (Reynié, 2016). At the time of writing this call, Austria's re-run of presidential election (almost won in May by Hofer, aka 'Austria's Donald Trump'), Italy's constitutional referendum, parliamentary elections in the Netherlands (where the right-wing Party for Freedom is on the rise), French presidential and parliamentary elections (with Marine Le Pen and the National Front forecast big gains), and the parliamentary elections in Germany (where the right-wing populist party Alternative for Germany is gaining ground), are all on the immediate horizon foreboding that 'any minute now we could be living in a very different world' (Williams-Grut, 2016). The rise of heritage populism and its consequences are thus in need of urgent critical scrutiny (Reynié, 2016; Zakaria, 2016).

One of its most apparent and shocking features evident in both Brexit and Trumpism has been the politics and practice of hate. In the wake of the Brexit vote, hatred attacks, including those engendering racism, xenophobia, and homophobia, surged dramatically, some media reporting as much as a 147% rise in July, August and September 2016 following the June referendum (Lusher, 2016a). Although racism, xenophobia and associated behaviour have always been present in the British society, Brexit seems to have legitimised the expression of belief in their legitimacy (Stewart, 2016), leaving Britain deeply divided along the lines of not only race and nationality, but also age, class, education, regional differences and urbanisation (Hobolt, 2016; Toly, 2016; Worth, 2016). From the murders of MP Jo Cox and Polish worker Arkadiusz Jóźwik to almost daily attacks on foreign looking and speaking UK residents, written and verbal abuse and general expressions of hostility taking place on the streets, on public transport, in the workplaces, and on social media, the referendum has unleashed brutal forces that add to the uncertainty following the referendum result. Conversely, anti-racist and anti-hatred campaigns and movements, such as the #SafetyPin campaign, the Avaaz 'Reject Racism' campaign and Not Foreign (which has collected more than 10,000 signatures to their open letter to the Prime Minister calling on her 'to put a stop to her government's bitter, racist and divisive language') point to the consolidation of forces rising to oppose the hatred surge. The pattern is similar in the US, where Trump's 'definitionally hateful' xenophobic, racist, Islamophobic and misogynist campaign rhetoric created a permissive environment for an epidemic of hate to flourish (Goel and Goldstein, 2016). The rise of hate crimes in the US, including fascist graffiti, verbal attacks and physical violence against Muslims, Hispanics, African Americans, Jews, immigrants, women and LGBTQ (ibid; Lusher, 2016b), is producing anti-hate counter-forces such as the #StopHateDumpTrump campaign (their pledge 'to speak out in every way possible against the politics of hate and exclusion' Trump represents and 'to end hatred, fear mongering, bullying, racism in America' signed at the time of writing by over 78,000 people).

As well as stirring up the murky waters of hatred, Brexit and Trumpism also appear to have bred what the press has been quick to describe as 'a sinister strain of anti-intellectualism' (Wright, 2016).

In Britain, the role of experts and intellectuals has been spurned and ridiculed by some politicians – most notoriously perhaps when as part of the Leave campaign Michael Gove was reported by the media as refusing to name any economists supporting Brexit, stating instead that 'people in this country have had enough of experts' (Mance, 2016). Agents in the EU referendum and the post-referendum debate have been reported to take unprecedented liberty with facts and the meaning of political promises, with all key referendum promises of the Leave campaign broken. Similarly, Trump's 'factual' statements were awarded PolitiFact's 2015 Lie of the Year, only 4% scoring as 'true' and 70% falling into the 'mostly false', 'false' and 'pants on fire' categories (PolitiFact, 2016). 'Political frauds' (Giroux, 2016) exacerbating distrust in democratic institutions and elites, the anti-'anti-science' backlash seems to have been equally quick off the mark. The label of 'postmodern politics' has been freely ascribed to the Leave campaign and the government's management of Brexit, along with accusations of denials of the existence of 'objective truth' and permitting 'relativism to let rip and damn the consequences' (Wright, 2016). Likewise, images of Trump and his supporters have become firmly associated with 'post-truth politics' (Calcutt, 2016), Trump's rise attributed to American public's 'expression in an unprecedented attack on reason, evidence, science, and critical thought, which has reached perilous proportions in the United States' (Giroux, 2016: 95). The editors of Oxford Dictionaries named 'post-truth' ('relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief') the word of the year, based on the 2,000% surge in the use of the word in 2016 compared to 2015 – a surge that spiked around the EU Referendum and the US presidential election (Flood, 2016). Populism in its Brexit and Trumpism manifestations can thus be understood not only as the latest flare-up in the 200-year struggle between the expert-led state rule and the participatory democracy (Guldi, 2016), but also arguably as the latest salvo of the long-standing 'science wars' (Sardar, 2000) playing out in the broad political arena.

The questions over the legitimacy and relevance of experts and the nature of their knowledge make populism a core concern for academics in general and CMS academics in particular in terms of reflecting on our own knowledge, practice, impact and relevance. Added to this are concerns over our workplaces. For example, the consequences of Brexit for UK universities are manifold, as many of us question the possibility and expediency of following academic careers in the UK, European funding starts to be curtailed, the flow of European students starts to shrink, and European academic links and partnerships become harder to forge. Yet, as academics, we face the challenging task of not only living and working through the rise of populism, but also making sense of it as a phenomenon, of influencing policy and public opinion, and of questioning and reinventing what we research and who and how we teach in populist times. Moreover, as a scholarly community that is 'tangled up in populism and elitism' (Stookey, 2008), sharing with the former a suspicion of 'elites, mainstream politics, and established institutions' as well as the claim to speak 'for the forgotten "ordinary" person' (Zakaria, 2016: 9), CMS is now faced with the ugly side of its populist affinities.

Turning the lens on our own community, we therefore call for contributions that critically examine the populist rebellion against neoliberal globalization, market fundamentalism and austerity, and the role of CMS in this context. More specifically, we are interested in papers that ask how, as an academic community that studies and questions many of the root causes and issues raised and unleashed by 'heritage' populism, the CMS community can put its weight behind efforts to 1) critically study the organisation of populist victories such as Brexit and the Trump vote, their impact on organisations, and role of organisations in such events, and 2) critically consider our role as

researchers, educators and intellectuals in fostering constructive debate, challenging deep underlying racism, class, regional and other tensions, and dissipating the damaging effects and consequences of populism.

This special paper series invites contributions around, but not limited to, the following topics:

1) Critical analyses of populism, Brexit, Trumpism, and beyond

- Analyses of underlying structural issues, causes and reasons relating to the Brexit and Trump votes
- Studies of the organisation of the EU referendum and US election campaigns, the branding and marketing of Brexit and Trumpism
- Analyses of the subsequent management of Brexit, Trump presidency, and the role of political leaders (see Grint, 2016)
- Critical studies of media and social media and their role in populist victories, through the shaping and/or failing to shape public and political opinion
- Examinations of the impact of Brexit, Trumpism etc. on organisations, organisational reactions and their consequences
- Examinations of the role of organisations in shaping populist rebellions; the role of organisations in shaping and/or failing to shape popular and political opinion
- Analyses of absences, silences and margins – e.g. the voices of the disenfranchised, those who live and work in the UK and the US who were not allowed to vote but who experience the consequences of the votes (most) acutely
- Studies of populism and the workplace: tensions between colleagues and emotions at work
- Analyses of the behaviour of financial institutions, e.g. the role of the financial crisis, the City of London and the effect of the fall of the pound (see Pettifor, 2016)
- Critiques of EU management/governance from European and non-European perspectives
- Analyses of efforts to re-organise and repair after populist victories, the role of social movements and civil society
- Theorisations of (post)populist futures: what sort of world of work and organisational lives are we heading towards?

2) The Role of CMS and Academia in Populist Times

- Reflections on the role and contribution of CMS and academia in general to the efforts to re-organise and repair during and after populist victories
- Academia, Brexit, Trump and beyond: re-examining our own intellectual work and practice and responding to challenges to expert roles and intellectualism – e.g. reinventing and reclaiming the notions of 'relevance', 'impact', 'public intellectual', and 'expert' in populist context
- Analyses of universities in populist times – e.g. UK universities in the wake of Brexit: how can they challenge, resist, influence policy makers and retain European networks and partnerships? Or should they be focusing on connections outside Europe?
- Methodologies for studying the complexities of populist victories and their consequences, e.g., given that 'what happens after a discontinuity is nevertheless informed by the models

of the past' (Guldi, 2016:6), developing historical approaches for understanding how and why populist events came about

- Theorising Brexit, Trumpism and beyond: to what extent can we make sense of populist events with existing theoretical tools (e.g. theories of leadership, change, power, resistance, race and class), or should they lead on to new theoretical developments?
- Revisiting Management Education and Critical Management Education in the context of 'heritage' populism: what have we been teaching, what should we be teaching, how do we prepare our students for post-Brexit and Trump-era work?
- Considerations of CMS's engagement with politics, policy and community in the wake of the populist unleashing and deepening of class, race and regional tensions
- Re-examinations of CMS role in actively challenging racism, xenophobia, and homophobia

Submissions

Papers may be submitted electronically from **March 1 2017 until December 30 2017** to SAGETrack at: http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/organization

Papers should be *polemical in nature and no more than 4000 words*, excluding references, and will be blind reviewed following the journal's standard review process. Manuscripts should be prepared according to the guidelines published in Organization and on the journal's website:

http://www.sagepub.com/journals/Journal200981/manuscriptSubmission.

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