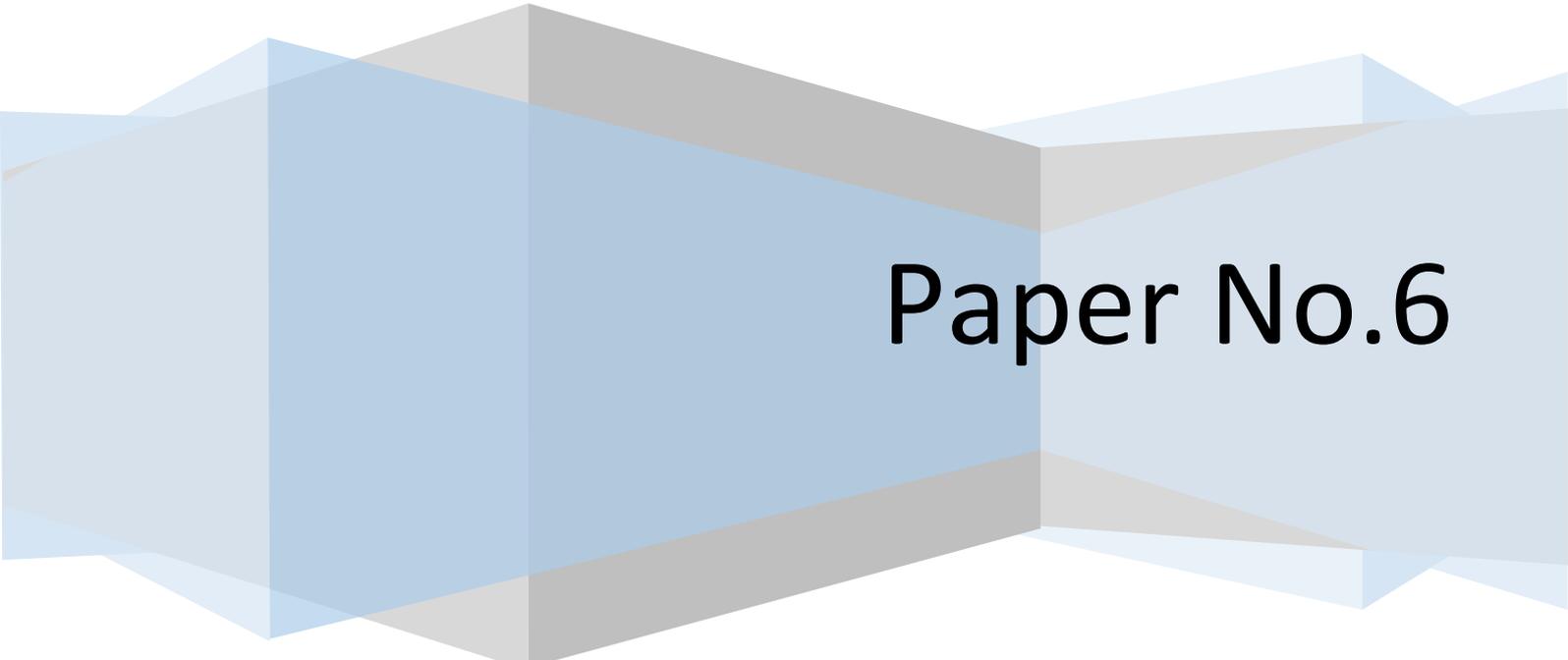**The Libertarian Ideal**

For secession, decentralism, mutualism and organic tradition

Brexit as Conjuncture?
Developments in the Modes of Production and Politics

Chris Shaw

Paper No.6

Brexit as Conjuncture?: Developments in the Modes of Production and Politics

In this essay I argue that Brexit must be understood as a conjunctural event that has dischoered the way politics is understood in Britain. The de-axiomatised explanations of the EU referendum so far present a fragmented socio-economic explanation for both the European Union referendum result and for the political attitudes that characterise the resultant Brexit. However, looking through a neoliberal axiomatic understanding and a range of polling data related to the EU referendum, we can see that many voters who voted leave can be seen to be the discontents of globalisation, those left behind economically. However this macro-level variable does not cohere to the micro-level processes of the voters, who voted overwhelmingly due to cultural and national issues such as immigration and national sovereignty. Due to the extent of neoliberal subjectivation in the UK which individualises economic activity and creates a politics of consensus, economic issues became difficult to articulate as they lack a collective socio-economic subject. Thus the referendum acted as a de-economised catalyst, where people's grievances were funnelled through a culturation of politics. This culturation is continuing post-referendum, as voters' cultural and national concerns come to the fore of politics, leading toward processes of trasformismo and co-optation where the governing elites, particularly in the Conservative Party, are adopting this cultural rhetoric and re-engineering it into a form of neoliberalism with Brexit characteristics. Brexit then is not a revolt of the masses against neoliberal globalisation, but an event that is being slowly reabsorbed into the prevailing modes of production and politics. (Key words: Brexit, EU referendum, modes of politics, neoliberalism, subjectivation, conjuncture, governance)

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The referendum on whether to remain within or leave the European Union (EU), held on June 23rd, 2016, has had a seismic effect on the way modern British politics and society are understood. When it was announced that 51.9% of the British voting public voted to leave the EU, the term Brexit began to dominate the discourses of media and modern politics, with many trying to explain why the vote occurred and what its potential consequences would be. Explanations ranged from a plebiscitary revolt that rejects liberal modernity and a working class backlash to neoliberalism and austerity, to the idea it was a populist event influenced by demagoguery, exaggerated figures and pure politicking on the part of major leave-supporting campaigners.

This shows that the referendum vote and the subsequent idea of Brexit can best be viewed as conjunctural events, "an accumulation of tendencies, forces, antagonisms and contradictions" that "produces a point of uncertainty and possibility"[1]. These events produce a series of further questions which are not easily reintegrated into the prevailing modes of politics and political economy, producing a destabilising effect which signals a turn away from the norm in one aspect or another. Thus the explanations that I briefly identified are all true to a certain degree, as a conjunctural event such as the referendum and its outcome are overdetermined discursive moments which are multi-dimensional. However each of these premises are de-axiomatised, in the sense that each explanation lacks a fully attenuated causal mechanism that explains the inherently overdetermined nature of the referendum result and the resulting Brexit. How can an event be characterised as a vote against neoliberalism, austerity and the deepening of the European political project when it is spearheaded by mainstream politicians in the Conservative Party such as Michael Gove and Boris Johnson? How can the main leave campaigns support free trade and speak of a 'global Britain', while at the same time attracting significant electoral support from working class constituencies who have been significantly and negatively affected by globalisation and the opening of trade and capital flows?

In explaining the referendum outcome and the processes that have developed from it, there is a requirement for an axiomatic understanding which fully places Brexit as conjuncture in the context that it occurred. That starting point I believe begins with a full understanding of the socio-economic logics of neoliberalism as a project of subjectivation. The neoliberal subject is one of rationalisation, sublimated in a matrix of understandings involving "individualism, competitiveness, and economic self-sufficiency as incontestable virtues"[2]. In the UK, this method of subjectivation can be seen through the development of its political hegemony, through processes of privatisation and deindustrialisation and practices of depoliticisation within a number of institutions and infrastructures which foreclose political contestation and critique. In this sense, neoliberal subjectivity is about foreclosing a political means of representation and collective identity, limiting the extent to which one sees themselves as a collective subject.

In relation to Brexit, the referendum became something more than a simple vote on the EU and one's opinion of it. The vote was overdetermined, informed by a number of contradictory discourses. However, what can be seen is that while economic reasons and beliefs were informative to one's vote, they did not present themselves as the significant reason for voting to leave the EU. Instead, cultural and national reasons predominated, with concerns specifically focusing around immigration and sovereignty. These understandings predominated due to the extent of neoliberal subjectivity that shapes institutional and

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[1] Clarke, J. & Newman, J. 2017, 102
[2] Springer, S. 2010, 1028

individual circumstances, and these understandings have not been dislodged despite the effects and developments of the 2007-8 financial crisis. The working class voters and disenfranchised individuals who eventually voted to leave on June 23rd did not vote as a protest against their socio-economic condition, but voted based on their cultural views. By understanding the prevailing economic conditions found amongst the British electorate, with many being a part of the developing precariat as described by Guy Standing[3], we can see that these voters lack a collective economic subject that can challenge prevailing realities, with the referendum a conjuncture strained through a cultural lens.

In the conjunctural sense through which I understand Brexit, this vote is the evolution of a multitude of general concerns surrounding the cultural/social direction the UK is going in. Thus rather than focusing on the structural foundations of neoliberalism and their consequences for communities in Britain, referendum issues focused on the spatiality of social governance in a globalised world, and the extent to which voters actually had a choice over the micro-political conditions of their world. In effect, those who voted leave can be seen as part of a nascent lebenswelt, a "dimension of being" that is defined by "face-to-face interaction, tradition, custom and other extra-conceptual modes of communication"[4] which I call the post-imperial imaginary, a cultural collection of understandings that sees Britain as a diminished country in relation to its supposedly glorious past.

Such a lebenswelt then allows me to expand this concept outwards to the post-referendum political landscape, looking at how such an imaginary has changed the vicissitudes of the macro-politics of parties and governments. With this understanding of neoliberal subjectivity and its involvement within the developments of Brexit, I can begin to sketch a speculative understanding of what has changed since the referendum, concluding that the modes of politics have been shifted not by a material change of circumstances found in the modes of production and reproduction, but by a disparate cultural backlash.

The first chapter is a theoretical understanding of neoliberal governance, both in its abstract conceptualisation and in its concrete forms that are seen in Britain. It focuses on neoliberal governance as a subject-making strategy and examines the forms of politics that have come from this governance. The second chapter focuses on the referendum result itself, with the first section showing that it was cultural issues that led people toward voting leave and the second section explaining how demographic groups that exist in precarious economic circumstances voted with a campaign that tacitly supported those circumstances. The final chapter then looks at changes that have occurred in the post-referendum political environment, looking at palpable changes in political discourse with particular focus on the governmental changes in rhetoric. I conclude by examining the development of what Brexit means and how it is being politically formulated.

Theoretical Framework

The broad thrust of my theoretical underpinning is concerned with a conjunctural understanding of the EU referendum and Brexit. In understanding Brexit as a conjuncture we can begin to understand whether the referendum result is a manifestation of change brought forth by a public reacting to neoliberal governance. Thus a significant element of my theoretical framework will be in understanding and delineating the neoliberal modes of

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[3] Standing, G. 2011
[4] Piccone, P. 1995, 53-54

regulation within Britain, looking particularly at the effects of the precariatisation upon the workforce, the significance of private debt, and forms of neoliberal subjectivation. Much of the literature I draw on, from Mark Fisher's *Capitalist Realism* and Bauman's *Liquid Times* to Colin Crouch's work on neoliberalism and Guy Standing's concept of the precariat, allows me to gain both an economic and a socio-cultural understanding of neoliberal subjectivity and the political consequences it produces. To concretise these abstract understandings, I rely on the framework of neoliberalisation presented by Simon Springer[5] and the historical concepts that Neil Davidson outlines in his essay *The Neoliberal Era in Britain*. Both allow me to make sense of the extent of neoliberal subjectivity as a political force.

Conjuncture in this sense is the flow and fragments of "crises" that "are moments of potential change, (where) the nature of their resolution is not given"[6]. They raise fundamental questions that can act as vectors of change in a narrow or wide sense. I then place this understanding in a wider Gramscian understanding of politics as explained by Mouffe in *On the Political*. The concept of an antagonistic/agonistic politics, whereby "properly political questions always involve decisions which require us to make a choice between conflicting alternatives"[7], shows politics to be a contest of hegemonic projects that question the prevailing common sense. The conjuncture of the referendum result places the modern common sense in a crisis of legitimacy, potentially fracturing its hegemony in particular ways.

Following from this, I use a range of empirical evidence that comes from polling data surrounding Brexit as well as data coming from the post-referendum political environment. In terms of the polling data, I use a number of attitudes surveys and polls that show the importance of the EU as an issue prior to the election, and the importance of Brexit post-referendum and during the 2017 general election. In particular I look at Michael Ashcroft's polling data on the referendum[8]; Goodwin and Heath's *The 2016 Referendum, Brexit and the Left Behind* which explains the vote in terms of the discontents of globalisation delivering the referendum result; and John Curtice's *What Do Voters Want from Brexit?* which further breakdowns the leave vote as a multitudinous event that was informed by many causes. Using this data allows me to understand Brexit as a manifestation of change amongst an electorate, providing insight into the electorate's position on Brexit and how that is part of the catalyst of Brexit as conjuncture.

I will also look at Conservative election manifestos, specifically focusing on the changes between the 2015 and 2017 manifestos which may represent the conceptual break that a conjuncture represents. As the Conservative Party is the governing party and was at the time of the referendum, a discourse analysis of their manifestos allows me to understand the changes that the referendum has brought to the political arena, particularly focusing on how the idea of Brexit has changed rhetoric away from the technocratic language of the 2015 manifesto to a more culturally-grounded and nationalist discourse that is found in the 2017 manifesto.

Brexit in one sense is a nascent political identity borne from the discourses and voting intentions of the referendum, where the capacity to create a "'we' which can exist only by the

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[5] Springer, S. 2010
[6] Clarke, J. & Newman, J. 2017, 103
[7] Mouffe, C. 2005, 10
[8] Ashcroft, M. 2016

demarcation of a 'they'"[9], thus forming antagonistic political identities. The other way I understand Brexit is as a conjunctural interregnum that is related to this nascent identity. Brexit is an overdetermined process, whereby "each site and process is constituted at the intersection of all others", leading to "an emptiness, complexly constituted by what it is not"[10], meaning that Brexit is contradictory, containing different discourses that bring together dichotomous elements. It does not have the potential to challenge the structural power of neoliberal governance because it cannot conceive of a unified political subject, but instead of a fragmented one unified on some matters and ignorant on others.

The Nature of Neoliberal Governance

Neoliberalism can be seen as the hegemonic common sense of the modern world, existing within and through subjects as well as through larger structures and institutions. It is an ideological project that has "the capacity to project and circulate a coherent program of interpretations of the world on to others. This is not merely coercive subordination, but also involves a degree of willing consent"[11] which leads toward a form of subjectivation where one's subjectivity is bound up with these projections and interpretations. Institutionally, the bureaucratic and governmental apparatuses of neoliberal hegemony reimagine the state as a regulator and facilitator of the market, a form of governmentality concerned with the "rule of experts" and the prizing of depoliticised, technocratic knowledge over political debate and critique[12]. This then involves "governance at a distance"[13] that aims at "creating 'a secure political foundation' for free markets through the use of constitutional and institutional mechanisms to 'lock-in' free market policies"[14]. The common sense that exists is both an institutional and subjectivating form of political power, acting performatively to implement and structure a micro-political identity that fits into the institutional-ideological frameworks of a neoliberal macro-politics.

In a concrete sense, "think of the processes by which, for example, the "benefit cheat" becomes seen as the enemy of the "hardworking family", through the articulation of stereotypes across varying media, political articulation of our interests along this axis, and so on"[15]. These narratives act to construct an individualistic identity that decries collective solidarity, whether that be found in the welfare state or in the feelings of empathy toward those struggling within the modern benefits system and flexible labour markets. Neoliberalism then is "predicated on the exclusion of other possibilities"[16], foreclosing the possibility of alternative political understandings and limiting debate that may lead to counter-hegemonic articulations. This means removing the possible from the political, creating a legal-juridical constitutionalism[17] that preserves and engenders markets, limiting intervention except in the case of preservation and further marketisation. The neoliberal environment is then akin to neoliberalisation, the processual development of political power for the creation of subjectivity and its concretisation.

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[9] Mouffe, C. 2005, 15
[10] Gibson-Graham, J.K. 2006, xxx
[11] Springer, S. 2010, 1032
[12] Springer, S. 2010, 1032-1033
[13] Springer, S. 2010, 1033
[14] Harmes, A. 2012, 65-66
[15] Trafford, J. 2017
[16] Mouffe, C. 2005, 18
[17] Harmes, A. 2012, 66

Neoliberalism is enclosure, not in the historical sense of the enclosure of common land and the dispossession of the rural classes, but as the enclosure of possibility and politics itself, making deliberation and resistance inert. There becomes an incapability to develop a alternative politico-economic subject, instead individualising one's work-life as a depoliticised arena removed from collective responsibility and action. The development of precarity, and the modes of subjectivation which maintain its general existence, foreclose a politics of the economy and instead leave open the wounds of economic dislocation.

Mark Fisher's concept of capitalist realism demonstrates this foreclosure of possibility that defines neoliberal subjectivity in its hegemonic realisation. "The power of capitalist realism derives in part from the way that capitalism subsumes and consumes all of previous history"[18], producing a system of equivalence. All exchange and social relations are absorbed into this equivalence, subsuming any collective socio-economic identity into the matrix of a "business ontology" in which everything in "society, including healthcare and education, should be run as a business"[19]. Everything must be desacralised and made interchangeable, with the incapability of conceptualising an alternative without reference to this universalised equivalency. The common sense hegemony that emerges, "wherein the constitution of a stable order is the result of a manufactured compatibility between dominant ideas, institutions and material capabilities"[20], is structured around this universal equivalence, and spreads out into the construction of identity and the micro-political of one's everyday life. As Burnham notes, "ideological mobilization(s) 'do not rest upon shared beliefs (or shared normative commitments); rather they operate in and through the forms in which day to day life is organised'"[21]. Neoliberalism is made the norm through the economism of life, where oneself is a commodity, a cog in the production process that does not require the overtures of an identity that can socialise work as a part of their lifeworld. In the way that the enclosure of common land split desacralised one's labour as a product removed from their control, the neoliberal modes of subjectivation make one's economic identity inconsequential and inert, meaning that their social and cultural understandings of life become more central to one's identity as the extent of business ontology and the marketisation of everyday life become more prevalent. This is a post-ideological world where one's opinion of capitalism or neoliberalism is irrelevant.

Such can be seen in the modes of precariatisation and individualisation that characterise the neoliberal subject. The precariat as understood by Guy Standing constitutes a "class-in-the-making"[22] that is not yet a fully conscious class in itself that has recognised and shared understandings of solidarity and identity. The shared characteristics of this precariat include the shorning of labour securities and the limitation of one's social income, with members lacking both a community-based security and access to state and company benefits[23]. The central component of any shared identity comes from their flexibilised employment relations that require constant adaptation[24]. Within this system, there is a "'contractualisation' of life" where with the diminution of trade unions and collective bargaining, many contracts are organised and bargained on an individual basis. This shift to "tertiarisation" comes with the

[18] Fisher, M. 2009, 4
[19] Fisher, M. 2009, 17
[20] Burnham, P. 2006, 29
[21] Burnham, P. 2006, 38
[22] Standing, G. 2011, 7
[23] Standing, G. 2011, 12
[24] Standing, G. 2011, 32

increasing relevance of services jobs over manufacturing and skilled labour[25], and with the de-institutionalisation of labour as a collective concept.

Further, the advent of neoliberal governance makes the possible apolitical, with globalisation and the opening of economies separating power from politics. That power is shifting from the direct control of state's and certain institutions as witnessed during the Keynesian era of economic governance to the "politically uncontrolled global (and in many ways extraterritorial) space"[26]. The state then becomes a simple container of regulative means, acting as a partner to neoliberal governance rather than an overt actor that controls particular flows of capital. When the capacity to form a collective political identity that can critique the prevailing common sense of neoliberal governance and its subjectivating mechanisms is near-inconceivable, the necessity for the state to act in a political manner becomes redundant. The state is depoliticised, characterised in the UK by moving political decision-making to "ostensibly 'non-political' bodies as a way of underwriting the government's commitment to achieving objectives". Such can be seen with the move to central bank independence and the depoliticisation of interest rate setting, as it was moved from the treasury to the 'independent' Monetary Policy Committee[27]. Many of the procedures of these non-state/quasi-state bodies then become codified and rule-based to increase accountability and make governance as understandable and streamlined as possible. Under the New Labour government a multitude of fiscal rules were introduced to boost economic credibility in the public eye and create a depoliticised fiscal framework of governmentality[28]. Such processes then create rule-bound distinctions between the government and the range of independent regulatory bodies who have their own codified rules and boundaries. The state in the political sense is defanged, made into a regulative spectator and partner that is inert.

In this depoliticised state, neoliberal governmentality becomes a codified part of how the economy is run and regulated, with the political consequences of financial flows and their redistribution removed from the accountability of the political arena. How can one formulate a political or economic identity when the major levers of the economy are held in independent bodies who are not fully accountable to the general electorate. This rule by experts that is characterised by a technocratic understanding of the economy, as something rule-bound and equilibristic, is effectively unquestionable. Even where discontent is palpable there is an inability to articulate these views. Ipsos Mori data shows that poverty and social inequality were the second highest worries within Britain in 2016[29], with historical evidence also showing this to be a large concern. Lower social classes (for example the precariat in semi-routine work) and lower income groups have been the most likely to view income inequality as too large[30], yet there is no political mobilisation which has been meaningful due forms of subjectivation which objectify the economy, making fisco-monetary criticisms of economic distribution incoherent and null.

Such can be seen with the 2007-8 financial crisis. From the 1980s financial markets in the trading of risk and its securitisation developed rapidly. "Risks were being traded at increasing velocity, increasing the chain of 'beliefs about beliefs' that, slightly each time, was gradually

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[25] Standing, G. 2011, 37

[26] Bauman, Z. 2007, 2

[27] Burnham, P. 2006, 104

[28] Burnham, P. 2006, 106

[29] Ipsos Public Affairs, 2016, 10

[30] Orton, M. & Rowlingson, K. 2007, 13

distancing the prices in the market from evaluations of the original risks"[31], with many of these markets being encouraged to develop further through processes of government-led deregulation. A significant number of these securities came from the bundling of credit and consumer debt obligations (mortgages, credit card debts, loans, etc.) into tradeable commodities. The reason that this could occur is due to the general complicity provided by consumers who would use their houses and other financialised products to increase consumer spending[32], producing individualised financial subjects. Debt via financial instruments became a means to prosperity through the accumulation of consumer goods and homeownership that governed people through subsuming their identity into the pantheon of financial flows. Debt "provided an alternative to struggle, in conditions where that was difficult or impossible. While New Labour was in office, total debt held by individuals rose from £570.0 billion to £1,511.7 billion, an increase of 165.2 percent"[33]. Such trends have continued since the crash, with the proportion of private debt increasing in the UK from 2008-2010 and still remaining above 80% of GDP in 2017[34]. A construct develops where "Britain's economic fortunes came to depend heavily on the vagaries of finance-dominated accumulation and the wider world market and a low-skill, low-tech, low-wage, and even zero-hour service sector associated with a neoliberal race to the bottom"[35], with any elements of the 'real economy' left structurally underfunded and balkanised, removing institutions that previously informed collective economic identities. This both comes from, and further develops, the impossbilisation of a political subjectivity that can articulate alternatives. Instead there is a stripped-bare individualisation that even with the advent of the financial crisis has not been significantly dislodged. The renewal of consumerism and debt-instruments have continued practically unabated.

Within the structuration of neoliberal subjectivity on the one hand, and its institutional governance on the other, the idea of a political subject becomes redundant. Citizenship, as a set of political rights and obligations, now is more akin to denizenship, a status of non-political subjection whereby one is bound by the rules of the place they live within, yet have no right to question these rules and laws substantively[36]. This concept is normally used in relation to irregular migrants and asylum seekers, yet the idea can go beyond this to describe the effectiveness of modern citizenship in the fragmented polity where power is separated from politics. Bauman describes this in the dichotomy of individuals de jure and individuals de facto[37]. The former are endowed with political rights through which they can express politicised concerns and desires, yet "a large number of people have only a few if any possessions or acquisitions worthy of a gallant defence". The precariat as a developing class of temporary labourers and contractualised individuals are denizens, thrust into a mode of production where they cannot develop an independent political subjectivity, always remaining a disparate class-in-the-making.

Neoliberalism then is the world of "the hunter", whose sole purpose is the continued attainment of the short-term, moving onward to the "next kill"[38]. Within the political arena,

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[31] Crouch, C. 2011, 99

[32] Crouch, C. 2011, 109

[33] Davidson, N. 2013

[34] Trading Economics, 2017, 10 Yr Graph

[35] Jessop, B. 2017, 135

[36] Standing, G. 2011, 93-94

[37] Bauman, Z. 2007, 58

[38] Bauman, Z. 2007, 100

there has been the "evacuation of local contexts of action - the disembedding of activities"[39] from the national context, with power being practiced in the extraterritorial realm. Citizenship is depoliticised, and one's economic life is treated as an automatic consequence of market forces that can only be dealt with by the individual. Thus the means to collectively understand one's life and develop a political critique are foreclosed, implanting a universal neoliberal subject that deindividualises and decollectivises.

The Referendum Result

Thus in the neoliberal condition of governance, politics has become post-political. The nation-state has been traditionally conceived as "the great container of activities, first capturing politics, then economics, followed by cultural identity and finally the idea of society itself"[40]. However the development of globalisation and the increasing extraterritoriality of political power has meant this containerised view is no longer salient. Rather power has become fragmented and de-spatial, as different institutions and organisations vie and develop their own niches of power and influence in a global arena. "The new individualism, the fading of human bonds and the wilting of solidarity are engraved on one side of a coin"[41] with the other side being the transformation of the nation-state into a depoliticised entity which strengthens its character in some regards (as in relation to financial markets where the codification and institutionalisation of apolitical management and independent bodies provides greater room for manoeuvre in a global world of capital and wealth flows[42]) while loosening it in the area of social containerisation. "Society is no longer protected by the state" with governments instead "struggling day in, day out to weather the current storms stumble from one ad hoc crisis-management campaign and one set of emergency measures to another, dreaming of nothing more than staying in power after the next election but otherwise devoid of far-sighted programmes or ambitions"[43].

Politics becomes meaningless when it is stripped of the ability to enact change. In this consensus politics there is no constitutive outside, but simply a constant, depoliticised whole that is impermeable. "One of the key successes that neoliberalism has achieved for capital has therefore been to render inconceivable alternatives to the economic policies established by the initial regimes of reorientation—or at any rate, alternatives to their left. In Britain, for example, each successive phase of the neoliberal experiment saw the incremental abandonment of the repertoire of measures through which governments had traditionally influenced economic activity, beginning with Geoffrey Howe's abandonment of exchange controls in 1979 and concluding (to date) with Gordon Brown's transfer of the power to set interest rates from the Treasury to an unelected committee of the Bank of England"[44]. Politics has had its power removed, as is evident with the lack of importance the public give to elections. Voter turnout dropped significantly in the 2000s in the UK[45] with the development of the centre-ground narrative and the mainstreaming of neoliberal policies across all major parties. Similar drops occurred with party loyalty[46] and party membership[47] amongst the

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[39] Giddens, A. 1994, 83

[40] Taylor, P. 2003, 107

[41] Bauman, Z. 2007, 24

[42] Burnham, P. 2006, 103

[43] Bauman, Z. 2007, 25

[44] Davidson, N. 2013

[45] Mair, P. 2013, 39

[46] Mair, P. 2013, 46

[47] Mair, P. 2013, 50

British electorate. In effect there is "narcissism of small differences"[48] as petty debates over small subjects predominate politics, with politicians becoming actors on a stage who once in power see it as their job to govern in a homogeneous, uniform manner. Hegemonic economic debates are ignored as they are depoliticised into ersatz political institutions.

This environment has not gone even with the financial crisis in 2007 as neoliberal governance has effectively retrenched itself. "Post-crisis Europe has been one that has looked to build on its ability to normalise the crisis as a 'natural consequence' of a financial cycle, whereby solutions should be sought in order to get the market re-stimulated"[49], moving toward a quasi-Ordoliberal position where the state is further oriented toward facilitating the market and creating new positions for its renewal and development, as with austerity policies and significant cuts to public budgets and services all in the aim of cultivating the confidence of markets and maintaining their common sense hegemony[50]. This environment was what the European Union referendum was conducted in, an environment characterised by neoliberal subjectivation and a limitation of political choice.

Culture Led Politics

"British voters decided that ideological considerations trumped economic ones"[51]. An apt description of the way the referendum result went. However the question then becomes what ideology/ideologies was it that led toward a majority of the British public voting to leave the EU, particularly when considering the neoliberal subjectivation that has informed British politics for the last 30 years or more. The ideological as political possibility has been a closed route for that period as the takeover of narratives surrounding TINA (there is no alternative) and the creation of a polity that is concerned with governing for the centre-ground became the norm of British political understandings and discourse. Our shared capitalist reality meant that we must accept the inevitable forces of freer markets and freer trade, working within this system as best we can. Yet Goodwin and Heath make the claim that "the vote for Brexit was delivered by the 'left behind'—social groups that are united by a general sense of insecurity, pessimism and marginalisation, who do not feel as though elites, whether in Brussels or Westminster, share their values, represent their interests and genuinely empathise with their intense angst about rapid social, economic and cultural change"[52] due to the polling data which suggested the lines that split the electorate into leave and remain camps were related to one's level of skills and education[53], with a lack of suggesting a higher degree of aptitude toward voting leave.

This suggests that socio-economic variables were a major factor for making one decide how they would vote, with the discontents of globalisation being the most likely to vote to leave. However the range of polling data that followed the referendum result shows a lack of clarity surrounding economic issues amongst leave voters. There is no general consensus on economic issues that clearly demonstrates an ideological cleavage or a reason to leave the EU. Rather the central issues that were presented by leave voters as their main reason for voting leave were national sovereignty ("the principle that decisions about the UK should be taken in the UK"), control over immigration and a belief that remaining in the EU meant the

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[48] Hazell, C. 2009, 97

[49] Worth, O. 2016, 3

[50] Worth, O. 2016, 5-6

[51] Bachmann, V. & Sidaway, J. 2016, 49

[52] Goodwin, M. & Heath, O. 2016, 331

[53] Goodwin, M. & Heath, O. 2016, 330

UK would have little control over EU expansion. Only 6% of those polled cited economic policies such as trade as a reason for voting to leave[54]. When taking into consideration that a significant number of those leave voters said they had either always held the opinion that voting to leave the EU was the best thing to do (36%) or had developed said opinion before or at the beginning of 2016 (22%)[55], the coherent ideological cleavage seems to concern cultural and national matters rather than economic ones. When looking at social attitudes, Ashcroft's survey data shows that cultural matters are the ones that predominate the concerns of leave voters, who tended to view life in Britain as worse than it was 30 years ago, and believe that life will be worse for children than it was for their parents. On wider issues such as social liberalism, multiculturalism, immigration and other facets of the modern world that are increasingly seen as the norm, the majority of leave voters polled view these things negatively as forces for ill. However capitalism was viewed ambiguously by leave voters, having no direct relation to the way one voted[56].

Further polling data bares out this conclusion, as a significant proportion of leave voters backed economic perspectives and proposals that would seemingly be at odds with the idea of the leave vote being delivered by the 'left behind'. In John Curtice's polling work, where he asks people who voted in the EU referendum (irrespective of how they voted) there support or lack of on certain post-referendum issues, there is a clear support from all those polled on issues like free trade (90% support, 2% against), compliance with EU regulation (65% support, 15% against) and support for bank passporting (63% support, 6% against)[57]. This suggests that the ideological patterns are not economic, as supporting free trade and regulatory compliance suggests a general support for the economic openness that is characterised by neoliberal globalisation. Such was apparent with the rhetoric found in the Leave campaigns which supported a 'global Britain' and an open economy. For example, Patrick Minford and the Economists for Brexit support for unqualified free trade in a post-Brexit world would mean a significant reduction in manufacturing capacity, tending to concentrate amongst the highest skilled and higher-paid strata. It would also mean a loss in economic welfare (2.3%) due to the loss of economies of scale within the European Union if we were to leave European economic institutions like the Single Market and the Customs Union[58]. Michael Gove's Telegraph article that was published before the referendum in February gives general support for an economically freer Britain in the event of leaving the EU. Gove talks of the need for an "optimistic, forward-looking and genuinely internationalist alternative"[59] that forges an innovative path in a dynamic, changing world. This market Eurosceptic position, "rather than contest the basis of the post-crisis environment from an outside ideological (or counter-hegemonic) perspective"[60], goes along neoliberal lines in supporting the dynamics of globalisation and furthering the extent to which the British state is involved with these processes. If the 'left behind' delivered the Leave vote, they also tacitly delivered a more market-based vision for Britain.

However, British Social Attitudes surveys show that the perceptions around economic integration and closeness with the European Union were significantly ambiguous in 2014 and

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[54] Ashcroft, M. 2016

[55] Ashcroft, M. 2016

[56] Ashcroft, M. 2016

[57] Curtice, J. 2016, 7

[58] Wolf, M. 2016

[59] Gove, M. 2016

[60] Worth, O. 2016, 7

2015[61]. "So far as the economic benefits or otherwise of EU membership are concerned... many are inclined to the view that it does not make much difference either way"[62]. Rather it is cultural matters that define the direction of voting as mentioned before. Curtice's analysis with the BSA shows that the belief that the "EU is undermining Britain's distinctive identity" was a marker that conferred Eurosceptic beliefs and intentions[63]. Eric Kaufmann's work strengthens this correlation. Kaufmann has shown the intention to vote to leave best correlates with one's view on the death penalty, suggesting a link between what are dubbed "right-wing authoritarian" attitudes and the desire to leave the EU. Similar attitudes such as "disciplining children and whipping sex criminals, keeping the nation safe, protecting social order and skepticism correlate with Brexit sentiment"[64], suggesting a dichotomy that is not best understood in socio-economic terms. A dichotomy between those who favour social openness and those who favour social order is more important in understanding why people voted to leave, with the latter best characterised as a "postcolonial melancholia - the unresolved loss of an imagined past"[65]. This explains why leave voters tend to have negative attitudes toward social change and view the future with a large degree of negativity. For these voters, the past as an imagined variable is the best lens through which to channel concerns and anomie, rather than through an economic critique. As with descriptions of precariatisation and the rise of private indebtedness, critiquing the prevailing economic system is politically difficult as one is so intertwined in its constitutive elements. One cannot frame a critique of depoliticised fiscal and monetary matters when their livelihoods (with mortgages and consumer debt instruments) are a massive part of these matters.

Thus this post-imperial imaginary cuts across class, supported by both a "white working class" and a "traditional middle class"[66] whose lives have been transformed by neoliberalisation and the depoliticisation of modern economic governance. "Desocialization marks the shift to forms of work and employment relationship that are significantly individualizing"[67], and change the work-life balances of rural communities as well as post-industrial towns and cities. The faceless nature of neoliberalism, and the way it ebbs through existing lifeworlds that then entangle one's socio-economic life in things like private debt for consumption, means that a political-economic identity cannot gain a counter-hegemonic position. It is the "very real sense of democratic and political disenfranchisement that"[68] is expressed through the referendum, where easily-realisable events like immigration and changes in the way the British state governs are given political credence and capital while economic issues are left to wilt.

The Economy Has Been Subsumed

The economy has been subsumed to the cultural values that dominated the Leave vote. The conjunctural effect it had led to a situation where the 'left behind' voted for a result whose main campaigners signalled was to further a market Eurosceptic position that supports deeper globalisation through a 'global Britain'. With the extent of neoliberal subjectivation, an event like the EU referendum was never framed as an oppositional event against neoliberalism and

[61] Curtice, J. 2016 (2), 10

[62] Curtice, J. 2016 (2), 9

[63] Curtice, J. 2016 (2), 13

[64] Kaufmann, E. 2016

[65] Clarke, J. & Newman, J. 2017, 108

[66] Clarke, J. & Newman, J. 2017, 105-106

[67] Clarke, J. & Newman, J. 2017, 105

[68] Clarke, J. & Newman, J. 2017, 106

globalisation. The fact that the main campaign, Vote Leave, emphasised the importance of dynamism and innovative activity in relation to the supposed scleroticism of the EU[69] which would allow for free trade and further openness in the event of a Brexit suggests a disconnect between the economic circumstances of many Leave voters, and the individual reasons for voting to leave. The distinction between the macro-level analyses show a clear socio-economic bias in communities that have been significantly affected by globalisation to support Brexit while a micro-level analyses shows that many Leave voters voted on the basis of cultural issues or non-quantifiable variables, such as a belief that the country is worse than it was 30 years ago. A significant proportion of working-class towns and geographical concentrations showed a preponderance to vote leave[70], which is further compounded when looking at two issues that correlate with the predominance of particular areas to vote leave: wage inequality and import substitution.

The correlation between constituencies with low median wage growth and the percentage of those who voted to leave is strong[71] suggesting that "worsening economic conditions for workers have proven important in... the Leave vote in the referendum". Similar correlations are found in relation to import substitution, mainly Chinese import shock where "larger shocks are attributed to regions in which more workers were initially employed in the manufacturing sector"[72]. Colantone & Stanig's study showed that "Leave vote shares are systematically higher in regions that have witnessed larger import shocks", with regional-level evidence consistently showing that "the Chinese import shock has a positive effect on the propensity to vote for Leave". This shows that many Leave voters cohere toward being members of the precariat, as they have lower wages and exist in precarious economic circumstances affected by deindustrialisation and a temporary economic life.

However this conclusion is only present on the macro-level analysis. The micro-political reasons, as analysed by Curtice and Kaufmann, show instead the cultural reasoning behind the leave vote. The disconnect between these micro and macro analyses come down to communities lacking a unifying collective identity, thus the reason for cultural issues becoming dominant amongst leave voters. Working class districts happened to vote to leave, but this was not a collective modus operandi but rather an interregnal situation that failed to develop a coherent collection of identities and understandings. Immigration defines this understanding, as it is a socio-economic variable (representative of the processes of globalisation) that brings significant cultural change. "Immigration might be better understood as a scapegoat for a malaise that has more structural economic origins. These are related to large scale economic transformations that inflict disproportionate losses on some sectors of society"[73], with these losses produced through a set of structured circumstances that are difficult to codify and critique, particularly when politics, as the general means of registering dissatisfaction, has become closed off due to its administrative and overtly governmental modus operandi.

This lack of a collective economic identity goes further when understanding economic dissatisfaction amongst the British electorate before the advent of the referendum. During the 2015 general election, there were mixed, ambiguous messages being signalled by the electorate in relation to socio-economic matters. Consumer confidence was growing in this

[69] Vote Leave, 2016 http://www.voteleavetakecontrol.org/campaign.html
[70] Kaufmann, E. 2016, Figure 1
[71] Bell, B. & Machin, S. 2016, Figure 1
[72] Colantone, I. & Stanig, P. 2016
[73] Colantone, I. & Stanig, P. 2016

period despite the continuing ebbs of the 2007-8 financial crisis, while more people thought they were worse off financially and only 20% of people asked in the Ashcroft poll said they felt the benefits of the 'economic recovery'. But then more people felt the general economic condition of the country was better than those who thought it was worse going into the 2015 election[74]. The inability to coherently express material economic issues is palpable here, further suggesting neoliberal subjectivation depoliticises economics and makes it difficult to cohere a political subject that can express particular economic grievances. Coffey & Hellwig's research into the importance of political messaging and the way it shapes public opinion shows a similar ambiguity that is perceptible to elite cueing. Conservative Party messaging in 2008 began to place the blame for the financial crisis at the feet of the Labour Party. Cameron said that "over the past decade, the regulators haven't regulated properly, the Government hasn't governed properly, and that's in addition to the bankers making big mistakes"[75] and accused the Labour government of a "complete and utter failure" around fiscal policy. Such targeting tended to shift blame, with the Labour Party originally blaming markets and banks as the causes of the crisis, but eventually shouldering some of the blame after continued attacks by the opposition. This messaging tended to affect Labour and Conservative supporters of both high and low political sophistication as they began to blame the government[76], with these messages muddying the waters, making blame more singular rather than looking at the structural effects and causes of the financial crash. "The media focus was on the excesses of individual bankers and on the government's handling of the crisis, not on the systemic causes of the crisis"[77], leading to a situation where the facelessness of neoliberal governance gives way to easy-to-blame targets through elite messaging. The constitutive elements of the crisis are ignored in favour of the concrete regulative structures whose failures were more obvious.

Post-referendum results show this socio-economic ambiguity is present. NatCen data that tracked public attitudes around austerity in 2016 showed a large section of people (77%) believe that the class divide in Britain is too wide, and that there are significant limits on social mobility. It also revealed an increased support for public spending relative to austerity, rising to pre-crash levels of support. However there is still support for tough action on unemployment benefits. Similarly, there exists a general support for jobs, while stress-at-work and control over one's work pattern were seen as troubling variables, particularly amongst working class individuals[78]. This further supports my thesis that there is an inability to articulate economic concerns due to the lack of economic identity and a collective subject to channel it, thus leading to the referendum subsuming economic concerns to cultural and national ones that are influenced by elite cueing by market Eurosceptic positions found in the Leave campaigns.

Such a condition festers in a situation of depoliticised governance and a neoliberal subjectivation. The "rationalist model of democratic politics"[79] attempts to remove the agonistic/antagonistic element of politics itself. In Britain this has been felt acutely, as "since the move to the right of New Labour under the leadership of Tony Blair, many traditional Labour voters no longer feel represented by the party. The demands of an increasing

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[74] Higham, N. 2015

[75] Hellwig, T. & Coffey, E. 2011, 421

[76] Hellwig, T. & Coffey, E. 2011, 422-423

[77] Fisher, M. 2009, 63

[78] NatCen, 2016

[79] Mouffe, C. 2005, 70

proportion of the popular sectors have been left out of the political agenda"[80] leading to a situation where there is no outlet for the expression of grievance and concern. Where left and right were blurred in favour of a depoliticised governing strategy, "voters did not have the possibility of identifying with a differentiated range of democratic political identities"[81], with the EU referendum in some loose, overdetermined sense becoming the best means of registering dissatisfaction with modernity. The generality of neoliberal subjectivity which is linked to and produced by this depoliticisation advances barriers toward a collective socio-economic identity as well. Jost, Banaji and Nosek's research suggests that "members of disadvantaged groups will exhibit a depressed sense of entitlement relative to members of advantaged groups"[82], with such feelings internalised into one's perception of their work. There exists the incapability to cohere a collective political identity that can examine one's own socio-economic condition, expressing a situation where "people internalize the effects of inequality, adjusting their expectations to fit the status quo"[83] and subconsciously support the 'economic realities' one finds themselves within.

The fact that many Leave voters, who come from disadvantaged backgrounds (with areas that have experienced higher levels of fiscal cuts and higher levels of council house renters being more likely to vote leave[84]), support free trade and market Euroscepticism shows that many are subsuming the economic status quo, and not blaming it for their socio-economic situation. The financial crisis shows this clearly, where the structural reasons for the crash, which are multifaceted and hard to pin-down, are blamed on identifiable actors like individuals, banks or particular governments. The kind of identity, that nascent lebenswelt I mentioned earlier, that this conjuncture brought forth is not characterisable as a fully formed subject but is instead similar to the precariat's condition as a class-in-the-making. It is a populist identity, containing the capacity to present an anti-institutional dimension, a certain challenge to political normalization, to 'business as usual'"[85]. Such feelings are a "reservoir of raw anti-status-quo feelings"[86] that are inarticulate and non-economic. Any post-referendum development must deal with this matrix of contradictory understandings that can support globalisation and free trade yet oppose immigration and cultural change.

Modes of Politics Post-Referendum

The development of this populist quasi-identity, this post-imperial imaginary that views political problems through a socio-cultural lens, has borne itself out during the EU referendum, where the Leave campaign won on the basis of thin economic prescriptions and an appeal to an alternative that is removed from the economic spheres of understanding. In this sense, politics led the economy, where the developing lebenswelt, a cross-class coalition informed by culture and nationality, decided to 'take back control'. Brexit, as with the Leave vote, was defined by culture at the expense of economic arguments, with taking back control meaning taking control of how society is defined. This has led to changes in the forms that political rhetoric are taking, with the Conservative Party and its leader Theresa May signalling a move toward recognising the socio-cultural lens of understanding that caused Brexit. This then suggests that Brexit, far from being a revolt of the masses, is instead a

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[80] Mouffe, C. 2005, 71
[81] Mouffe, C. 2005, 69
[82] Jost, J., Banaji, M. & Nosek, B. 2004, 906
[83] Jost, J., Banaji, M. & Nosek, B. 2004, 906
[84] Becker, S., Fetzer, T. & Novy, D. 2016, 23-24
[85] Laclau, E. 2005, 123
[86] Laclau, E. 2005, 123

fragmented event, a "disparate series of happenings, experiences and emotions"[87] that has been co-opted by the prevailing political elites. Brexit is not remaking common sense, common sense is adapting to Brexit.

With the referendum and the resultant Brexit, a conjuncture in the prevailing modes of politics has been opened up. Pre-referendum polling data suggested that the UK's relation with Europe was not the most important issue leading up to referendum compared to immigration and the NHS[88], with the conjunctural effect coming from these matrices of disparate cultural issues. This understanding goes further when considering the evidence[89] that risk assessments surrounding the leaving the EU tended to average toward a slight majority viewing Brexit as too risky an option (thus confirming LeDuc's Law which suggests in risky events like referendums the electorate stick with the status quo[90]) while the actual results show this perceived risk was overrode by other considerations, particularly the cultural backlash of a post-imperial imaginary which emphasises sovereignty and the capacity to control immigration.

In this sense, the economic risks were seen as less important than the capacity to signal discontent with modern Britain. This is in contrast to economic elites, where "the business sector, represented by the CBI, has historically been extremely influential in determining the UK's EU policy stance" and who expressed a clear intention to support staying in the EU[91]. In the post-referendum climate where a form of Brexit is considered assured, business leaders have moved toward a soft Brexit position that desires to remain a member of the single market and maintain regulatory links with EU institutions[92]. In contrast, Leave voters have continued signalling their views that national and cultural questions should dominate how Brexit is defined, with this position being considered a hard Brexit. This position emphasises the need to bring sovereign decisions back under the auspice of the UK government, with particular emphasis placed on ending payments to the EU, controlling who can live in the UK and "no longer being subject to ECJ judgments" as the important elements to a Brexit settlement. As one voter polled said, "(Theresa May has) got to be able to say we're only allowing certain people in at certain times – that's what people voted for. Trade is a bit of a red herring"[93]. This latter understanding of Brexit seems to have seeped into the general understandings of politics, as cultural matters predominate in recent attitudes surveys and in the language of political leaders and manifestos.

Ipsos Mori polling data from 2017 show the greatest worries felt by the British electorate express a general culturation of politics, with the top three important issues being of a cultural nature, with the economy coming fifth in the list[94]. During the 2017 general election, these cultural and sovereign issues again prove the most important issues amongst the electorate, with Brexit, immigration and terrorism identified as defining issues of the election[95]. These cultural issues are also subsuming the economy into their particular matrix of understandings, as most people want to have free trade (thus showing the limits of Brexit as a critically

[87] Brassett, J. & Vaughan-Williams, N. 2012, 28

[88] Mann, J. 2016

[89] Clarke, H., Goodwin, M. & Whiteley, P. 2016, 17-18

[90] Clarke, H., Goodwin, M. & Whiteley, P. 2016, 8

[91] Jensen, M.D. & Snaith, H. 2016, 1304

[92] Savage, M. 2017

[93] Riley-Smith, B. 2017

[94] Ipsos Mori, 2017, 2

[95] Fieldhouse, E. & Prosser, C. 2017

reflexive moment) and be able to restrict immigration at the same time[96]. In this socio-cultural conjuncture, "the public would like to have their cake and to eat it"[97].

This change in discourse can also be seen in the changes in Conservative Party manifestos from the 2015 to 2017 general elections. I specifically focus on the Conservative Party as they remain the governing party even after the 2017 general election, and thus are the most powerful position to negotiate a Brexit settlement with the EU. With the 2015 manifesto there is a focus on technocratic governance, describing the government as providing a plan for every stage of life. Here the state is a facilitator of socio-economic independence and growth, much in the way the neoliberal state acts as a state to facilitate capital accumulation and globalisation through the subjectivation of the individual as decollectivised and depoliticised. It talks of a "long-term economic plan"[98] and the importance of job growth while the conservatives have been in government. They focus upon the creation of the Office for Budget Responsibility which has ended the capacity for politicians to "cook the books", thus signalling a form of fiscal depoliticisation. It emphasises continuity in the relation to cutting the deficit, comparing government to a business that must maintain credibility in the face of its creditors[99]. A statement like "we support policies that grow the economy as a whole, generating new jobs and higher wages for everybody"[100] shows that these policies view society in an economic light, as a collection of rational individuals whose goal is to get on in life by getting a job and a good wage. This stress on viewing the economy as the fundamental political dimension of contention where it is seen that "a job is the best way to provide security for families" and where "cutting red tape, lowering taxes on jobs and enterprise, getting young people into work, boosting apprenticeships and investing in science and technology"[101] is of structural importance, suggests that the generality of human agency and desires are found and subsumed in economic understandings. Such is acutely seen in how the manifesto describes tackling immigration. The technocratic descriptions of reforming welfare, tackling criminality and people trafficking, and creating new codified rules like "deport first, appeal later"[102] show a distinctly depoliticised view of how to understand the impact of immigration, with only a small section dedicated to promoting cultural integration and emphasising British values for migrants[103].

In contrast, the 2017 Conservative manifesto has a stronger cultural focus, looking at challenges to Britain and framing these in a collective manner. For example, the "five challenges" identified in the beginning of the manifesto focus on things like technological change, social divisions and a changing and aging world. Descriptions like "for too many people, where you end up in life is still determined by where you were born and to whom"[104] suggest a move from economistic understandings of human agency to classed understandings that recognise social barriers to national unity. Instead of a long-term economic plan, it talks of a "strong economy" that can develop "national economic success"[105]. Even the section on an industrial strategy, a technocratic policy proposal, discusses delivering "a stronger

[96] Wells, A. 2017
[97] Wells, A. 2017
[98] Conservatives, 2015, 7
[99] Conservatives, 2015, 8
[100] Conservatives, 2015, 13
[101] Conservatives, 2015, 17
[102] Conservatives, 2015, 31-32
[103] Conservatives, 2015, 32
[104] Conservatives, 2017, 6-7
[105] Conservatives, 2017, 13

economy that works for everyone – where wealth and opportunity are spread across every community"[106], where communities are viewed as more than economic units, describing the importance of civil society and civic institutions in crafting solid, unified communities[107]. Immigration is mentioned throughout rather than being given one particular section like the previous manifesto, suggesting its centrality to policy as something axiomatically definitive and that is a prism through which policy is seen. The global is seen through this lens, with the British nation being the platform through which global power can be honed and understood[108]. This goes against the extraterritoriality of global governance, instead seeing sovereignty and trade as growing from national community into the world of global relations. Thus we see the post-imperial imaginary being consolidated, with British leadership placed against the uncertainty of a Hobbesian globality. Even the economistic language of austerity, "fiscal credibility" and "sound public finances" are placed within the Burkean concept of a "contract between the generations"[109]. Here we then see a change in discourse, from the neoliberal language of technocratic governance that sees the government as a placid actor facilitating global institutions and markets, to a more communitarian, nationalist set of understandings and ideas that are culture-centric and socially oriented.

The conjuncturality of Brexit can be seen in the way that politics is shaping post-referendum. The cultural distinctions that the leave vote brought up seem to be trickling their way into the discourses of modern politics. Theresa May's Davos speech emphasises the left behinds of globalisation, recognising that globalisation can mean individuals jobs are "being outsourced and wages undercut. It means having to sit back as they watch their communities change around them"[110]. This, and discussion around JAMs ("people who can just about manage but worry about the cost of living and getting their children into a good school"[111]) in the Conservative manifesto, suggest a discursive change that reorients politics toward a cultural, national field of understanding that is de-economised in certain ways. However this discursive change does not suggest a counter-hegemonic project that is opening up British politics. Instead, what this redevelopment of rhetoric suggests is a co-optation of what Brexit is. A process of trasformismo can be witnessed, where "the traditional ruling class...changes men and programmes and, with greater speed than is achieved by the subordinate classes, reabsorbs the control that was slipping from its grasp"[112]. The move away from economic rhetoric that is witnessed however is hollow, as can be seen with the predominance of market Euroscepticism and the continued focus on a global Britain emphasised by May in that Davos speech. The populist matrix of identity that I mentioned earlier means that politics can become hollow, as can be seen with other statements by May like 'Brexit means Brexit' and "no deal is better than a bad deal"[113]. These are meaningless epithets that signal a basic co-optation of the language of leave voters. Neoliberal governance isn't being fundamentally rethought, but instead cultural matters are being brought on board that are compatible with the market Eurosceptic that was rife throughout the major leave campaign. The fact that Leave campaigners and voters can believe in free trade and globalisation, and migration controls, means that there exists no collective socio-economic identity but instead a fragmented socio-cultural lens that is easily caught in processes of co-optation. Neoliberal

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[106] Conservatives, 2017, 18
[107] Conservatives, 2017, 24
[108] Conservatives, 2017, 37
[109] Conservatives, 2017, 61-62
[110] May, T. 2017
[111] Conservatives, 2017, 8
[112] Gramsci, A. 1999, 451
[113] May, T. 2017, http://news.sky.com/video/may-on-brexit-no-deal-better-than-a-bad-deal-10897952

subjectivation will easily continue on, but in slightly framework of discursive references that allows for a degree of cultural backlash. Brexit literally means Brexit because it means nothing other than the capacity for the discontents of modernity to briefly believe that they have taken back control.

This has created a co-opting instantiation that isn't questioning the material economic realities of the modern socio-political era, instead focusing on cultural issues much like the Leave campaign did during the referendum. The subsequent focus on a "Global Britain" that will be one of the "leading agitators for free trade"[114] suggests that contradictory elements of the Leave vote are being subsumed by the government as they push both a free trading Britain and a traditional Britain that is sceptical of immigration. This then suggests that Brexit may well be more of an interregnum as it is incorporated into forms of neoliberal governance. Flexible labour markets, free trade and precariatisation have not been questioned and will not be questioned in the modern political arena, and Brexit will remain an event that is unable to question them.

Conclusion: Interregnum or Political Battlefield?

Brexit then is a term removed from any meaning or context, a word devoid of definition other than those conjured in a number of different, contradictory imaginaries. It means both a free trading Global Britain and a culturally closed, homogeneous Britain that attempts to project sovereignty the way it did during the time of the British Empire. Thus the questions that must be asked are whether Brexit represents a hegemonic challenge upon which new political arguments and debates can be waged, and new public spaces can be forged that facilitate them. Or is Brexit so overdetermined as a concept that it is extremely difficult to pin down, thus closing debate and allowing for processes of co-optation that simply bring more populist arguments into the existing politico-economic system. The micro-politics of the referendum result suggest that co-optation has occurred, as culture became the defining characteristic, not economics or the structural conditions of society. The referendum and the resultant Brexit, rather than being the terrain for new political subjectivities, seem instead to be stuck in their conjunctural status, constituting an interregnum "in which the extant legal frame of social order (or in this case cultural common sense) loses its grip"[115].

Brexit is an interregnum that cannot cohere into a counter-hegemonic situation due to elite cueing of the outcome, the market Eurosceptic position it seems to be taking which is generally supportive of neoliberal modernity but with certain caveats, and the inability to centre economic arguments that are opposed to neoliberalism (thus relying on socio-cultural framework within the post-imperial imaginary). The construction of neoliberal subjectivation suggests a significant degree of flexibility, able to incorporate disparate narratives such as anti-immigration sentiments and nationalist dialogue. Best characterised as neoliberalisation, it can be seen as: "the state looks after your interests by encouraging you to choose to lock yourself in(to gated communities) while it locks up the undesirable (in prisons) or locks out the externally threatening (by way of immigration restrictions)"[116], thus guaranteeing a form of external security that maintain the prevailing economic system. With the incorporation of cultural issues such as immigration controls and the reassertion of British sovereignty with the idea of a Global Britain that facilitates free trade and globalisation, alongside the market-

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[114] Johnson, B. 2016
[115] Bauman, Z. 2012, 49
[116] Goldberg, D.T. 2009, 335

based critique of the EU where "the majority of Euro-sceptics from the British right stress that the regulatory framework within the EU stifles, rather than contributes to, neoliberal development"[117], we can this form of neoliberalism with Brexit characteristics coming forth.

The nascent lebenswelt will always remain nascent so long as socio-economic issues are tacitly ignored and subsumed, with a socio-cultural framework dominating. The integration of cultural narratives as seen in the 2017 Conservative Party manifesto, where austerity and the prevailing modes of production and regulation are given a Burkean tinge shows the incapability of constructing a meaningful political settlement out of the rubble of Brexit. The contradiction of supporting globalisation while pushing against extraterritorial governance and attempting to reassert a form of cultural/national sovereignty suggests that these issues will remain disparate, unable to coalesce around a coherent collective subject.

The lack of a macro-political arena that can seriously express the micro-politics of globalisation's discontents, such as those within the precariat of temporary workers who live a contractualised life, means events like Brexit can only have minimal expanse as serious challenges to the common sense of politico-economic modernity. To develop a "war of positions" with the existing hegemonic order, social movements need "to be accompanied by a set of alternative principles and practices, capable of contesting and replacing those of the existing order. Not only do these need to have economic objectives, but also cultural, social and political dimensions to succeed"[118]. Brexit, with its uni-dimensional focus on the cultural and national, suggests this war of positions is already lost.

The paradoxical case of Brexit is that resistance to globalisation is not being found in the processes or discourses of leaving the EU, but are instead being artificially boosted as campaigners and figures talk of opening up Britain to global forces of competition and further marketisation. It is too easily co-opted into the prevailing narratives of neoliberalism, producing a distinct Brexit form of neoliberalism in contrast with the European form found in the UK presently. It is too overdetermined, informed by contradictory narratives that accepts neoliberal subjectivity but with a slight reform that allows for more control over migration and security, and thus caught up in a process of trasformismo. While the modes of production have been subsumed by the politics of Brexit, Brexit will not cohere into a new mode of politics.

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[117] Worth, O. 2002, 309
[118] Worth, O. 2016, 1486-1487

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