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Social Movements, Brexit and Social Policy

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In this article, I examine the relationship between social movements, Brexit and social policy and consider how political and socio-economic developments since the 2008 financial crisis helped create a fertile ground for Brexit. I query the assumption that Brexit was simply a result of those left behind by globalisation and instead explore why and how actors from across the ideological spectrum supported Brexit and examine the sources of discontent which created the conditions from which Brexit emerged. To understand the relationship, role and impact of social movements and, more widely, civil society on social policy, I argue that it is important to critically examine how diverse actors within civil society are campaigning for the recognition of unmet needs and challenging systems of redistribution and the ways in which they interact and engage with governance institutions and policy processes.

Keywords: Brexit, populism, social movements, austerity, social policy.

Introduction

Brexit, similar to Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 US presidential elections, is frequently interpreted as a manifestation or result of the growing anger with the political and economic status quo and a victory for populism. In this article, I examine the relationship between social movements, Brexit and social policy. Contextualising my discussion in the literatures on social movements and social policy, I consider how political and socio-economic developments since the 2008 financial crisis contributed to and helped create a fertile ground for Brexit. In examining the context within which Brexit occurred, I query the assumption that Brexit was a result of the losers of (or those left behind by) globalisation, and problematise the accounts which proclaim the death of democracy and the rise of the age of authoritarianism (Keane, 2009; Plattner, 2015; Appadurai, 2017). Instead, I explore why and how actors from across the ideological spectrum supported Brexit and examine the sources of discontent that created a fertile ground from which Brexit emerged. To understand the relationship, role and impact of social movements and more widely, civil society, on social policy, I argue that it is important to critically examine how diverse actors within civil society are campaigning for the recognition of unmet needs and challenging systems of redistribution and the ways in which they interact and engage with governance institutions and policy processes.

I present some material from our interviews conducted with activists in London in 2013–14. We conducted a total of twenty-five interviews in London. I use the term 'activist' to refer to those engaged in social movements. 'Activist' is a slippery term, but drawing on the social movement literature, I understand being an activist as a collective identity linked to participation in a social movement or collective action (Bobel, 2007).

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During our fieldwork my colleagues and I interviewed only those who had been deeply involved in the protests, for whom activism was an important time commitment and part of their identity, rather than occasional demonstrators. In using these interviews, there are two clarifications to make. First I acknowledge that London is not representative of Britain. Second, we were mostly interviewing activists who were on the left of the political spectrum.

Social movements, collective action and social policy

The literature on social movements examines the relationship between structural change and social transformation. Scholars have analysed how social problems and discontent becomes the basis for collective action (Tilly and Tarrow, 2007; Tarrow, 2011; Goodwin and Jasper, 2012) as well as the agency of movement actors (i.e. why individuals join or drop out) (Touraine, 1984; Wieviorka, 2005; Pleyers, 2011). Collective action is not outside of politics, but rather is the space through which 'ordinary people' come into confrontation with elites or authorities around a shared common purpose (Tarrow, 2011: 9). So as to understand how shared grievances become transformed into collective action, in recent years sociological research on social movements (van Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2013) has also examined the role of emotions and 'emotional dynamics' during all the processes and phases of protest (Jasper, 2014: 208). Research on emotions examines how emotions can lead to collective action, but also result in demobilisation and non-action.

The question, which often follows those of why collective actions emerge and why individuals mobilise, is concerned with analysing movements' success or impact (Della Porta and Diani, 2006; Rochon and Mazmanian, 1993; Giugni, 1998; Weldon, 2011). In the narrowest sense, impact is often interpreted as a change in legislation or the adoption of a new policy instrument. Such a narrow (or what some call a productivist) understanding of impact (Castells, 2012) ignores how movements engage with and seek to shape wider public debates, social policies, and attitudes. In this article, my aim is to examine the context from which Brexit emerged and became possible, but also to problematise some of the reigning assumptions about it.

In 2010, two years after the 2008 financial crisis, we saw the explosion of protest movements throughout the globe. It is important to recall that these were movements that were *against* austerity and inequality and *for* greater democracy, dignity, and social justice (Ishkanian and Glasius, 2018). Many writing about recent movements argue that the protests and occupation of squares beginning in 2010 were an expression of anger and reflected growing concerns around the lack of democracy, social justice and dignity (Kaldor and Selchow, 2012; Glasius and Pleyers, 2013; Tejerina *et al.*, 2013; Della Porta, 2015), representing a tipping point in a globalisation of discontent (Biekart and Fowler, 2013) and indignation (Calhoun, 2013). Yet because of their progressive demands, horizontal forms of organising, and participatory nature, the global wave of protests, including those of the Arab Spring, the Spanish and Greek Indignados, Gezi Park, and Occupy were also described as movements of hope (Flaherty, 2016; Castells, 2012; Boukalaa and Dimitrakopoulou, 2017). Thus, positive (i.e. hope) and negative (i.e. anger, indignation) emotions drove people to the streets and squares.

It has now become clear that the prospects of activists' demands – as well as their conceptions and practices of democracy, social justice, and participation bleeding

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outward and upward into the transformation of society and of political decision-making – are very bleak. Instead, in the UK, in the US and all over the western world, nativist, right-wing populist movements have been on a rising trajectory, based at least in part on very similar sentiments of discontent with electoral politics and neoliberal policies. And we increasingly hear about the crisis, death, decline of and fatigue with democracy (Keane, 2009; Flinders, 2016; Plattner, 2015; Appadurai, 2017). Scholars and pundits argue that we are now living in the period of the 'great regression' (Geiselberger, 2017), which is also characterised as the 'age of anger' (Mishra, 2017).

The UK-focused social policy literature, which examines the role of civil society in policy shaping and implementation, has tended to overwhelmingly focus on how formal, professionalised voluntary or third sector organisations have developed partnerships with the State (Billis, 1993; Lewis, 1999; Deakin, 2001; Alcock, 2010; Harris, 2010), their comparative advantage and efficacy in delivering services (Billis and Glennerster, 1998; Harris *et al*., 2001), and the challenges they face in maintaining their independence and autonomy in the wake of funding cuts and increasing reliance on contracting (Rochester, 2013; Deakin, 2014; Milbourne and Cushman, 2015; Murray and Milbourne, 2017). There has been far less focus on more contentious civil society actors, including social movements and informal grassroots groups, which are less interested in working in partnership with the State and instead contest and critique existing policies and campaign for the recognition of unmet or unrecognised needs (Martin, 2001; Halfpenny and Reid, 2002; Powell, 2009; Rochester, 2013; Milbourne and Murray, 2017; Ishkanian and Ali, 2018).

In examining Brexit, it is important to recall that what would eventually become Vote Leave grew out of the campaign which started in 1975 regarding the UK's withdrawal from the membership of the European Common Market, which it had only joined two years prior. I agree with Della Porta who maintains that we should view both the Brexit and Trump campaigns as 'other forms of populist politics' rather than social movements (Della Porta, 2017: 27). But even if we agree with Della Porta that Brexit was a form of 'populist politics' rather than a social movement, what constitutes populism remains difficult to define. Laclau (2005) characterised populism as an empty signifier which is defined by antagonistic frontiers and, rejecting analyses of populism that focus on ideological content, he noted that there can be both right and left populisms. Yet even if we focus on form rather than content, the task of defining populism remains difficult for, as Müller maintains, that there isn't yet a '*theory* of populism' which provides us with 'coherent criteria for deciding when political actors turn populist' (Müller, 2017: 2) [emphasis in the original].

Regardless of whether we consider Brexit a form of populist politics or simply as a specific political issue or demand, I show below how, similar to many recent movements, Brexit had a heterogeneous base of supporters (Peterson *et al*., 2015). I discuss how Brexit brought together individuals with grievances around the current economic and political context but who hold diverse political and ideological views and allegiances – or, in some instances, no allegiances at all. This illustrates how the issue became a touchstone for diverse grievances. While I acknowledge the limits of social movement theories in explaining phenomenon such as Brexit, I argue that these theories remain useful in helping us to analyse how shared grievances are transformed (or not) into action.

In the sections below, I explore why and how actors from across the ideological spectrum supported Brexit and examine the sources of discontent which coalesced into a victory for Leave. Drawing on empirical research with activists in London conducted in 2013–2015, I discuss their discontent and demands as they existed in the period after

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the crisis leading up to Brexit to argue that one of the driving factors for recent discontent is neoliberalism. By examining the different actors and their critiques of the status quo, I highlight that, while there may be shared grievances, the diverse groups who express anger with the current situation do not share common explanations or solutions.

Brexit's heterogeneous supporters

In analysing Brexit and Trump, and the rise of authoritarian populism elsewhere, it is common to read of how those left-behind by globalisation have lashed out in anger against the current political elites and wider system, which they believe has impoverished them. Such analyses are hardly new; and scholars, including Kriesi and others, have analysed the so-called winners and losers of globalisation in the 2000s, noting the growing nativism, xenophobia and anti-immigrant claims (Kriesi *et al*., 2008). Since the Brexit referendum, there have been a bevy of post-mortem reports. One such report, commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, explains the Brexit vote by arguing that those on the margins of society, living on low incomes, with few qualifications and without the skills required to prosper in the modern economy, were more likely than others to vote 'Leave'. According to the report's authors, 'Groups in Britain who have been "left behind" by rapid economic change and feel cut adrift from the mainstream consensus were the most likely to support Brexit' (Goodwin and Heath, 2016: 3). While emphasising the socio-economic drivers for Leave, they also acknowledge that educational attainment, geography, attitudes, and values all matter. In particular, they argue that low educational qualifications, socially conservative views, and a very strong sense of English identity predisposed people towards Leave (Goodwin and Heath, 2016: 18). Kaufman argues against the economic inequality argument, maintaining it was all about culture and attitudes. Drawing on the British Election Study 2015 Internet Panel and census data, he unequivocally concludes that, 'all told, the Brexit story is mainly about values, not economic inequality' (Kaufman, 2016). Another report, this one published by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, finds that Brexit was overwhelmingly supported by those on the right, and that UK far-right groups 'gained significant number of followers' from the Brexit campaign (Smith and Colliver, 2016: 1). While Smith and Colliver acknowledge that the Leave campaign 'actively sought to distance itself from the UK far-right movements', they maintain that the xenophobic narratives 'resonated and gained traction with communities who felt they had lost control, or simply lost out, because of national immigration policy', adding that inevitably 'parallels were drawn between the narratives of the two' (Smith and Colliver, 2016: 2). But this is hardly the whole story. In addition to those so-called losers of globalisation, Brexit supporters included many winners, including those with high educational qualifications and incomes. Nick Clegg, the former leader of the Liberal Democrats, describes the elite Brexiteers as follows:

> . . . the hedge-fund managers for whom EU-wide regulations are an overburdensome [sic] hindrance to their financial aspirations . . . the owners and editors of the rightwing press, whose visceral loathing of the EU has shaped their respective papers' tone and coverage for decades; the Tory backbenchers, many of whom still inhabit a preposterous past in which Britannia still rules the waves and diplomacy is best conducted from the royal yacht; a handful of multi-millionaire businessmen who have, in some cases over thirty years or more, bankrolled whichever party, or politician, stands on the most aggressive EU-bashing platform (Wintour, 2017)

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Finally, alongside the so-called left-behind and the financial elites that supported Brexit, there was also a group of Brexit supporters on the political left who are sometimes referred to as Lexiteers. Lexiteers by and large reject the xenophobic anti-immigration arguments which they ascribe to the right-wing 'big business' and 'little-Englander' Leave campaigns (Choonara, 2015: 3), arguing instead that their opposition to the EU is based on socialist principles and is based on advancing workers' rights and anti-racist policies. According to the chair of the Left Leave group, Brexit supporters on the left reject the 'anti-foreigner kind of nonsense' (Zagoria, 2017) and base their support for Brexit on the premise that the EU is promoting an anti-democratic neoliberal agenda which advances 'market rather than collective planning' (Tuck, 2016). They cite the EU's support for free movement as 'based on a desire to create a European-wide labour force that can be profitably exploited by capital' (Choonara, 2015: 3) and argue that post-EU immigration controls would put the interests of British workers first. One such Lexit supporter, Labour MP Frank Field, argues in *The Guardian* for greater immigration control in the following way. He writes,

> It's not racist to worry about this [immigration control] as some of my colleagues seem to think, and there's broad support for more control of immigration among all Britain's ethnic minority communities . . . a post-EU immigration regime can support our public services, expand our economy and also deliver humanitarian objectives; but because it will be under our control there won't be unexpected and excessive pressures on our schools, hospitals and public infrastructure (Field, 2016).

Harvard academic and Lexit supporter Richard Tuck similarly argues that a planned welfare state, which is 'the traditional heart of modern left-wing politics . . . is rendered virtually impossible if Britain stays in the EU since no one will have any idea of the population numbers' (Tuck, 2016). Lexiteers maintain that the referendum has 'broken the neoliberal consensus, and alerted the establishment to the polling power of the "left behind"' (Buxton, 2017).

As I have discussed in this section, it is far too simplistic to describe all Brexit supporters as ascribing to a particular ideological position or indeed of being driven by common concerns or grievances. A more nuanced interpretation should consider how Brexit wasn't just the outcome of the so-called left behind voting out of anger and fear, but to consider how the issue became a flashpoint for varied grievances. Moreover, what is often ignored in the discussions about the so-called winners and losers of globalisation is that many of the people who are now protesting in the streets, not for Brexit necessarily and often against it, are people who in recent years would have been described as the winners of globalisation. As Della Porta writes, '. . . they are the well-educated and the mobile, once described as globalization's 'winners', but far from enjoying such a self-perception today' (Della Porta, 2017: 30); and, as Streeck maintains, in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis '. . . the number of "globalization losers" has been steadily growing' (Streeck, 2017: 161). 'Left-behind' is a fluid rather than a static category and even those who may have in the past been described as 'winners' of globalisation (i.e., young, middle-class, university graduates) are now are facing increased precarity in the job market, growing personal (including student) debt, and even relative poverty.

Indeed, analysis of recent protests movements have repeatedly illustrated how the 2008 crisis and the ensuing austerity negatively impacted a wide set of the population,

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including young people, pensioners, public sector workers, and those who were previously considered middle class (Joya, 2011; Tejerina *et al.*, 2013; Matsaganis and Leventi, 2014; Simiti, 2017). For example, drawing on my own research with anti-austerity activists in London, I found that many activists who identified as middle class expressed a deep concern for growing inequality, precarity, loss of opportunities, and lack of voice. Charlie,[1] who at the time of the interview was in his early thirties and was employed in a NGO, said,

> I and a lot of my friends [in group] are between twenty to thirty years old . . . They are highly educated, they feel highly passionate, a sense of despondency, a sense of betrayal, hopelessness – about the climate, about the war in Iraq and the complete failure on the part of the political leadership to in any way challenge the status quo and make fundamental changes in people's lives.

William, a professional in his late fifties, was active in the Occupy movement which he characterised as 'a very broad church of dissatisfaction', adding '. . . the overriding message of Occupy from its spontaneity and the way it rolled across the globe was just a demonstration of anger at just the way we're being governed and manipulated'. During the fieldwork (2013-2015) Brexit was not mentioned by any respondent and it did not feature prominently in the mainstream press. I cannot, nor do I wish to speculate, how William, Charlie, or indeed any of our respondents voted in the referendum. Rather, I wish to illustrate that the discontent with the status quo was shared widely and that Brexit emerged from this context of discontent, anger, and indignation. While the anti-austerity movements, both in London and elsewhere, sought to be inclusive (Ishkanian and Glasius, 2017) as noted by the activists quoted in this article, there were those who did not engage or join. I do not wish to speculate on the reasons behind a lack of participation, but it is important to keep in mind that non-engagement in a movement or collective action does not mean absence of discontent or grievances.

Therefore, rather than writing off those with grievances – as losers, the left-behind, and even more problematically, as 'deplorables' (Clinton, 2016) or 'victims' who are 'fearful, angry, and resentful of what their societies have done for them and to them' (Appadurai, 2017: 2) – a more robust and empirically grounded analysis is required to understand the complex political reconfigurations and shifting alliances which have contributed to Brexit and the rise of Trump. This in turn can inform our thinking of how social policy can mitigate social conflicts and advance greater social justice and cohesion. If nothing is done to recognise and address the social and economic drivers that contribute to rising discontent, populist politicians from Trump to Farage will continue to tap into the anger by creating a divisive politics of us versus them.

The trouble with neoliberalism

Brexit exposed deep fissures and cleavages in British society and, as many argue, neoliberal policies have not only deepened inequality and poverty but are also deeply anti-democratic (Merkel, 2014a; Streeck, 2014; Brown, 2015). While I agree with those who argue that we should embrace a 'more nuanced approach' which views neoliberalism as a 'mobile technology' or 'logic' which mutates as it travels rather than 'a fixed set of attributes with predetermined outcomes' (Ong, 2007: 3; Collier, 2012), most authors

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writing about neoliberalism agree that, at a minimum, neoliberalism entails a focus on individual responsibility rather than collective meeting of needs (George and Wilding, 1994; Dwyer, 1998; MacGregor, 2005; Harvey, 2007) and that, as an ideological position, neoliberalism is characterised by a hostility to the 'public realm', representing instead policies which are a combination of anti-welfarism and anti-statism (Clarke, 2004: 30).

The global wave of protests of the early 2010s were as much concerned with the economy as with the political system (Ishkanian and Glasius, 2018); moreover, as already stated, they brought together individuals with shared grievances around the status quo. As such, they can be seen as embodying what Laclau and Mouffe call 'diverse antagonisms and points of rupture' (1985: 191). Contrary to those who argue that democracy is in decline or that there is fatigue with democracy (Merkel, 2014b; Plattner, 2015; Appadurai, 2017), through our comparative research with movements in Europe, North Africa, and in Asia, my colleagues and I found that activists almost universally rejected representative democracy as a sufficient model but that, rather than feeling fatigued with democracy, they wanted more, *real* democracy: which they understood as being a process-oriented notion of active citizenship that places strong demands, both on the citizens themselves and on those at all levels who govern them (Ishkanian and Glasius, 2017). They argued that democracy means having a voice, a right, and even a responsibility to participate in politics and the public life of the commons. Moreover, they developed more demanding practices and ideas of what democracy should mean: ideas that are not idiosyncratic, but resonate with each other and with certain writings in political theory. Activists in these movements also developed solidarity and self-help practices, which were intended as political interventions, rather than philanthropic acts of charity, through which people began to confront the state with its failure to meet its responsibilities to its citizens, including, but not limited to, providing basic services. These forms of solidaristic action represent an inherent rejection and subversion of the neoliberal logic of individual responsibility that goes well beyond the expression of grievances.

A number of scholars writing about the resilience of neoliberalism argue that civil society actors, and in particular social movements, have an important role to play in articulating challenges against neoliberal ideas and policies (Crouch, 2011; Peck *et al*., 2012; Thatcher and Schmidt, 2013). Yet critical scholars who have examined the relationship between democracy and neoliberalism maintain that democracy will be in crisis until such time as the problems created by capitalism and neoliberalism are addressed (Crouch, 2011; Keane, 2009; Merkel, 2014a; Streeck, 2014; Della Porta, 2015). While they recognise the importance of movements in challenging prevailing views, they also acknowledge how inequalities of power between movements and market and state institutions may limit their impact (Brown, 2015; Badiou and Gauchet, 2016).

My colleagues and I have examined and analysed the driving factors, demands, repertoires of action, and mobilising strategies and practices elsewhere (Glasius and Ishkanian, 2015). In this article, I focus on the reality that, however inclusive and participatory the movements sought to be, they cannot be said to have been entirely representative. Indeed, the activists we interviewed in London spoke of their concerns that many who were worst hit by the crisis and subsequent austerity policies were not very engaged with or integrated into the anti-austerity struggle. Luke, early fifties, who was involved in a grassroots anti-austerity campaign and is also a trade union activist described the growing poverty and inequality in his London borough as providing 'fertile ground' for the rise of the far right. He said,

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> I am not saying there is no racism, it is latent... Look, there are lots of people living on these council estates who are very isolated and very angry. These [far right] forces could easily organize them. It's ripe for organizing. Some people in the Labour Party are what I call bleeding heart liberals and they don't see any of that. But I am from a working class background and I know that it could happen. I just hope it never does happen.

Jack, early twenties, who was involved in the student movement against fees and cuts argued that, while students had an outlet to express their anger, he worried that '... the white working class don't have those opportunities, might associate with a hooliganistic type of nationalist politics.... Politics in the EU will become a lot more populist, without a doubt.' For Mia, late forties, the shift to the right was hardly new. She said,

> If you look at what's happening across Europe fascism is growing. People might not think the EDL [English Defence League] is much of a threat, they are just football hooligans on the street, but actually they are growing as a result of the crisis. They are allowed to promote the hatred out in the street, they are given lots of air time on TV... What that does is fit into people who already have racist views who are looking for someone to blame because their job has been cut and their home is under threat. They are struggling and things are hard, they are looking for a scapegoat.

While anti-austerity groups in England have raised concerns around the impacts of cuts on different groups of people, highlighted alternatives to austerity (e.g. cracking down on tax evasion), and demanded the reversals of the cuts, Government has yet to substantively change course from the austerity agenda. This agenda, which was introduced by the 2010–2015 Coalition Government, led to the largest welfare spending cuts since 1921–24 (Lupton *et al.*, 2013). Hence while we can analyse and argue over why the 2010+ movements emerged, if we consider, purely from a policy perspective, what these movements achieved, then it is clear their impact has been very limited (Ishkanian and Glasius, 2017). Movements have shaped the political discourses and wider public discussions, issues such as inequality and tax justice, but apart from contributing to shifts in public discourse, there is little evidence that they are having a direct impact at the level of social policy; albeit I recognise that impact as such is difficult to measure and attribute.

Jeremy Corbyn's rise and election as Labour party leader and his explicit anti-neoliberal stance has revitalised many on the left, yet he faces challenges from the Conservatives as well as those in his own party. Moreover, like Bernie Sanders in the US, Corbyn is often accused of promoting a type of left or socialist populism, which critics argue lacks fiscal constraint and discipline and is anti-business (Wolf, 2017). What we find then is that, despite the growing discontent, it remains difficult to challenge the position of TINA [there is no alternative] and to formulate a critique of neoliberalism, without being branded a regressive socialist who is reprimanded for '... being culturally and morally backward' (Streeck, 2017: 164)

Post-Brexit: what role for social policy

In this article, I examined the relationship between social movements, rising social discontent, Brexit, and social policy. Contextualising my discussion in the literatures on social movements and social policy, I examined how political and socio-economic developments since the 2008 financial crisis contributed to and helped create a fertile

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ground for Brexit. In discussing the context within which Brexit occurred, I critically examined the assumption that Brexit was a result of the losers of (or those left behind by) globalisation and problematised the accounts which proclaim the death of democracy and the rise of the age of authoritarianism. Instead, I considered why and how actors from across the ideological spectrum supported Brexit and the sources of discontent that created a fertile ground from which Brexit emerged.

While acknowledging that social movements and activists have had limited impact in shaping the social policy agenda in the post-2008 period, nonetheless civil society actors, including both movement activists as well as voluntary sector professionals, are engaged in campaigning for the recognition of unmet needs and for fairer redistribution, by also highlighting emerging inequalities of experience, of opportunity, and outcome.

Gramsci famously used the term 'interregnum' to describe a period of uncertainty during which the old system or order is dying and the new has yet to emerge. He wrote, 'The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear' (Gramsci, 1978: 276). In other words, we are in a liminal, transition period, where there is a great deal of uncertainty, but also upheavals and danger. As I write this, we are in the last days of 2017 where despite months of discussions, there is hardly any further clarity about where Brexit negotiations are headed and how a whole host of issues will be resolved. All we know is that there is no guide map, that we are in uncharted waters, and given the political turbulence around Brexit negotiations, it is useless to speculate what Brexit will in the end mean. And yet, the grievances that initially brought people into the squares and streets in protest – both with the political and economic status quo – have not been resolved and, in some instances, they have been exacerbated. And as we have seen, drawing on the same sense of discontent with the status quo, populist politicians and parties have grown stronger. Given the continuing discontent, anger, and the fact movements keep coming up against unresponsive state structures, we can expect recurrent political mobilisation, despite the claims of democracy fatigue and despondency. So, the question remains, how will social policy makers respond?

The editors of this themed section argue that the current problems in Europe, such as the crisis in democratic representation and the Brexit vote among other developments (e.g. the ongoing sluggish economic performance, inhumane treatment of migrants and refugees, etc.) stem from the overall neoliberal direction of the EU, and especially, the influence of Anglo-American countries in this regard (Corbett and Walker, 2018). They suggest that neglecting the social has weakened the progressive and integrative role of social policy over the last forty years (2018). Recalling the 1997 Amsterdam declaration on social quality of Europe and judging from the anti-austerity protests which emerged across Europe from 2011 onwards, including in Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and the UK, it is clear that although European social scientists raised the alarm, policy makers have not necessarily been listening and that they have not done enough over the past twenty years to '. . . create a social policy that has its own independent rationale and legitimacy so as to counterbalance the dominance of economic and monetary policy within the EU' (Walker, 1998: 109).

Note

1 All names have been changed and pseudonyms are used to refer to the interviewees.

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