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Pasculli, L.

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Seeds of systemic corruption in the post-Brexit UK

Purpose – This article assesses the risks of systematisation of corruption in the UK following the Brexit referendum.

Design/methodology/approach – The article applies theoretical and empirical findings of criminological, social, psychological, economic and legal research on the causes of systemic corruption to the socio-institutional developments following the Leave vote.

Findings – The events surrounding the referendum confirm that the resort to corrupt practices is normalised in certain sectors of the British institutions, business and media and that socio-political processes activated by the Leave vote and inadequate UK policy- and lawmaking can aggravate the situational and socio-psychological enablers of systemic corruption. Effective solutions must go beyond mere anti-corruption laws and address deeper social issues.

Research limitations/implications – The article focuses only on some of the major situational and socio-psychological causes of systemic corruption, including the unintended criminogenic effects of the law. More interdisciplinary research is required to address other causes, such as historical and cultural factors.

Practical implications – The findings of this article can inspire practical solutions by policymakers and future research.

Social implications – The article contributes to raise social awareness and stimulate public discussion on systemic corruption in the UK and on the consequences of the referendum on public and private integrity.

Originality/value – The article offers the first systematic analysis of the effects of Brexit and the referendum on corruption through an integrated interdisciplinary approach to systemic corruption in the UK.

Article classification – Research paper

Keywords – Brexit, Integrity, Systemic Corruption, Anomie, Legitimacy, Politics, Lobbying, Press, Media, Immigration, Corruption proofing, Lawmaking

Introduction

The suggestion that the United Kingdom (UK) is corrupt – let alone systemically corrupt – can scandalise many or sound like a provocation, given the country's global standing against corruption. Nevertheless, in the last few years, the taboo of corruption in the UK (Barrington, 2016a) has been seriously shattered by the exposure of corrupt practices embedded in certain environments of the public and private sectors (Whyte, 2015). The Brexit referendum and the following events provide both a case study and an opportunity to assess the risks of systematisation of corruption in the UK. The purpose of this article is to perform such an assessment and to recommend possible remedies. To do so, we will adopt an interdisciplinary approach integrating different explanations of systemic corruption elaborated by scholars from different fields.

In the first part of the article, we will provide a definition of systemic corruption as a phenomenon departing from existing legal definitions, which are found to be too narrow (Ellis and Whyte, 2016; Beetham, 2015). We will also illustrate some of the major situational and socio-psychological causes of systemic corruption combining criminological explanations of crime and corruption with the sociological theories of anomie and strain, the psychological theory of legitimacy and the more recent theory of the criminogenic effects of the law. In the

second part of the article, we will examine the social, political and legal developments following the referendum in the light of the above theoretical framework and some relevant economic studies to verify the claim that corruption is actually getting systemic in the UK and to identify the risks of such systematisation posed by the processes triggered by the referendum. In the final part, we will present our findings and make our proposals to mitigate such risks.

Systemic corruption and its causes

Systemic corruption is the normalised resort, across different levels and sectors of society, to abuses of entrusted private or public power as ordinary means to pursue personal interests. As such, it consists not only of criminal conduct, such as bribery offences, but of any other illegal or even unethical behaviours (Grasso, 2017; Huisman and Vande Walle, 2010; Gray, 2013), such as collusive relationships, influences, and arrangements, which, while not being necessarily illegal, can enable corrupt schemes and are perceived as corrupt by the general population (Ellis and Whyte, 2016; Beetham, 2015; Johnston, 2005; Doig and Theobald, 2000). Systemic corruption encompasses not only the grand corruption of powerful elites but also petty corruption and minor breaches of integrity committed by public officers, private citizens and businesses. Systemic corruption is a relational concept: it can refer to any socio-organisational system, such as the national system as a whole or any of its sub-systems (the politico-institutional system, the system of business and finance, the health system, the system of education etc). The causes of systemic corruption are many and complex. We will distinguish between situational causes and socio-psychological causes, but, in reality, the line between the two categories is often blurred due to their continuous interaction, as the following paragraphs demonstrate.

Motivations, opportunities and normalisation

Situational causes can be identified not only, like for any other crime, in motivations and opportunities (cf. Cantor and Land, 1985; Coleman, 1987; Coleman, 1992; Clarke, 2016), but also in specific patterns of normalisation of such behaviours (Cressey 1953; Ashforth and Anand, 2003). As symbolic constructions defining certain goals and activities as desirable, motivations are influenced not only by situational circumstances (Coleman, 1987) but by deeper socio-cultural evolutions, as we are about to see. Opportunities are situations that make certain behaviours possible or more tempting (Coleman, 1987; Clarke, 2016). They include, amongst others, the lack of adequate controls and access to suitable victims, often facilitated by the position of power of the perpetrator (Cohen and Felson, 1979; Graycar and Sidebottom, 2012; Graycar and Masters, 2018; Klitgaard, 1988). The normalisation of corruption takes place through mutually reinforcing processes of rationalisation (Cressey, 1953), institutionalisation and socialisation (Ashforth and Anand, 2003). Rationalisation is the neutralisation of the moral and cognitive dissonances caused by the corrupt behaviour; institutionalisation is the embedding and routinising of corrupt practices in organisational structures and processes; socialisation is the inducement of newcomers to view corruption as permissible or even desirable, also through organisational learning processes (Prabowo, Sriyana and Syamsudin, 2018).

Anomie and institutional illegitimacy

On a deeper socio-psychological level, systemic corruption is caused by a state of anomie and by a lack of legitimacy of the law and the institutions. Anomie is a condition in which the excessive socio-cultural emphasis on material goals of success, which aggravates the human tendency to unlimited desires (Durkheim, 1897) and causes individual strains (Agnew, 2006), is not balanced by the availability of legitimate means to attain them (Merton, 1938; Merton, 1968) and by effective institutional efforts to promote alternative models of self-worth

(Messner and Rosenfeld, 2013; Messner and Rosenfeld, 1997). Anomie generally occurs in periods of great and rapid change, when society fails to adjust individual passions to new standards. Relevant changes can be not only the worsening of economic conditions, which may motivate individuals accustomed to a better wellbeing to maintain it through unlawful means, but also the improvement of financial opportunities, which may foster greed and unlimited desires (Durkehim, 1897). At a psychological level, anomie entails a shared perception that a particular social system is falling apart, which results from a perception of the “disintegration” of social trust and moral standards and of “disregulation” – that is, the illegitimacy and ineffectiveness of society’s leadership (Teymoori, Bastian and Jetten, 2017). Such perceptions undermine the legitimacy of the law and the institutions and are the basis for the processes of rationalisation, institutionalisation and socialisation. When people stop believing that the law and the authorities operate within an appropriate ethical framework and are fair and effective they are less likely to obey to their prescriptions (Jackson *et al.*, 2014; Jackson *et al.*, 2012; Darley *et al.*, 2004; Tyler, 2001; Tyler, 1990).

The corruption of the law

A less perceptible cause of systemic corruption is the so-called “corruption of the law” (Pasculli, 2017; Pasculli, forthcoming), which occurs when the law itself and the policies behind it become a factor of corruption and its systematisation. This can be either the intended result of undue political and private influences on the processes of policy- and lawmaking (Giavazzi and Barbieri, 2014) or, more often and more insidiously, the unintended result of poor policy- and lawmaking (Albrecht and Kilchling, 2002; Savona *et al.*, 2006a; Hoppe, 2014; Kotchegura, 2018). The corrupting effects of the law can act both on a situational level and on a socio-psychological level. At a situational level, legal provisions can strengthen criminal motivations, provide opportunities for crime, or undermine the effectiveness of controls (Pasculli, 2017). Scholars have identified a set of typical regulatory situations which carry crime risks: (1) the introduction of burdensome obligations; (2) the introduction of concessions on taxes, fees or obligations; (3) the introduction of grants, subsidies, or compensation schemes; (4) the introduction or increase of costs of legal goods; (5) the prohibition, restriction or reduction of the availability of demanded products or services; (6) the introduction, removal of or other changes to a law enforcement capacity; (7) the attribution of regulatory powers to public officials (Morgan and Clarke, 2006). At a deeper, socio-psychological level, any source of law and any institution in charge with its implementation can more or less inadvertently facilitate the processes of rationalisation, institutionalisation and socialisation of corrupt behaviours. Counterproductive or unreasonable policies, unnecessarily burdensome obligations, inaccessible or obscure provisions, unfair or delayed administrative or judicial decisions, ineffective law enforcement, all contribute to undermining the social trust of the law and the institutions and the perception of their legitimacy. This, in turn, erodes the generalised willingness to spontaneously observe their prescriptions and provides convenient patterns of self-excuse. The binding and abstract nature of the law and its general applicability fosters the widespread institutionalisation of corrupt practices based on flawed legal provisions (Pasculli, 2017).

The referendum, Brexit and the systematisation of corruption in the UK

The UK is not generally considered systemically corrupt. The public perception of corruption has been steadily reducing in the last few years and the UK has been climbing the rankings in Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index, jumping from the 14th place in 2014 to the 8th in 2017 (Transparency International, 2018). The widespread idea of incorrupt UK institutions is supported by the integrity of many public servants (Foster-Gilbert, 2017). The UK has an exemplary standing in the global fight against corruption (cf. EU Commission,

2014; OECD, 2017; Transparency International, 2017a and 2017b) and a number of anti-corruption measures taken in the last few months – such as the Anti-Corruption Strategy 2017-2022, the Criminal Finances Act 2017, the Money Laundering, Terrorist Financing and Transfer of Funds (Information on the Payer) Regulations 2017 (SI 2017/692), the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018, the launch of the International Anti-Corruption Coordination Centre (IACCC), and the recent announcement of a new national economic crime centre (HM Government, 2017) – have dissipated the worries that after the Brexit vote anti-corruption might slip down the list of the government’s priorities (Barrington, 2016b; Hough, 2017). Relatively effective law enforcement and the independent judiciary provide adequate controls to contrast petty corruption.

Such optimistic perceptions, however, are challenged by the recent exposure of various corruption scandals. Some studies even suggest that corruption is endemic in the private and public sector and sustained by a culture of impunity (Whyte, 2015). The apparent contradiction between public perceptions and scholarly research can be solved – at least partially – considering our definition of systemic corruption. Those who point at the systemic character of certain corrupt practices in the UK usually refer to grand corruption schemes perpetrated by powerful members of public institutions or private organisations, such as for instance the collusion between politics and the press (Cathcart, forthcoming), while we could find no evidence that petty corruption and a culture of illegality is widespread across public servants and the general population. It appears, therefore, that while corruption can be considered systemic at relatively high levels of certain sectors of British public and private life (namely, some areas of political power, of the press and of the financial and corporate environment), it is not yet affecting the national system as a whole. (This is not to suggest, however, that the grand corruption of the powerful elites is not harmful: on the contrary, its consequences can be devastating for the UK population, for other countries and for the global democratic governance: see Whyte, 2015). The analysis of the political and social developments surrounding the Brexit referendum seems to support such impression, but at the same time reveals the emergence of factors that might easily lead to the systematisation of corruption at a national level.

Post-Brexit anomie

The UK is affected, like many other countries, by a chronic state of anomie determined by industrialisation and globalisation (cf. Durkheim, 1897; Passas, 2000) and manifested in the inequality that affects the British society (McCann, 2016), which was one of the major reasons behind the Leave vote (cf. Dorling, 2016; Goodwin and Heath, 2016; Bell, 2016; Los *et al.*, 2017; McCombie and Spreafico, 2017). Rapid changes to Britain’s economic and social structure in the last decades have pushed to the margins those who lack the education and skills required to thrive amid the modern, post-industrial and globalised economy, together with relatively well-educated workers who lack the opportunity to take good jobs in the areas where they lived and feel marginalised in society (Ford and Goodwin, 2014; Goodwin and Heath, 2016; McCombie and Spreafico, 2017). In such a context, the outcome of the Brexit referendum is instigating other major and rapid socio-economic changes which have the potential to aggravate the anomic conditions of the country.

This is true irrespective of whether the effects of Brexit will be detrimental for the British economy or not, for, as we have seen, both improvements and deteriorations of financial conditions can be criminogenic. If, as predicted by many economists, Brexit will reduce trade opportunities (Van Reenen, 2016) and exacerbate regional inequality (McCombie and Spreafico, 2017), citizens and businesses might turn to illegal means to achieve their objectives. Increased poverty and unemployment and the disillusion of the frustrated promises of Brexiteers might increase the strains which many citizens have expressed through the Leave

vote and might motivate them to undertake criminal activities. New constraints and costs on trade with European countries, particularly in the “no deal” scenario, might induce UK businesses to circumvent them illegally. On the other hand, new business opportunities might as well generate opportunities for corruption. To pursue new trade prospects, UK investors and companies might be induced to neglect compliance and acquiesce or engage in corrupt practices solicited by firms or officials from more corrupt countries or to try to exert undue influences on policymakers (Inman, 2018). The risk will be higher if, as suggested by the Prime Minister (May, 2017), the UK will strike trade deals with countries, such as China, Brazil, India and the Gulf States, which are not well placed in the fight against corruption (Hough, 2017; Transparency International, 2018). Other opportunities for corruption concern lobbying. After the referendum, former political operatives and advisers have assumed roles in the lobbying industry or even set up their own firms (McTague, 2017). Obviously, this can open the doors to various collusive arrangements which frustrate the democratic processes of political representation and aggravate the perceptions of the disintegration of social trust and deregulation of social leadership typical of the anomic state, thus eroding the legitimacy of political institutions.

Unethical lobbying in the context of Brexit is an excellent example of the anomic condition which affects the British society. As the Prime Minister’s speeches on Brexit make clear (May, 2017 and 2018), the main objectives valued and pursued by the British government in leaving the EU are the usual materialistic goals of global liberalism, which are not counterbalanced by an equivalent institutional emphasis on alternative values such as solidarity, equality, integrity and accountability, as we shall see in the next paragraphs. However, the government is failing to fulfil the promise to provide efficient means to achieve them and to regulate these means and drawing a clear line between what is legal and what is not. Revolving doors and other questionable forms of lobbying which are unequivocally considered corrupt by the public, for instance, are perfectly legal in the UK (Ellis and Whyte, 2016). Similarly, trading in influence, that is the abuse of real or supposed influence on political decision-making in exchange for undue advantages (so-called “peddling”), is not a criminal offence in the UK, despite its criminalisation is imposed by both the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and the Council of Europe’s Criminal Law Convention on Corruption. Some forms of trading in influence can be prosecuted as bribery offences under the Bribery Act 2010 or under any of the 112 offences relating to political donations established by the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, but such a fragmentary framework does not help the development of a clear social perception of what is acceptable and what is not (cf. Transparency International, 2016), hinders effective prosecution and provides an easy avenue for patterns of normalisation.

Political delegitimisation and the press

The Leave vote was an expression of the perceived illegitimacy of political elites rooted on the departure between the values of such elites and the values of the “left behind” (Goodwin and Heath, 2016). Other developments in British politics preceding and following the referendum demonstrate the gradual erosion of various constitutive elements of institutional legitimacy: integrity, fairness, effectiveness and accountability. As for integrity and fairness, the Leave campaign was stained with deliberate exaggeration, half-truths and untruths (cf. Major, 2017). The deliberate insistence of the then Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson MP on the misleading figure of £350 million per week allegedly paid by the UK to the EU despite the rebukes of the Institute for Fiscal Studies (Emmerson, 2017) and the UK Statistics Authority (Full Fact Team, 2017) is one notorious example (Cohen, 2016). Moreover, the physiological conflict intrinsic to political life has degenerated to pathological levels, causing intolerance of opposite views and condemnation of dissenters, as it happened in the case of conservative MPs who, after

voting against their party on amending the EU Withdrawal Bill to subject the final Brexit deal to parliamentary approval, have been called “rebels” or “mutineers” by a certain press and have received death threats (Asthana and Stewart, 2017). As for effectiveness, Brexit advocates have neither proposed a serious political programme for leaving the EU, nor assumed any responsibility in conducting the leaving process (Bush and Lewis, 2016), while those in charge with it – ironically guided by a remain supporter, the Prime Minister Theresa May MP (May, 2016) – struggle to find viable solutions, much to the frustration of both leave and remain supporters. As for accountability (which is a function of both integrity and effectiveness), no serious institutional action has been taken to expose, condemn and sanction unfair and unethical practices – not even in the most macroscopic cases of misrepresentation.

In this scenario, the press and the media play a fundamental role. The sensationalist mystifications and mockeries perpetrated by tabloids and other media can destroy the institutional legitimacy and dramatically alter democratic processes. Branding the High Court judges who issued the decision in the *Miller* case [1] “enemies of the people”, as the Daily Mail did (Phipps, 2018), undermines public trust in the judiciary and threatens its independence. Accusing EU representatives to be attempting to “punish” Britain (Scotto di Santolo, 2018) through restrictive trade conditions might contribute to delegitimise the future laws regulating such conditions and to facilitate the rationalisation, institutionalisation and socialisation of practices to circumvent them. Things get even more disquieting when one considers that the papers that are mostly responsible for such misconduct are backed by powerful lobbyists (Cathcart, 2016). The second Leveson inquiry on the British press was recently cancelled also thanks to collusive relationships between politicians and the press, in what has been defined “a landmark moment in the corruption of British public life” (Cathcart, forthcoming). This confirms that corruption is already endemic at least at certain levels of the British politics and press.

The unintended corrupting effects of policy- and lawmaking after the referendum

Brexit is having a considerable impact on lawmaking. On the short term, the UK will need new legislation to address the immediate regulatory consequences of withdrawal. The European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 plays an important role in this respect. On a longer term, the UK will need new regulations to shape the relationships with the EU and new international allies. Both these lawmaking processes entail corruption risks. Sections 8 and 9 of the EU (Withdrawal) Act confer on ministers the power to make regulations to deal with deficiencies arising from withdrawal, comply with international obligations and implement the withdrawal agreement. Such regulations may make any provision that could be made by an act of Parliament. In other words, the Bill contains powers to make changes – with some exceptions – to current primary and secondary legislation by statutory instruments which do not require the full scrutiny of Parliament (so-called Henry VIII clauses) (Barnard, 2017). Some of these are likely to create the situations identified by Morgan and Clarke as crime/corruption risk indicators (Morgan and Clarke, 2006). The Act clearly states that the regulations can provide for new functions and new authorities, which might entail attributing new regulatory powers to public officials (indicator n. 7), as well as variously affecting law enforcement capacities (n. 6). They might well introduce new or more burdensome obligations (n. 1), as well as new concessions (n. 3) or restrictions to the access to goods and services (n. 5). On a socio-psychological level, the fact that such regulations are drafted by ministers, rather than the Parliament, increases the risks of poor lawmaking and lessens public participation in lawmaking, and ultimately diminishes their perceived legitimacy, according to the psychological patterns highlighted above.

A powerful example of possibly criminogenic law- and policymaking is provided by migration regulation. Migration has been one of the most powerful points of the Leave

campaign. The Prime Minister has promised a more restrictive immigration policy (May, 2017) favouring high-skilled individuals. The predominant focus on skills can be misleading and short-sighted. Research shows that while migration *per se* has no significant effect on corruption, immigration from corruption-ridden countries boosts corruption in the destination country (Dimant *et al.*, 2014). Empirical evidence suggests that high-skilled migrants from corrupt countries are not necessarily less corruptible than the average citizen in their home countries and might even export corrupt practices embedded in their original social system to the destination countries (Dimant *et al.*, 2013 and 2014). Restricting immigration on the sole basis of skill levels will be therefore not enough to prevent such an importation of corruption. The well-educated and well-off children of powerful oligarchs from systemically corrupt countries would satisfy the high-skills requirements to study and work in the UK, and, once in the country, they might perpetuate the corrupt habits and networks entrenched in their socio-cultural background.

Disembedding corruption in the UK. Conclusions and recommendations

Four main findings follow the above observations. First, the Brexit referendum and the Leave campaign have been affected and the leaving process is being affected by corrupt relationships and practices which were probably already embedded in sectors of the political system and the media (cf. Whyte, 2015; Cathcart, 2016; Cathcart, forthcoming). The facts surrounding the referendum, therefore, offer further evidential support to the suggestion that the resort to corrupt practices is normalised in certain environments. Second, the outcome of the referendum has triggered socio-political processes which can aggravate the situational and socio-psychological factors that are the major causes for the systematisation of corruption, thus increasing the risk of a further spreading of corrupt practices and culture across other areas of the British society. At a situational level, following the referendum, new motivations and opportunities for specific corrupt schemes, such as revolving door appointments and collusive arrangements with foreign business partners, are emerging. At a socio-psychological level, Brexit can exacerbate the anomic condition that affects the UK and further erode the perceived legitimacy of the law and the institutions. Third, despite its ever-enlarging anti-corruption armamentarium, there seem to be many loopholes in UK regulations which facilitate the normalisation of corruption, to the extent that behaviours considered corrupt by the public or by international law, such as revolving door appointments and trading in influences, are neither clearly criminalised nor prohibited at all. Moreover, there is little awareness of the possible criminogenic effects that some policies and laws might entail – particularly when they are driven by intuition rather than be based on up-to-date scientific research.

These findings lead us to suggest some possible remedies.

Restoring legitimacy

The British political class must restore institutional legitimacy. This cannot be achieved, as many politicians around the world pretend, just by trying to please the public at all costs: the difficulties in finding an agreement on the future relationships between the EU and the UK prove that it is impossible to please everybody and that populist decisions (i.e. the referendum) may irreversibly lead to a cul-de-sac. On the contrary, restoring legitimacy requires a most demanding effort to reinstate integrity, fairness, effectiveness and accountability. There should be comprehensive regulatory and disciplinary systems to responsabilise politicians, the media and lobbyists. Unacceptable political misconduct, such as the deliberate spreading of misinformation, should be sanctioned with disciplinary penalties, such as immediate resignations, and in the most serious cases should be prosecuted as a criminal offence. In some cases, the offences under the Fraud Offence Act 2006 might apply. The media must acknowledge their social responsibility and act accordingly. The effectiveness

of the regulatory framework of the British press should be seriously reconsidered. Freedom of the press should never mean freedom from ethical constraints. Deliberate unethical practices should be unequivocally qualified as unacceptable and appropriately penalised. Lobbying also needs better regulation (Barrington, 2016a). Corrupt lobbying practices should be prohibited by the law and sanctioned accordingly. As suggested by Transparency International (2015; 2017c), an independent body with appropriate resources and the power to impose adequate penalties should be established to supervise lobbying. Trading in influences should be unambiguously criminalised. Other than punitive measures, positive sanctions can be used to promote and reward ethical practices (cf. Bobbio, 1969). Finally, to be effective and fair, policies and laws must refrain from any irrationalism or intuitionism and be firmly grounded on verifiable research findings obtained through equally verifiable scientific methods and must be respectful of the tenets of the rule of law, including the highest standards of protection of individual rights and freedoms. The Post-Brexit high-skill migration policy is a clear example of the possible side-effects of a policy which is not informed by adequate research.

Corruption-proofing the law

The UK must become more aware of the possible corruptogenic effects of legislation and adopt appropriate mechanisms to prevent them. Eastern European countries adopt various mechanisms to proof draft legislation from the risks of corruption (Hoppe, 2014), which is inspired by the crime risk assessment mechanism (CRAM) proposed by some criminologists to crime-proof EU law (Savona *et al.*, 2006a; Savona *et al.*, 2006b; Calderoni *et al.*, 2012; Caneppele *et al.*, 2013). These “corruption-proofing” mechanisms are a special form of regulatory impact assessment adopting a risk-based approach similar to that suggested by international organisations to evaluate and mitigate the risks of corruption or other financial crimes in corporations or institutions (e.g. FATF, 2013; UN Global Compact, 2013). Such mechanisms generally entail a first phase in which experts assess corruption risks of proposed regulation and a second phase in which they make recommendations to amend it so as to remove any corruptogenic factors. The UK legislative processes are well suited to incorporate a corruption-proofing mechanism, perhaps shaped on the model of regulatory impact assessments. Such mechanism, however, is not a panacea: a shift of perspective is required to make policy- and lawmaking immune from corruption risk. While the complexity of the issues of contemporary globalising societies requires the specialised contribution of experts and technicians from different fields, a holistic view on the law is required when introducing new policies and regulation, to prevent corruptogenic gaps and contradictions between different areas of regulation. To this purpose, consultations are a precious instrument and they could well include specific questions concerning risks of corruption. Moreover, it is imperative that the experts appointed to advise on policy- and lawmaking are unbiased, highly qualified and operate with verifiable scientific methods. The appointment of impartial academics is certainly preferable to the appointment of self-proclaimed experts somehow connected to political parties.

Changing values

Regulatory solutions are necessary but not sufficient. To resolve the deepening anomic state affecting the British society a change of values is required. The institutions must commit to mitigating the excessive emphasis on financial goals and promoting the development of legal and social norms founded on alternative goals of self-worth and achievement based on the intrinsic value of the human being, which have been long neglected in substance – despite the many formal proclamations of civil, political, social and economic individual rights. Such a shift is all but easy and immediate. It requires resisting the global pressures coming from the neoliberal ideology serving the interests of powerful countries and corporations, to embrace an

idea of globalisation founded on the universal value of the human person. This, in turn, means promoting values of solidarity, diversity, equality and reversing the feelings of insecurity, fear and anger which then lead to populism, nationalism, xenophobia and discrimination, through concrete socio-economic measures to make British society more equal and provide everyone with the appropriate intellectual, psychological, social, and financial resources to achieve their needs and ambitions. The problem is that such reforms require a political willingness which is highly unlikely to grow spontaneously in a context in which politics are largely influenced, more or less legitimately, by the private interests of powerful corporations and financial elites. Against the temptations of defeatism or populism, the most formidable weapon remains knowledge. Intellectuals, including (but not limited to) academics, educators and journalists, have the duty-responsibility to produce verifiable knowledge about the realities of the system and its context and disseminate it through appropriate means of information and across all levels of education, so as to elevate the level of popular understanding and discourse about the above issues and develop the critical and rational attitude which is required to produce change (cf. Haney, 1993; Russell, 1939).

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Notes

- 1 *R (on the application of Miller) v Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union* [2016] EWHC 2768 (Admin).