

From order to chaos.

How the Brexit economic expert discourse articulates structural dissolution in times of COVID-19 crisis

Abstract

This paper analyses the transformation of identities and institutions of economic experts as politico-economic professionals brought about by the Brexit process between 2016 and 2020. In order to understand the transformation from order to chaos in times of COVID-19, a mixed methods approach is applied. In a first step, a discourse analysis of two competing letters from two different groups of economists is carried out. One letter was published by “Economists for Remain” before the Brexit referendum in 2016; the other letter was published by a group called “Economists for Free Trade”, arguing for leaving the EU. In a second step, we conduct a field and social space analysis of economists who signed the letters in order to analyse their social backgrounds and professional positions within the UK academic, media, political and economic system. The paper shows that members of both groups take significantly different positions. In a final step, we conducted interviews in 2019/20 with selected members of each group. Here we show how the professional system of UK economic governmentality enters a state of crisis. The paper finally argues that contemporary nationalist movements cannot provide a new social order. They lead societies into chaos instead.

Keywords: economic expert discourse, field and discourse analysis, Brexit, nationalism

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 crisis has accelerated, intensified and disclosed existing societal dynamics, inequalities and structural dislocations (Dörre, 2020; Lessenich, 2020). Brexit is a pertinent example in this respect because the UK experienced a dramatic Corona shock with a high number of victims, a huge economic downturn and a political response strategy by the pro-Brexit government that was experienced as scandalous, at least at the beginning. Later in the Corona crisis, the UK managed the vaccination of the population at a breath-taking pace. In the meantime, the Brexit negotiations took on a chaotic form and the exit from the European Union was finally “completed” on Christmas Day 2020, at least apparently because the “Deal” between the EU and the UK is de facto only the starting point for endless future negotiations about almost every single sector of the economy. Thus, while some scholars, politicians and journalists might have expected a displacement of Brexit’s effects on society by the Corona shock, today we clearly see instead intensification and overlapping of the Corona crisis and Brexit.

* *Jens Maesse* (jens.maesse@sowi.uni-giessen.de), University of Giessen, Germany.

Thierry Rossier (t.rossier@lse.ac.uk), London School of Economics, United Kingdom.

However, all the events mentioned here (failed Corona strategy, “successful” vaccination and chaotic Brexit negotiations, as well as questionable outcomes) can be seen as an indicator of contemporary British nationalism, because a coordinated response with other EU countries was no longer likely to happen in light of Brexit. Under nationalism, governments are expected to demonstrate to the people the newly acquired “sovereignty” even if an EU-wide coordinated process was seen as rational by member states soon after the crisis emerged. Yet, what form does this type of nationalism take? Does it include strong leadership and clear authority as is usually expected from authoritarian regimes and often proclaimed by nationalistic political movements? Or will it take on a completely different form, characterised by chaos, dissolution and collapse? We don’t yet know what the outcomes will be, but we can nevertheless indicate traces of a possible future, reflected by emerging social structures, discursive practices and people’s views.

This paper investigates the economic expert discourse of the Brexit debate between 2016 and 2020. Based on a mixed methods approach, covering discourse, field, and interview analyses, and a Foucault-Bourdieu framework (Bourdieu, 1989; Foucault, 1972; Maesse et al., 2021) to analyse UK economists, we show how professional positions, structural dissolutions and new identity projects emerged during the Brexit/COVID-19 period. This period was not only characterised by global crisis experiences (COVID-19) and institutional transformations (Brexit), it was also a time of anti-EU nationalist mobilisation within the UK (Koller et al., 2019) that also largely defined the relationship between the EU and the UK during the first two years of the pandemic. In order to understand and conceptualise this complex situation, which is overdetermined by parallel dynamics and still in flow, we propose a Foucault-Bourdieu framework that helps us to understand the interplay between the *stable socio-institutional structures* of academics and professionals living and working in the UK, and the *discursive identity dynamics* represented by media debates as well as individual daily life experiences. This approach helps us to better understand the complexities of social transformation. The economic experts that we analyse in this paper have no single identity or position. On the contrary, they are involved in complex and multi-layered processes of identity formation and position-taking (Volosinov, 1975).

In this article, we articulate a mixed methodology that serves our purpose to analyse economic expert discourse regarding the Brexit crisis. We first rely upon a qualitative analysis of the official statements of two groups of economists regarding Brexit, which enables us to understand the aggregated discursive positioning of those groups regarding that matter. Then, we proceed to a quantitative field analytical strategy in order to understand in more detail the individual positions of economic experts who take part in these groups, especially regarding their individual resources and assets in the academic, scientific and political systems in the UK and abroad. Finally, we again rely upon qualitative analysis of interviews carried out with a subsample of these experts to understand the relations between their positions

in the social space of economic expert discourse on Brexit and their discursive position-taking on the topic, this time at the individual level. These three layers of analysis allow us to articulate the structural, individual and discursive dimensions around narratives of structural dissolution in times of Brexit crisis.

Chapter 2 will briefly outline our theoretical approach. In the third chapter, we present our analytical strategy and methodology. Chapter 4 conducts a discourse analysis of two letters. “Economists for Brexit” published one letter, “Economists for Remain” the other. In Chapter 5, by means of a field-analytical strategy, we show where members of both groups of experts are positioned within the professional field of British economic experts. Chapter 6 is based on semi-structured narrative interviews with professors from both groups that were conducted between 2019 and 2020 (when it became clear that Brexit could no longer be stopped). In this chapter, we analyse the corrosion of identities among members from both camps. A Conclusion will discuss our findings. Nationalism in contemporary Europe cannot provide societies with a new order as a system of norms, rules and values. It produces chaos instead. In contrast to “anarchy” as a state of transition between one type of order to another, the notion of “chaos” points to the dissolution of an existing order, initiating an open-ended process of searching for new possibilities of reintegration in the global political economy.

2. Theory: A discourse-field approach to economic experts

The empirical analysis of economic expert discourses requires a special theoretical design for three reasons. First, economic experts take positions in different social fields located at the interface between academia, politics, the media and the economy (Fourcade et al., 2014; Lebaron, 2001). Second, economic experts are involved in different types of discourses and social networks that follow different linguistic, cognitive and social rules (Fitzgerald & O’Rourke, 2015; Pühringer & Griesser, 2020). Finally, closed borders, fixed boundaries and insurmountable obstacles do not separate both types of discourse, fields and networks. They are rather characterised by a poly-centric and trans-epistemic discourse-field architecture (Maesse, 2015a; Rossier et al., 2017; Schmidt-Wellenburg, 2017a).

The social studies of economics developed research designs that are particularly suitable for analysing such heterogeneous socio-discursive phenomena (Maesse et al. 2021). These designs include historical document studies for analysing the emergence of ideas, theories and methods (Morgan, 1990), social network analysis (Plehwe et al., 2007; Pühringer & Griesser, 2020) for the study of powerful paradigms and conflicts over economic policies, discourse studies for understanding argumentation patterns, position-taking and framing processes (Fitzgerald & O’Rourke, 2015; Maesse, 2015b; Pühringer & Hirte, 2015) and field analysis for the analysis of social positions (Lebaron, 2001; Rossier & Bühlmann, 2018; Schmidt-Wellenburg, 2017b).

Against this backdrop, this paper starts from two theoretical premises. First, economic experts obtain social positions such as academic positions and political positions, as well as positions in the media and the economy. These positions correspond to *field positions* (Bourdieu, 1989) since they reflect the societal role of economists in the British political-economic system and can be seen as indicators for the power and influence of an academic profession. Field positions develop over longer periods and they cannot change quickly. They provide actors and social groups with resources in order to get involved in different discourses. Second, next to such sociological field positions *discursive positions* exist (Foucault, 1972). These discursive positions cannot simply be reduced to social logics even if they are related to field positions. Discursive logics are expressed via public and informal communication, and they follow special rules and dynamics. Sometimes, social logics are homologous to discursive logics because the former are closely connected to the latter. Yet, in times of crisis and social transformation, discursive logics become more and more separated from a fixed field of social positions. Furthermore, while social positions do not change quickly over time, discursive logics can collapse and change in the short run. For example, a professor in economics might change her/his view on the world, his style of arguing or her attitudes within a few years, months or even weeks (= the discourse position); yet, his/her occupational positions at university, on editorial boards, in commissions and on ministerial boards will remain intact (= the social position). This “unevenness” of different positions and logics helps us to understand the social transformation that took place in the course of the Brexit discourse between 2016 and 2020.

Both premises are based on our theoretical understanding of society influenced by two different theories of power. While Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of social fields helps us to understand the sociological rules of professional fields based on institutional positions (capital), Michel Foucault’s concept of discourse makes possible the investigation of communicative forms of power based on knowledge regimes (identity).

To accompany the combination of these two theoretical premises, we rely upon three different methods and types of data in order to understand how the Brexit discourses of economic experts articulate special experiences with nationalist movements in the UK.

3. Analytical strategy and methods

Our analytical design consists of three different but interrelated methods: in a first step, we conduct a discourse analysis (Angermüller et al., 2014) of two letters signed by economists in favour of and in opposition to Brexit before the referendum on June 23rd 2016. The goal of this analysis is to show how two different discourse positions are constructed and how two different discursive identities are formed (Maesse, 2017). In a second step, we conduct a field analysis (Lebaron, 2001; Rossier et al., 2017) of actors that signed both letters in order to show to which

field regions and positions they belong in the British political-economic system. Here, we will analyse parts of the British power structure, the “state nobility”, as Bourdieu would have put it, in order to understand the relationship between social structure and discursive logic as well as the connection between a specific discourse position (created by the pre-Brexit discourse) and a field position (created in recent decades by the British university-state-system). Finally, we conduct semi-structured narrative interviews (Schütze, 1983) with selected economists who signed both letters in 2020. In these interviews, economists were asked about their experiences of the period between 2016 and 2020, how their life has changed and what they think about economists who signed the opposite letter (Maesse, 2018). The goal of this interview analysis is to understand how the discursive position changed after the referendum and the ongoing Brexit debate since then.

Before the referendum was held in June 2016, British economists entered the debate with two letters that we selected for our first analytical step. One letter was named “Britain more prosperous IN” (in favour of remain); 195 economists from different career stages, locations and reputations signed it: ten US-based and two UK-based Nobel Laureates, 17 UK-based senior professors and civil servants (most of them with a lord’s or a knight’s title, or a title from the Order of the British Empire), 78 UK-based professors, nine UK-based junior (assistant and associate) professors, 77 other UK-based academic economists and two US-based professors. This group was called “Economists for Remain”. The other initiative called “The economy after Brexit. Economists for Brexit”, (in favour of leave) was signed by 30 experts with background in academia, finance and politics, who later renamed themselves “Economists for Free trade” (17 economists, some without a professor title, and 13 advisors, without prominent ties to the economics discipline). According to a survey initiated by “Economists for Remain”, most economists in the UK were against Brexit and only a small minority supported the Brexit idea (Ipsos, 2016).

In a second step, to perform the field analysis, we selected a group of economists from among the signatories of the two letters. We retained the 17 economist members of “Economists for Free Trade”. We also retained the two UK-based Nobel Laureates, the 17 senior professors/ economists, the 78 professors and nine junior professor members of “Economists for Remain”. As the numbers of the two groups were particularly unbalanced (17 economists for Free trade vs 106 for Remain) and in order to have significant results from the group of economists in favour of Brexit, we decided to reduce the number on the “Remain” side. Therefore, we sampled half of the 78 UK professors (i.e. 39 individuals). To do so, we retained one out of two of the 78 professors on the list in alphabetical order, i.e. 39 individuals. We collected a list of characteristics of both groups that were formed from this list (ones who were part of the sample and ones who were not) and found that, at the aggregate level, the two groups had similar profiles in terms of gender, reputation of their university according to the REF ranking, scientific reputation (number of

citations in Google Scholar and ranking in RePEc) as well as citizenship (UK vs non-UK citizens). In the end, we stayed with 84 individuals (67 economists for Remain vs 17 for Free trade, i.e. 20 per cent of the total).

Then, adopting a prosopographical strategy (Rossier, 2019), we systematically collected a long list of biographical indicators until 2017 (including complete educational and professional trajectories) based upon a variety of Web sources (Linkedin, Wikipedia, ORCID, Prabook, personal and institutional webpages, newspapers, websites etc.) and other printed sources (British *Who's Who*, *Who's Who in Economics*), in addition to the information already available in both letters.

In order to analyse the space of economists for and against Brexit, we performed multiple correspondence analysis (MCA). MCA is a geometric method which reduces the complexity of multiple cross-tables between a list of active variables into factors or axes of opposition, where each individual and each modality of a variable is located as a point on each axis (Hjellbrekke, 2019; Le Roux & Rouanet, 2010; Rossier & Benz, 2021; Gautier Morin & Rossier, 2021). Table 1 lists our 32 active and two supplementary indicators.

Table 1: Active and supplementary variables for the MCA

Dimension	Variable
Active variables	
Academic positions	Head of Department
	University administration (except HoD)
	Fellow of an Academy
	Department's Research Excellence Framework (REF) ranking (at the time of the two letters)
Scientific recognition	Journal editor
	Prize(s)
	4* Journal in economics
	Number of citations in Google Scholar
	Rank in the RePEc ranking of economists
Elite integration	Nobility title
	Presence in the British Who's Who
	High civil servant
	Advisor to HM Treasury
	Advisor to the BoE
	Advisor to another public institution in the UK
	Advisor to a public administration abroad or an international organization
	UK politician

Dimension	Variable
Active variables	
Economic power	Company board
	Consultant for an investment bank
	Consultant for the industry
Think tanks	Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS)
	Centre for Economic Policy Research (CEPR)
	National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR)
	Other think tank in the UK
Trajectory	Slope of the academic trajectory (based upon the REF rankings of different university departments)
	Years until professor after studies
	Years as professor
	Number of countries
	Number of affiliations/institutions
	Number of roles/positions
Ascriptive characteristics	British citizenship
	Gender
Supplementary variables	
Letter	Free Trade or Remain
Specialty	According to Journal of Economic Literature (JEL) codes

Source: own research

In a third and final analytical part, after the Brexit referendum was won in favour of the “Leave” group and the Leave side won elections with the new Prime Minister Boris Johnson in Downing Street, we carried out interviews with seven economists from the Remain group (eight per cent of the 84 economists and ten per cent of the Remain side) and five members of the Free trade camp (six per cent of the total and 29 per cent of the Leave side). Here, we collected data via semi-structured narrative-biographical interviews (Schütze, 1983) and analysed them with enunciative methods (Fløttum, 2005). The idea of this methodology is to study a clearly defined period in people’s biography (four years from 2016 to 2020) and to raise particular topics (semi-structured). In a first step, the interviewees were asked to think back to the moment when they decided to sign a letter/join the initiative and to explain their motivations for that. In a second step, the interviewees were asked to tell us what has happened to them since that moment until today and how these events have influenced their professional life-world. In a third step, the interviewees were asked how they see those economists who signed the other initiative (Remainers were asked to talk about Leavers and vice versa).

4. Before the referendum: The discursive logic of Brexit discourse in two opposing letters

4.1 Background

The referendum about membership of the UK within the European Union was accompanied by different debates on “national sovereignty” and “independence”. These debates took place within different discursive contexts and they were characterised by various argumentative strategies, political calculations and public emotions (Davies, 2021; Hobolt, Leeper, Tilley, 2020; Richards, Heath, Elgenius, 2020). Flemmen & Savage (2017) show that the Brexit referendum situated itself within a long history of nationalist sentiment among the “white” population of the UK. However, contrary to the common view, while disadvantaged “white working class individuals” sometimes articulated a kind of anti-establishment nationalism, “white” elites, and especially their economic fraction, were most likely to manifest a kind of attraction to older imperial, potentially racist, identities (Savage, 2021; Patel & Connelly 2019), while their cultural fraction strongly opposed the “Leave” (Chan et al., 2020). In that sense, the Brexit referendum can be understood not as a nationalist reaction, but more as an attempt, by certain corporate fractions of the elites, to revive an “imperial legacy” (Bhambra, 2017).

While the “Remain” side in many cases argued in an instrumental and economically rational way for staying as a member of the EU by pointing to the advantages, many contributions of the “Leave” side were characterised by anti-migration attitudes, anti-establishment opposition, nationalism and democratic-sovereignist populism (Koller et al., 2019). However, what discursive positioning strategies can be found when economic experts as members of the societal elite became involved in the public debate on Brexit?

In this Section, we will show how both groups entered the public debate through different discourse strategies via two contributions prepared for laymen in public media communications (a letter and a bulletin). In order to show this, we will present some quotes from both letters/ initiatives for illustrative reasons. The main goal of the following short discourse analysis is to demonstrate how a public position was created by discourse before the Brexit referendum was held. Here, we are not interested in all the communicative and cognitive aspects that characterise the discourse. We are, rather, interested in the “positioning strategies” of economists performed through discourse. These positioning strategies particularly illustrate the “professional identities” and “professional images” that are typical for members of both groups. In the discourse analysis literature, speakers’ images or identities are formed by particular linguistic markers (Fløttum, 2005). Initially, Foucault used the notion of “subject position” (Foucault, 1972) to analyse discursive actors and identities. Later, following Lacan’s theory of the split subject (Lacan, 1991), Maingueneau, (1999) and other French discourse theorists analysed the more complex

formation of the discursive imaginary as “ethos” or “subjectivation” (Angermüller, 2014; Williams, 1999).

4.2 The discourse of “eloquent professionals”

In the following discourse analysis of an economic expert’s public communication, we will show how discourses create two different images of discourse actors (Maesse, 2017, 2020). We will start with the “Remainer” discourse. The following excerpt is the first part of the letter that covers only two pages.

Figure 1: “ethos of eloquent professionalism”: economic argumentation and straightforwardness

If Britain votes to Leave we believe **that:**

- A **recession causing job losses** **will become** significantly more likely due to the shock and uncertainty of Brexit. With **interest rates near zero** and **debt still high**, the Bank of England and Government **would have** limited ability to prevent such a **recession**.
- A **drop in the pound** and **increased tariffs on imports** **will cause** the **costs of everyday goods** to go up **increasing inflation**.
- **Investment in the UK** **will drop** **harming innovation and future job growth**.
- **These impacts** **will fall most heavily on** **households with middle and low incomes**.
- **Less growth** **means** **less government revenue** which **means** **higher taxes and less to spend on services like the NHS**.

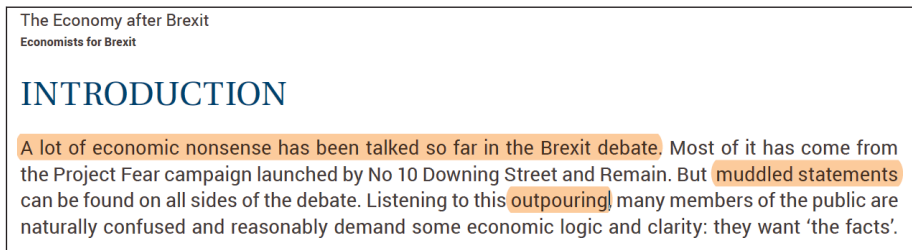
Source: Letter “Britain more prosperous IN”

First, we marked two sorts of linguistic entities: markers that work as “operators of argumentation, casualization and conclusion” (highlighted in red) and markers indicating “economic entities” such as “facts” (*less growth*), “processes” (*increasing inflation*) and “actors” (*households with middle and low incomes*) (underlined in green). As we see in the excerpt in Figure 1, the operators of argumentation, casualization and conclusion combine economic entities to a logical universe where an economic fact (“Britain votes Leave”) causes processes (“recession”, “drop in the Pound”) which results in further facts (“harming innovation and future job growth”) finally affecting different actors (“households”, “government”). For the purposes of our investigation, it doesn’t matter whether this argumentative scenario is seen as “true” or “false”. What is interesting here is the discursive performance of “logical rigour”, “strict causality” and the “clear prediction” of “economic downturn”. The discourse offers little space for dialogue with possible opposing economic expertise on Brexit. On the contrary, Brexit would lead “directly” to an economic downturn.

In this economic argumentation universe, the expert’s subjectivity emerges as an “eloquent professional” that leaves no space for doubting his/her expertise. The argumentation is presented as “straightforward”, “clear”, “easy-to-understand” and evokes an image of the expert’s epistemic authority. Here, it is easy to imagine a situation where the “professional wise person” explains a “simple economic truth” to “average-intelligent-laymen”. Furthermore, the ethos of professional eloquence presented in this way is even highlighted by the huge number of signatures, including twelve Nobel Prize Laureates, a couple of Lords, dozens of professors, assistant professors and young career economists (almost all from prestigious Departments) seeking to represent all generations and career stages of an entire profession. Moreover, the clear impression is that the “entire profession” is speaking here. This group of experts leave no doubt about their symbolic position of sovereignty within the social structure of the British professional system.

4.3 The discourse of the “antagonistic opposition”

If we compare this discourse structure with the discourse of the “Leave” camp, we can quickly see a couple of linguistic features that make a difference in the debate. For illustrative purposes, we choose two pieces from the bulletin published by the “Economists for Brexit” initiative. The bulletin consists of an introduction and nine short texts (each no more than two pages) on different aspects of the economic consequences of Brexit, such as trade, jobs, immigration etc. Each piece is written by one of the economists who signed the Leave initiative. The following excerpt is taken from the “Introduction” (first sentences, page 3).

Figure 2: “ethos of opposition”: blaming the other

Source: Letter “Economists for Free trade”

The second excerpt is taken from the contribution by Patrick Minford (page 13) who is probably the most prominent economist among this group.

Figure 3: “ethos of opposition”: EU antagonism and self-victimisation

Source: Letter “Economists for Free trade”

Here and in the entire documents, three different communicative strategies stand out. As we see in Figure 2, highlighted in red, the Brexit discourse of the “Leavers” is characterised by different formulations that seek to “blame the other”. Here and elsewhere, the “blamed other” is not restricted to specific sorts of persons, groups, institutions and nations. Rather, a “permanent blaming” takes place when audiences read the text and seek to follow the authors. This is interesting because it introduces a lot of emotional energy into the discourse. In addition, the audience cannot easily follow the argumentation if they are unable to accept (sooner or later) at least some of the blaming. Finally, every reader who is in (partial or full) sympathy with the Leave campaign can construct their own “others-to-be-blamed”, be it an “economist from the establishment”, “politicians”, “Downing Street”, “the media” or even “the EU”.

This leads us to another aspect that characterises the Leave discourse. As we see in the formulation marked in red in Figure 3, “antagonism to the EU” is a constant element that makes this discourse special. By introducing a constant antagonist, the discourse seeks to focus their heterogeneous audiences on one single point located

“outside” of the “we-universe”. This helps to create a populist position as a negative demarcation line. The communicative advantage of such a strategy lies in its ability to speak about the “other” instead of the “we”: the we-position is unified by negativity, and if those people who become unified in a negative we-position have no real contact with the antagonist it is easy to say almost anything about the other. If we now combine the negative emotions that emerged from the “blaming” strategy with the negativity introduced by the “antagonising” force, we see how two sorts of negative emotions emerge: “negative feelings” and the other as a “negation-of-us” (because the “we” is not defined in a positive way but rather through the other).

Finally, a third form of communicative negativity is introduced in the discourse via “ego-victimisation”. As we see in the formulations marked in green in Figure 3, the “us” or “we” position is not only defined by antagonistic negativity. It is also created by presenting themselves as “victims” of EU policy and by being a member of the EU. Accordingly, people “pay too much” if they are inside the EU. This “economical negativity” operates in concert with the antagonistic and emotional negativity. But what sort of ethos of the speaker emerges from this positioning strategy of triple negativity? Of course, this is a typical communication strategy of people who seek to conquer a terrain that is more or less completely occupied by others. It is not simply the opposition of a democratic community because this opposition is part of the system. Rather, what we see here is an opposition that sees itself as “outside” the system.

According to Chantal Mouffe (Mouffe, 2005), political competition can take two forms: “agonism” and “antagonism”. Agonistic discourses always respect the other as a democratic competitor while “antagonistic” discourses construct the other as an “enemy”. The latter seeks to overcome the political system via a revolution, revolt or coup. But the “Leavers” discourse cannot be seen as “undemocratic” in Mouffe’s sense. Yet, the discursive structures that we have elaborated here characterise this type of discourse as more of an “antagonistic” discourse (and less of an “agonistic” one).

To conclude, the communicative structure of the Remainer discourse constructs the image of an “eloquent professional”, a person who represents what Bourdieu would have called “symbolic capital” as reputation, social recognition and public respect for their epistemic authority. In contrast to that, the Leaver discourse is much more characterised by an antagonistic structure, indicating a position within the societal symbolic universe that is not fully respected by British socio-political authorities. In order to better understand the deep structure of the Brexit discourse, we will look at the social structure of the Brexit discourse analysed as a social space.

5. The space of economic experts in the UK: Insiders vs. outsiders in the traditional economic expertise

We map the social space of economic experts in the UK composed of 84 economists via Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA). The goal of this analysis is to understand how each group of economists is involved in the professional institutions of the UK's scientific, political and economic governmental system. For that purpose, we used 32 active variables composed of 83 active (and one passive) modalities. The contributions of the variables and modalities can be found in Table A in the Appendix. To interpret the space, we retain only the two first axes, as they account for 82.1 per cent of the cumulative modified rates of variance. Axis 1 represents 59.9 per cent of the rates, while axis 2 corresponds to 22.2 per cent, meaning that the first opposition is significantly stronger in structuring the space than the second one. Dimensions after the second axis are less significant, as axis 3 only represents 5.1 per cent of the modified rates.

5.1 The logic of the economic expert space

We spatialise the different modalities of the active variables that contribute to at least to one of the first two axes (Fig. 4). We interpret both axes through these contributions. Twelve variables contribute to Axis 1 above the average contribution. They correspond to positions within the academic hierarchy (fellow of an academy of science and REF ranking), scientific prestige (scientific prize, 4* journals, citations in Google Scholar and ranking in RePEc), integration within powerful British elites (nobility title and a mention in Who's Who), memberships of think tanks (CEPR and NIESR) and trajectory features (slope of the academic trajectory and number of years since professorial appointment).

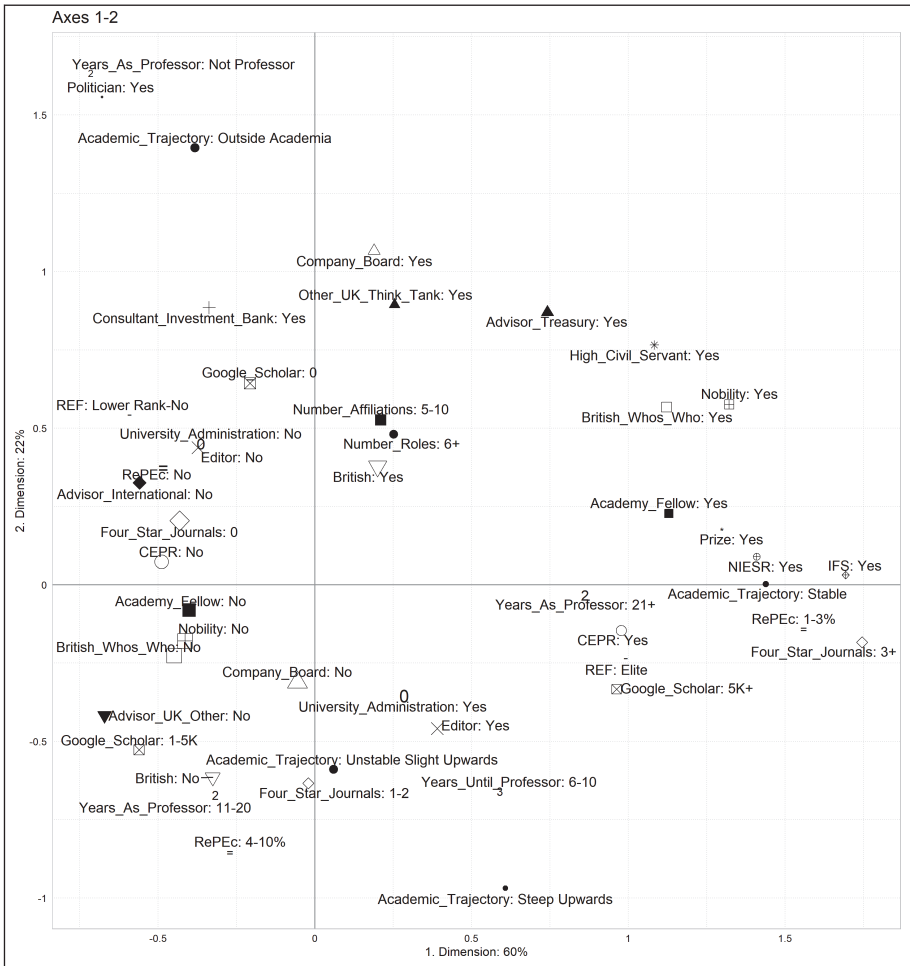
On the right of the axis, we find individuals with a large number of international scientific resources: they are ranked among the top one per cent to three per cent of authors according to the Research Papers in Economics (RePEc) index. They have at least three articles in 4* journals (the *American Economic Review*, *Econometrica*, the *Journal of Political Economy*, the *Quarterly Journal of Economics* and the *Review of Economic Studies*) and more than 5,000 citations on *Google Scholar*. In addition to that, they have been awarded for a scientific prize and belong to the most prestigious individuals in economics. Moreover, they occupy renowned positions in British academia: each one is a Fellow of an academy (among others the Royal Society, the British Academy, the Royal Society of Edinburgh, the Academy of Social Sciences or the Royal Statistical Society) and occupies a professor position at an "elite" university in economics according to the 2014 REF rankings (Oxford, Cambridge, the LSE, UCL, Warwick). They are members of the British state nobility, as they received nobility titles (lords, knights, chivalry orders) and are mentioned in the British Who's Who (Friedman & Reeves, 2020; Reeves et al., 2017). This group of actors is also close to the British state, as some of them occupy

senior civil servant positions or serve as advisors to HM Treasury. These professors are members of established and powerful (at least partly funded by the public) think tanks in British society, such as the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), the Centre for Economic Policy Research (CEPR) and the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR). Finally, they have experienced a stable academic trajectory, starting from their studies to the end of their career in elite universities as well as a long professorial career (21 years at least in a professor position). In summary, those individuals possess a very high volume of a variety of resources in science, academia and the field of power.

On the other side of the axis (left), we observe individuals with a low volume of the same resources, with less influence in science, in academia and in the public administration, no think tank positions and no integration into the British power elite. The first axis, which constitutes by far the most important opposition among UK economic experts, is structured according to the overall volume of capital, resources and assets they possess, following a logic of *integration* into the *transnational scientific field of economics*, into *British academia* and, more generally, into the *British state nobility*. It is also structured according to the logic of *seniority* within these types of power.

Axis 2 represents a secondary, but nonetheless significant, opposition among UK economic experts. 13 variables contribute to this dimension, related to academic position (university administration and REF ranking), scientific recognition (editor of a journal, citations on *Google Scholar* and RePEc ranking), political influence (advisor to the Treasury), economic power (company boards and consultant for investment banks), think tank power (other UK think tank), trajectory (slope of their career, years as a professor and number of institutional affiliations throughout their career) and citizenship (UK citizenship or not). On the *lower* side of the map, we find individuals who own scientific resources (they are the editors of scientific journals, are ranked in RePEc, have citations on their *Google Scholar* profiles and have been published in Top 5 journals) and occupy executive positions in academia (university administration). They have also followed relatively long academic careers (they spent 6–10 years in postdoctoral positions and 11–20 years in professor positions) and have experienced upward academic mobility when we compare the prestige of the different universities to which they have been affiliated since their studies. Finally, they are often non-British citizens and, most of all, they have never sat on a company board. In summary, this group owns a large share of scientific and academic resources.

Figure 4: Map of active modalities contributing above the average to axes 1 and 2



Source: own research

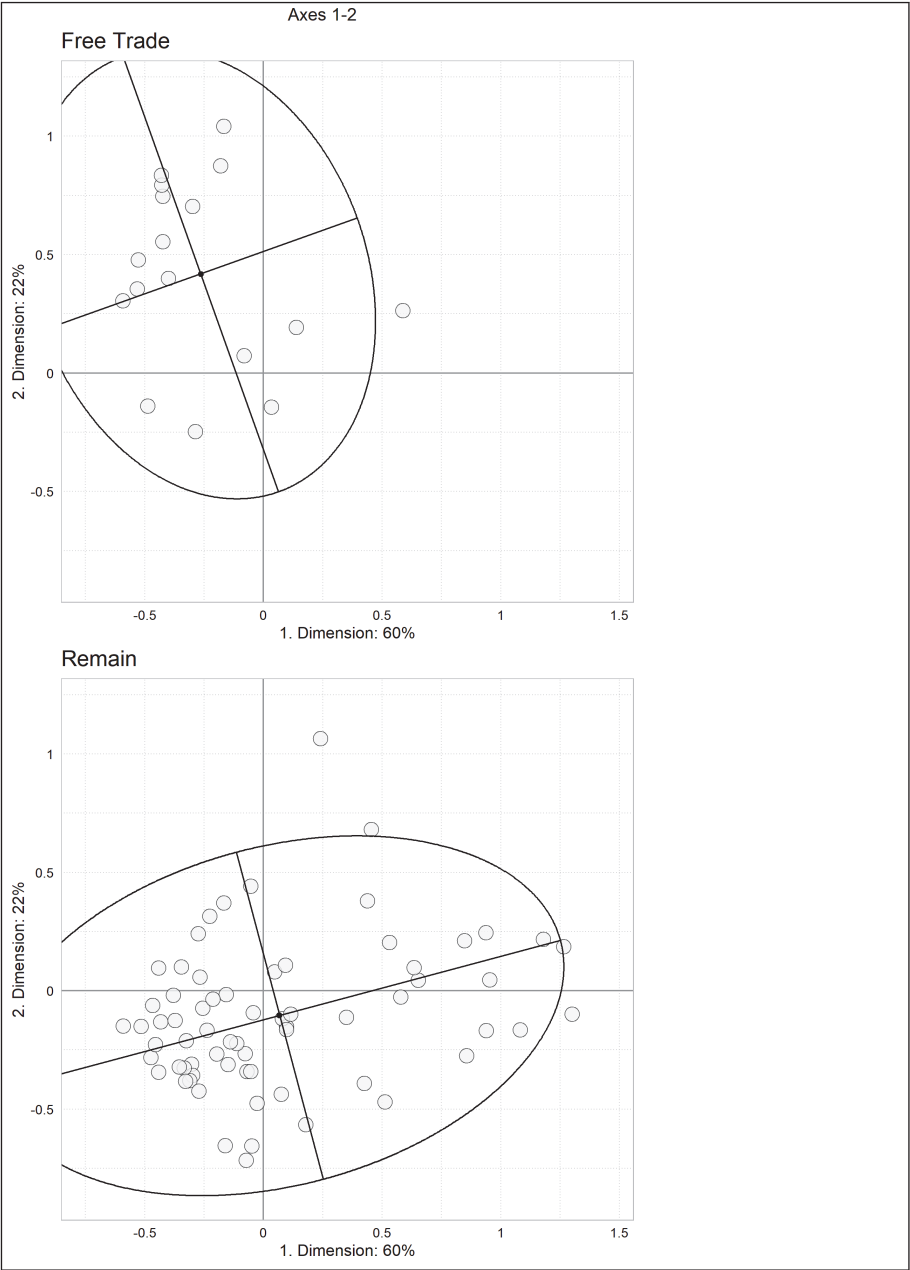
On the *upper* side of the axis, we find individuals with a different profile. Contrary to the opposite side of the axis, they have no important scientific and academic resources. Most of them have followed a career outside academia and were never professors; moreover, during their trajectory, they have occupied a variety of positions in a significant number of different institutions. In the business sector, they sit on company boards and do consulting for investment banks. In public administration, they also occupy high civil servant positions or advisory functions for the Treasury; some of them are even elected politicians. They also sit on less established think tanks in the UK than the ones mentioned above. Others have a

nobility title or have a Who's Who biographical entry. Finally, they have British citizenship. This second axis can be qualified as structured by the composition of the resources economic experts own. Especially, it opposes resources stemming from the *scientific field of economics and the academic field* to assets stemming from the *fields of business (and especially finance) and of politics*. It also represents an axis of *integration within British society*, where non-UK citizens can be found at the bottom of the space.

5.2 Free Trade vs. Remain: Different regions in the social space

In a second step, we project the two lists of economists as a supplementary variable in the space. Figure 5 spatialises the two groups through concentration ellipses, while Figure 6 also maps the main specialty of the 84 economists. We see that the "Free trade" group are situated in the top left of the space, while the "Remain" side are more dispersed in the space and can be found in a majority at the bottom left and on the right of the space. Both axes can be interpreted according to the opposition between Brexiteers and Remainers (Eta-square between the coordinates of the first axis and the Brexit/Remain belonging variable: 8.0; and for the second axis: 29.7): On the first axis, there is a significant difference of 0.7 between the coordinates of the two modalities, while on the second axis, the distance of 1.4 is notable. Therefore, all in all, free trade economists are slightly but significantly endowed with a lesser volume of resources than remain economists. Moreover, both groups are, this time, very significantly differentiated between the two components of axis 2: while the remain group mostly owns academic and scientific resources, the pro-Brexit side finds its roots outside academia, most notably in the private sector (but some of them are also elected politicians). To confirm this argument, we looked at the over- and under-representation of all active and supplementary modalities among the two groups thanks to p.value and Test value. These proximities are also confirmed by their specialty domains: while Brexiteers specialise in topics linked to studying the corporate sector (industrial organization, business administration and finance), the Remainers' interests are more in line with topics usually taught in economics programmes in academia (econometrics, macroeconomics, microeconomics, labour economics etc.).

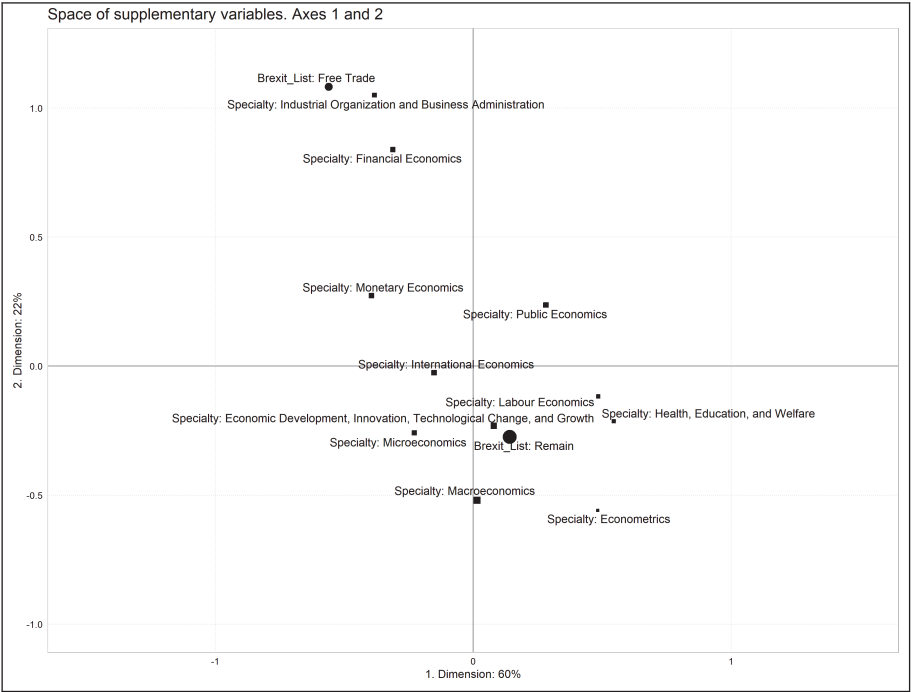
Figure 5: Map of the two groups of economists (“Free trade” and “Remain”) through concentration ellipses



Source: own research

In summary, support for Brexit among UK economists is a matter of the overall volume of resources they own, but also, and more importantly, of the form and nature of these resources, closer to the business sector, and *in particular to finance*. Therefore, the positions of these two groups explain their different discourses, understood as position-taking within the space of UK economic experts. The Remain group is composed of academic economists with prestigious scientific and political positions and proximity to traditional British state nobility. These economists are dominant within the field of economics and the field of power, and they occupy insider positions within most of the expertise spaces in the UK. Consequently, their discourse, where they adopt the posture of “eloquent professionals”, reflects these positions. In contrast, economists from the leave side are located outside most of the prestigious positions in UK economic expertise and are found in business and in the financial sector. Their discourse posture as “antagonistic opposition” reflects this outsider position.

Figure 6: Map of supplementary variables (two letters and main research interest)



Source: own research

6. After Brexit: The corrosion of professional identities and institutional legitimacy

In the previous chapters, we have analysed how social and discursive positions were formed as two different groups of economic experts of Brexit discourse via two different modalities: public debate and social space. Both analyses have demonstrated what it means to be in a different position. The discourse analysis has elaborated the difference between *antagonistic opposition* vs *eloquent professional* position on the basis of public letters. The second analysis of the space of professional economists in UK has shown that the actors of the Remain group occupy positions within classical institutional regions of *academic reputation*, *societal authority* and *political power*. In contrast, the actors of the Leave group, which is a much smaller group compared to the Remain group, take positions more or less *outside* these regions. This difference is also reflected by sub-disciplinary belonging: whereas the Remain group covers almost *all subfields of the economic sciences*, the Leave group is very much located at the “*finance*” and *financial economics* pole.

In order to analyse the subjective discourse from both sides on their particular motivations to join the initiative, their biographical trajectories from the referendum onwards and their perceptions of the other “side”, we conducted 12 interviews with economists who signed both letters. According to our social space model, five economists are located in the “top-right” quadrant, three in the “bottom-left” one, two within the “bottom-right” sector, and two at the “top-left” of the space. The exact positions of the interviewees from both sides are displayed in Figure A in the appendix. It is worth noting that, among others, we lack interviewees from the top-left quadrant of the space. Indeed, it was very hard to obtain the contact details of economists from the private sector compared to academic economists, whose email addresses can usually be found on their institutional websites.

The interviews were transcribed and analysed with the sequence analyses and the enunciative discourse analysis (Fløttum, 2005). The central question of enunciative analysis is how is the “me” position is constructed. The “me” position is the point of view from which the subject of the discourse enters the social space. From here, things become visible, the other is constructed and the discursive subject expresses its relationship to the world (Lacan, 1991). In all sorts of discourses such as books, newspapers, letters and even interviews, the me position is made visible by enunciative markers such as “I”, “here” and “now”, but also by emotional expressions such as “nice” or “annoying” or expressions of solidarity or distance (“I like/ hate this person”) (Zienkowski, 2016). In order to get an impression of our

data, we will have a look at a response from a prominent member of the Remain camp.

Question: How did you experienced the last years?

Response:

“(1) So personally as a **European**... I, that's a **British** citizen but it, therefore a **European**, personally I found it *profoundly depressing and upsetting and distressing*. (2) As a **democrat** I found it *upsetting*, that a campaign could win albeit *very narrowly* on the basis of information being put in front of the public that was *clearly not true*. (3) **Professionally** I think the effect has been very interesting and it was summarized in particular by the reaction of the **cabinet minister Michael Gove** would came in the referendum campaign immediately after the letter we tried, signed was published when a **cabinet minister** said that *we* have had enough of experts and as an aside added that even **Hitler** was able to get together a group of scientists that would back his ideology. (4) Now that is just one part of a, the polarization of debate in which the position of expertise has been *diminished*. (5) As well as being of course personally upsetting there were **other people who had signed that letter who lost family members in the holocaust** and therefore it's always a *bad* idea to make comparisons with **Nazi regime** from whatever side.” (Interview excerpt, professor, top-right of the space)

This response is typical of all the interviews we conducted with professors from the Remain side, whose discourse was usually expressing a negative sentiment strongly related to their institutional position in the space, endowed with an overall high volume of resources. In that sense, these responses can be read as symbolic position-taking that can be directly explained by their institutional positions in the professional field that came under “shock” from the Brexit process. Due to lack of space, we will only analyse in more detail one illustrative interview excerpt here, and subsequently, we will provide excerpts from other interviews that illustrate our general argument.

In this interview excerpt, we have highlighted the expressions as follows: Deixis (= pointing directly to the speaker) is underlined; Hedges (= an emotional expression indicating a distance of the speaking subject from an event or another object of relevance) are marked in *italics*; Discursive Authority (= an entity that provides the speaker's point of view with relevance) are marked in **bold**. In a first step, we will analyse statements (1) and (2). Here, we see that the speaker takes a position in the name of two different Discursive Authorities: “European” and “democrat”. We can clearly assume that both authorities are positively connoted here, representing the speaker's ideological value system and they provide the speaker with positive identity roles. Thus, “being a democrat and European” is presented as a highly legitimate and morally acceptable position in public discourse.

From these points of view follows another interesting discursive marker, namely, a succession of hedges such as “depressing”, “upsetting” and “distressing”. These hedges make a clear negative evaluation of the entire Brexit process as it happens until November 2019 (when the interview was conducted). The speaker does not take a more or less “critical” distance position, as would be typical for professional experts in public debates when they disagree with other people's opinions, typically

seen as “colleagues” and professional “competitors”. On the contrary, the speaker presents his/her position as a social being who is deeply involved. He/she speaks in three different names (first as European = British, second as democrat and finally as professional) and goes as far as possible to distance him/herself from the Brexit process.

This distancing from highly legitimate symbolic authorities (democrat, European/British) is particularly obvious when we look at statements (3), (4) and (5) when the interviewee speaks in the name of his/her “profession”. In this much longer statement the discourse mobilises not only a short story about a personal experience with people from the Brexit camp. In addition to that, negative Discursive Authorities are mobilised which highlight the drastic character of the situation. By connecting representatives of the Brexit (“cabinet minister Michael Gove”) with symbols from Nazi Germany (“Hitler”, “Nazi regime”), the speaker creates the biggest possible gulf between highly legitimate positions (“democrat”, “European/British”, “professional”) and the reality that is emerging in the present situation (“Brexit” as a sort of “Nazi regime”). In such a symbolic universe, the communicative covenant between “competing colleagues” is terminated. Both groups no longer belong to the same social reality. It seems to be that the antagonistic discourse logic of the pre-Brexit Leaver-discourse (see chapter 4.3) is somehow “hijacking” and “destroying” the eloquent professionalism of Remain economists.

This discursive constellation can be interpreted as a “drifting apart” of two different symbolic orders: on the one hand we see the legitimate socio-symbolic order of British society, with the speaker as a member of the British professional elite at the centre, consisting of legitimate symbolic positions: democrats, professionals, Britons as Europeans. On the other hand, we see the emerging “reality of Brexit”, expressed by highly illegitimate symbols (“Nazi regime”, “Hitler”, “Gove”).

How can we “read” such a discursive-symbolic constellation from our discourse-sociological point of view? Do discourses “express” underlying changes or do they articulate processes of transformation? At the moment, nobody knows where the Brexit transformation will lead the British social system, including the role of experts and professionals in governmental and political discourse. Yet, what we clearly see in this case is a particular “disconnection” between *institutional belonging* (the institutional position of an individual as an expert within a social field) and *symbolic belonging* (the position of an individual as an expert within a system of socio-discursive recognition). Typically, the system of material resources (institutional positions) correlates in a positive way with the system of symbolic resources (societal recognition and prestige). In the case of our interviews with professors occupying highly prestigious positions within the British system of expertise, governance, public debate and academic careers, we observe a sort of “turning away” from the socio-symbolic reality of the British political system while simultaneously remaining a member of exactly the very same institutional order: a form of “practi-

cal disrespect". This disconnection or drifting apart of elite persons from an elite system can be seen as precursor to what will come in the near future. For the moment, what we can expect is that chaos will emerge when an elite system that was, in the past, responsible for creating legitimate knowledge, making decisions and holding trust in what is seen as rationality, is rejected by the elite persons representing this system.

However, can we detect more and slightly different indicators in our interviews shedding light on these processes of dissolution? We also talked to the professors about their professional role within the British politico-academic system, as well as their experiences in debates among experts and the public. We got responses like this one

"The space for more neutral assessment has, in terms of what people hear, has been diminished. So as an example of one of the corrosive effects of this whole Brexit episode we have a very influential public finance, public economics think tank here, the Institute for Fiscal Studies which I should declare that I worked there for two years in the early 1980's but it has always been regarded as being a politically neutral commentator on the budget plans put forward by any government all the tax, all social security ideas of any government or opposition. When it put forward analysis of the potential effects of Brexit on public finances using the range of macro economic assessments, from trade assessments that were available depending on the variety of Brexit, people started attacking the IFS on the grounds that it had amongst its many funding sources in the past received some money from the European Commission." (Interview excerpt: professor, top right of the space)

This interview excerpt provides us with an anecdote from a political consultant that clearly shows how experts feel disconnected from their professional role. Now, new modalities of presenting expertise are emerging where the evidence of an institutional legitimacy and public authority is removed and people have to justify their role as professionals before they start speaking on very classical politico-economic topics. Once, mutual respect and prestige was implicit, a fundamental and unquestioned part of expert debates, now exactly these things must be clarified and declared before the content of expertise is presented. This is also illustrated the following statement.

"Well I think it's a, it's a tragedy. I think that ideology and politics have dominated logic and arguments, based on facts." (Interview excerpt: professor, top-right of the space)

The opposition between "ideology and politics" and "logic and argument, based on facts" expresses the opposition of "experts" vs "non-experts". Here again, the disconnection between institutional and symbolic belonging is expressed since the "experts" lost against "ideologists".

In addition to that, we regularly found very personal expressions from our interview partners, stepping away from their role as professionals and making personal declarations

"So my personal emotional view is also tremendous. I feel my citizenship, my identity has been torn away from me." (Interview excerpt: professor, top-right of the space)

This is not only a drastic and very emotional personal statement. It also implies an abdication of the professional role in the interview situation itself. We interpret this as corrosion of professional identities as well, since professional actors step away from their professional image only in particular crisis situations. Finally, we asked the question about how to see the other (in that case: the Leave economists). This example is typical for all interviewees and stands for itself.

“I know, I mean, I, I d[], I don’t believe that any good economist can believe in leave. I just don’t see the arguments.” (Interview excerpt: professor, top-right of the space)

Yet, when a group of professional experts is losing ground in the emerging reality, normally a new elite will take over their positions. In this case, the existing order will be replaced by another form of order with new epistemic elites involved in producing ideas, making decisions, debating and legitimising the order of things. In this case, a change of power takes place and new people enter existing positions and will probably transform the entire system by designing it according to their own interests, preferences and standards of their professional culture.

However, we also conducted semi-structured interviews with representatives from the “Leave initiative”. Interestingly, the responses from the “Remain camp” were very similarly structured in terms of opinions and motivations, seeing the other as well as in terms of discursive markers, as we have seen in the short analysis and the illustrations above. In contrast, the responses from interview partners from the “Leave camp” appeared very heterogeneous. In the data, we couldn’t find any common motivation, world-view, professional self-understanding or view on the other. For example, the motivations for joining the “Leave initiative” included the following answers: “providing equal access to the UK for EU and non-EU migrants”, “making the Brexit debate more democratic”, “opposing the unified view of mainstream economists on the Brexit debate” and “realising that the EU is a bureaucratic monster” (citations from interviews). Also, by discussing the state of the art of Brexit as it appeared in 2020, one interviewee was pessimistic about the outcome, two others were generally sceptical and only one respondent was optimistic that Brexit would strengthen the UK economy. Only on two points did all interview partners agree. First, all of them explained their economic motivation for Brexit with a textbook-standard monetary economics view on free markets for capital (but not for people!). The second common response was a negative view of the other, ranging from being “dominant” and “establishment” to “mainstream” and “EU-bureaucracy”. Thus, while the established epistemic elite of UK economic governmentality is losing ground, the potentially new epistemic elite is not in a position to take over discourse positions of dominant experts that seem to have somehow become “vacant” through the Brexit process.

7. Conclusion: From order to chaos

What can we learn from our analysis of economic expert Brexit discourse? In a first step, we have seen how two groups of economic experts enter a public debate via different discursive modalities. While one group's discourse was characterised by a certain "eloquent professionalism", the other group applied an "antagonistic oppositional" discursive strategy. Both these position-takings can be explained by the thorough descriptions that we have given of the positions, based on their related forms of capital, resources and assets, of both groups in this expert space. This is very typical for democratic societies, especially when nationalists enter the political scene. This "insider-outsider" structure was elaborated in detail via a social space analysis based on a huge variety of indicators. Both groups are not only oppositional within a democratic discursive space; they also do not occupy similar institutional positions within the British political, academic and economic system. The "professional-eloquent" "insiders" took powerful positions, while the "antagonistic oppositional" "outsiders" were located at the periphery. Whereas the former discourse logic is typical for established groups based on highly institutionalised practices, the latter can be seen in emerging, not yet established social constellations. This was the situation before the Brexit referendum.

When we conducted the interviews it became clear that the referendum was won by the Leavers and Boris Johnson – a Brexit hardliner – will win elections. Brexit populists turned the Conservatives into a nationalist party. While the agreement with the EU was not yet finished as a very precarious agreement with many open questions and fields of conflict in December 2020, the UK was hit by the COVID-19 crisis in March 2020. As a consequence, chaos emerged as a combination of Brexit and Coronavirus crisis management. The economic details are well documented by the Reports of the Bank of England and other economic expert institutions, expecting a historically unprecedented downturn of the British economy that will last for decades. Hence, the absurd events are speaking: British fish can no longer easily be delivered to the EU; EU firms stopped trading with the UK because of bureaucratic uncertainty; supermarket shelves are suddenly empty; the threat of an armed conflict in Northern Ireland makes its reappearance; industrial businesses re-organise their supply chains to the detriment of UK workers; the financial industry in the City of London is under pressure. The cultural, political, social and further economic consequences of these prospects are not clear to date. All prospects point to a further intensification of existing processes of downturn and dissolution (BBC, 2021).

How can this situation best be grasped? In a sociological world that only knows different forms of order and stability, such a situation can easily be analysed as a hysteresis effect, as an indicator for transition from state A to state B. Hysteresis of the habitus can be understood as the phenomenon through which individual dispositions acquired in particular spaces endure over time (Bourdieu, 2000). Indeed,

the individual habitus of economic experts was structured and consolidated within the borders of the British field of economics for decades. As a result, the propensity for these agents to change and evolve within what seems for them to be chaos, a.k.a. the dissolution of the social order where they occupied dominant positions, is low. Yet, the hysteresis effect is related to a situation of social change where one group of experts (here: the Remainers) is losing ground in terms of general social recognition of their expert views as well as roles, and a new group of experts (here: the Leavers) take over their legitimate and recognised discourse positions. However, what happens when this transition takes years or never happens? As our data (especially the interview data) indicate, experts from the Leave camp have neither a coherent view nor will they take over dominant elite positions, at least in a short- and medium-term perspective. What can we expect from a society that has not yet produced the new elite, representing the new order? How can we grasp a situation where a country is sailing into open sea?

To clarify this situation we need a different analytical terminology. Giovanni Arrighi makes an interesting distinction between “anarchy” and “chaos”. “Anarchy” designates ‘absence of central rule’, and “Chaos” and ‘systemic chaos’, in contrast, refer to a situation of total and apparently irremediable lack of organisation” (Arrighi, 1994, 30). When we look at the current situation in the UK, the notion of “chaos” seems to be more appropriate in contrast to “anarchy”, since the term “anarchy” implies the existence of norms, rules and values within a system (let’s say the EU) that is in conflict with another system (let’s say the UK) based on different norms, rules and values. In contrast, chaos refers to a situation of structural dissolution without any foreseeable direction.

Yet, in ten or 20 years, historians might explain this with the Corona crisis, maybe with some Brexit outcomes and maybe with some EU measures. However, our analysis of the Brexit discourse has shown that the traits of chaos (and not of anarchy) are already visible in the Brexit discourse from 2016 to 2020. What strikes us particularly is the relationship between the institutional and symbolic belonging of the UK economic “state nobility”, as well as the identity production of the Leavers’ discourse before and after the referendum. What seems to come out of the economic expert Brexit discourse is structural dissolution. This leads us to the conclusion that nationalism in contemporary Europe cannot provide societies with a new order as a system of norms, rules and values. Nationalist populists produce chaos, just chaos. Our analysis is restricted to a professional field and discourse. Yet, since this field is closely connected to and part of the centre of UK governmentality located at the interface between state, the public sphere and the economy – and therefore central within what Bourdieu called the field of power, i.e. the field where specific capital corresponds to power over capital (Lunding, Ellersgaard, Larsen, 2021) – we can expect at least a glimpse into the core of British society. We do not assume that our analysis somehow “represents” the structural core of society. But it might be an indicator for ongoing processes taking place at a deeper level.

References

- Angermuller, J. (2014). *Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis: Subjectivity in Enunciative Pragmatics*. London: Palgrave.
- Angermuller, J., Maingueneau, D. & Wodak, R. (2014) (Eds.). *The Discourse Studies Reader: Main Currents in Theory and Analysis*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Arrighi, G. (1994). *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of Our Times*. London: Verso.
- BBC. (2021, March 21). *Impact of Brexit on Economy 'Worse than Covid'*. Retrieved from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-59070020>.
- Bhambra, G. K. (2017). 'Brexit, Trump, and "Methodological Whiteness": On the Misrecognition of Race and Class: Brexit, Trump, and "Methodological Whiteness"'. *The British Journal of Sociology* 68(S1): 214–32.
- Bourdieu, P. (1989). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London: Routledge.
- Bourdieu, P. (2000). *Pascalian Meditations*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L.J.D. (1992). *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Chan, T., Henderson, M., Sironi, M., & Kawalerowicz, J. (2020). Understanding the Social and Cultural Bases of Brexit*. *The British Journal of Sociology* 71(5), 830–51.
- Davies, K. (2021). 'Sticking Together in "Divided Britain": Talking Brexit in Everyday Family Relationships'. *Sociology*, doi: 10.1177/00380385211011569.
- Dörre, K. (2020). Die Corona-Pandemie – Eine Katastrophe Mit Sprengkraft. *Berliner Journal Für Soziologie* 30(2), 165–90.
- Fitzgerald, J., & O'Rourke, B.K. (2015). Performing Economics: How Economics Discourse Gets Enacted in Radio News Interviews. *Presented at the 10th international conference in interpretive policy analysis*.
- Flemmen, M., & Savage, M. (2017). The Politics of Nationalism and White Racism in the UK. *British Journal of Sociology* 68(S1), 233–64.
- Fløttum, K. (2005). The Self and the Others: Polyphonic Visibility in Research Articles. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 15(1), 29–44.
- Foucault, M. (1972). *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. New York: Pantheon Book.
- Fourcade, M., Ollion, E., & Algan, Y. (2014). The Superiority of Economists. *MaxPo Discussion Paper* 14(3).
- Friedman, S., & Reeves, A. (2020). From Aristocratic to Ordinary: Shifting Modes of Elite Distinction. *American Sociological Review* 85(2), 323–50.
- Gautier Morin, J., & Rossier, T. (2021). The Interaction of Elite Networks in the Pinochet Regime's Macroeconomic Policies. *Global Networks. A Journal of Transnational Affairs* 21(2), 339–364.
- Hjellbrekke, J. (2019). *Multiple Correspondence Analysis for the Social Sciences*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Hobolt, S. B., Leeper, T.J., & Tilley, J. (2020). Divided by the Vote: Affective Polarization in the Wake of the Brexit Referendum. *British Journal of Political Science* 1–18.
- Ipsos. (2016). Economists' Views on Brexit. Retrieved from: <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/economists-views-brexit>.

- Koller, V., Kopf, S. & Miglbauer, M. (2019) (Eds.). *Discourses of Brexit*. London: Routledge.
- Lacan, J. (1991). *Das Seminar Buch 2. Das Ich in der Theorie Freuds und in der Technik der Psychoanalyse*. Weinheim: Quadriga.
- Le Roux, B., & Rouanet, H. (2010). *Multiple Correspondence Analysis*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.
- Lebaron, F. (2001). Economists and the Economic Order. The Field of Economists and the Field of Power in France. *European Societies* 3(1), 91–110.
- Lessenich, S. (2020). Soziologie – Corona – Kritik. *Berliner Journal Für Soziologie* 30(2), 215–30.
- Lunding, J.A., Ellersgaard, C.H., & Larsen, A.G. (2021). The Established and the Delegated: The Division of Labour of Domination among Effective Agents on the Field of Power in Denmark. *Sociology* 55(1), 110–28.
- Maesse, J. (2015a). Economic Experts: A Discursive Political Economy of Economics. *Journal of Multicultural Discourses* 10(3), 279–305.
- Maesse, J. (2015b). Crisis Management Policy. How Discourses Shape Academic-Political Actors. *On the Horizon* 23(3), 231–245.
- Maesse, J. (2017). Austerity Discourses in Europe: How Economic Experts Create Identity Projects. *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, 31(1), 8–24.
- Maesse, J. (2018). Opening the Black Box of the Elitism Dispositif: Graduate Schools in Economics. In R. Bloch, A. Mitterle, C. Paradiese & T. Peter (Eds.), *Universities and the production of elites: discourses, policies, and strategies of excellence and stratification in higher education* (53–79). London: Palgrave.
- Maesse, J. (2020). Performative, Imaginary and Symbolic Power: How Economic Expert Discourses Influence Society. In J. Maesse, S. Pühringer, T. Rossier & P. Benz (Eds.), *Power and Influence of Economists: Contributions to the Social Studies of Economics* (19–35). London: Routledge.
- Maesse, J., Pühringer, S., Rossier, T. & Benz, P. (2021) (Eds.). *Power and Influence of Economists: Contributions to the Social Studies of Economics*. London: Routledge.
- Maingueneau, D. (1999). Analysing Self-Constituting Discourses'. *Discourse Studies* 1(2), 183–199.
- Morgan, M. S. (1990). *The History of Econometric Ideas*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mouffe, C. (2005). *On the Political*. London: Routledge.
- Patel, T. G., & Connelly, L. (2019). “Post-Race” Racisms in the Narratives of “Brexit” Voters. *The Sociological Review* 67(5), 968–984.
- Plehwe, D., Walpen, B., & Neunhöffer, G. (2007). *Neoliberal Hegemony: A Global Critique*. Routledge.
- Pühringer, S., & Griesser, M. (2020). From the “Planning Euphoria” to the “Bitter Economic Truth: The Transmission of Economic Ideas into German Labour Market Policies in the 1960s and 2000s”. *Critical Discourse Studies* (17), DOI: 10.1080/17405904.2019.1681283.
- Pühringer, S., & Hirte, K. (2015). The Financial Crisis as a Heart Attack: Discourse Profiles of Economists in the Financial Crisis. *Journal of Language and Politics* 14(4), 599–625.
- Reeves, A., Friedman, S., Rahal, C., & Flemmen, M. (2017). The Decline and Persistence of the Old Boy: Private Schools and Elite Recruitment 1897 to 2016. *American Sociological Review* 82(6), 1139–1166.
- Richards, L., Heath, A., & Elgenius, G. (2020). Remainers Are Nostalgic Too: An Exploration of Attitudes towards the Past and Brexit Preferences. *The British Journal of Sociology* 71(1), 74–80.

- Rossier, T. (2019). Prosopography, Networks, Life Course Sequences, and so on. Quantifying with or beyond Bourdieu? *Bulletin of Sociological Methodology/Bulletin de Méthodologie Sociologique* 144(1), 6–39.
- Rossier, T. & Benz, P. (2021). Forms of Social Capital in Economics. The Importance of Heteronomous Networks in the Swiss Field of Economists (1980–2000). In J. Maesse, S. Pühringer, T. Rossier, & P. Benz (Eds.), *Power and Influence of Economists. Contributions to the Social Studies of Economics* (227–247). London & New York: Routledge.
- Rossier, T., & Bühlmann, F. (2018). The Internationalisation of Economics and Business Studies: Import of Excellence, Cosmopolitan Capital, or American Dominance? *Historical Social Research* 43(3), 189–215.
- Rossier, T., Bühlmann, F., & Mach, A. (2017). The Rise of Professors of Economics and Business Studies in Switzerland: Between Scientific Reputation and Political Power. *European Journal of Sociology/Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 58(2), 295–326.
- Savage, M. (2021). *The Return of Inequality: Social Change and the Weight of the Past*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Savage, M., Warde, A., & Devine, F. (2005). Capitals, Assets, and Resources: Some Critical Issues. *The British Journal of Sociology* 56(1), 31–47.
- Schmidt-Wellenburg, C. (2017a). Wissenschaft, Politik und Profession als Quellen diskursiver Autorität. In J. Hamann, V. Gengnagel, J. Maesse & A. Hirschfeld (Eds.), *Macht in Wissenschaft und Gesellschaft: Diskurs- und feldanalytische Perspektiven* (477–504). Wiesbaden: Springer.
- Schmidt-Wellenburg, C. (2017b). Europeanisation, Stateness, and Professions: What Role Do Economic Expertise and Economic Experts Play in European Political Integration? *European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology* 4(4), 430–456.
- Schütze, F. (1983). Biographieforschung und Narratives Interview. *Neue Praxis* 13(3), 283–293.
- Volosinov, V. N. (1975). *Marxismus und Sprachphilosophie. Grundlegende Probleme zur soziologischen Methode in den Sprachwissenschaften*. Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Wien: Ullstein.
- Williams, G. (1999). *French Discourse Analysis: The Method of Post-Structuralism*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Zienkowski, J. (2016). *Articulations of Self and Politics in Activist Discourse: A Discourse Analysis of Critical Subjectivities in Minority Debates*. London: Palgrave.

Appendix

Table A: Contributions of the variables and the modalities to the two first axes

Dimension	Modality	Dim. 1	Dim. 2	Freq.
Academic positions	HoD: No	0.1	0.4	61
	HoD: Yes	0.3	1.0	23
	Total	0.4	1.4	84
	University_Administration: No	0.8	1.9	37
	University_Administration: Yes	0.6	1.5	47
	Total	1.4	3.4	84
	Academy_Fellow: No	1.7	0.1	62
	Academy_Fellow: Yes	4.7	0.3	22
	Total	6.4	0.4	84
	REF: Lower Rank: No	1.6	2.0	27
	REF: Middle Rank	0.4	0.0	12
	REF: Upper Rank	0.3	1.2	18
	REF: Elite	4.4	0.4	27
	Total	6.7	3.6	84
Scientific recognition	Editor: No	1.0	2.1	43
	Editor: Yes	1.0	2.2	41
	Total	2.0	4.3	84
	Prize: No	0.7	0.0	71
	Prize: Yes	3.6	0.1	13
	Total	4.3	0.1	84
	Four_Star_Journals: 0	1.7	0.6	56
	Four_Star_Journals: 1–2	0.0	1.4	14
	Four_Star_Journals: 3+	7.1	0.1	14
	Total	8.8	2.1	84
	Google_Scholar: 0	0.2	3.5	34
	Google_Scholar: 1–5K	1.4	1.9	27
	Google_Scholar: 5K+	3.5	0.6	23
	Total	5.1	6.0	84
	RePEc: No	1.9	1.7	48
	RePEc: 4–10 %	0.2	3.3	18
	RePEc: 1–3 %	7.3	0.1	18
	Total	9.4	5.1	84
Elite integration	Nobility: No	1.8	0.5	64
	Nobility: Yes	5.8	1.7	20
	Total	7.6	2.2	84

Dimension	Modality	Dim. 1	Dim. 2	Freq.
	British_Who's_Who: No	2.0	0.8	60
	British_Who's_Who: Yes	5.0	1.9	24
	Total	7.0	2.7	84
Political influence	High_Civil_Servant: No	0.2	0.2	75
	High_Civil_Servant: Yes	1.8	1.3	9
	Total	2.0	1.5	84
	Advisor_Treasury: No	0.6	1.2	64
	Advisor_Treasury: Yes	1.8	3.8	20
	Total	2.4	5.0	84
	Advisor_BoE: No	0.1	0.1	66
	Advisor_BoE: Yes	0.5	0.4	18
	Total	0.6	0.5	84
	Advisor_UK_Other: No	2.0	1.2	27
	Advisor_UK_Other: Yes	1.0	0.6	57
	Total	3.0	1.8	84
	Advisor_International: No	1.5	0.8	29
	Advisor_International: Yes	0.8	0.4	55
	Total	2.3	1.2	84
	Politician: No	0.0	0.1	80
	Politician: Yes	0.3	2.4	4
	Total	0.3	2.5	84
Dimension (continued)	Modality (continued)	Dim. 1	Dim. 2	Freq.
Economic power	Company_Board: No	0.0	1.6	65
	Company_Board: Yes	0.1	5.4	19
	Total	0.1	7.0	84
	Consultant_Investment_Bank: No	0.1	1.1	65
	Consultant_Investment_Bank: Yes	0.4	3.7	19
	Total	0.5	4.8	84
	Consultant_Industry: No	0.0	0.0	78
	Consultant_Industry: Yes	0.2	0.6	6
	Total	0.2	0.6	84
Think tanks	IFS: No	0.2	0.0	78
	IFS: Yes	2.9	0.0	6
	Total	3.1	0.0	84
	CEPR: No	2.2	0.1	56
	CEPR: Yes	4.5	0.2	28
	Total	6.7	0.3	84

Dimension	Modality	Dim. 1	Dim. 2	Freq.
	NIESR: No	0.5	0.0	73
	NIESR: Yes	3.6	0.0	11
	Total	4.1	0.0	84
	Other_UK_Think_Tank: No	0.1	1.0	66
	Other_UK_Think_Tank: Yes	0.2	3.6	18
	Total	0.3	4.6	84
Trajectory	Academic_Trajectory: Outside Academia	0.5	9.3	19
	Academic_Trajectory: Steep Downwards	0.6	0.0	5
	Academic_Trajectory: Steep Downwards, then Upwards	0.6	0.0	7
	Academic_Trajectory: Slight Downwards	0.2	0.3	7
	Academic_Trajectory: Stable	2.8	0.0	8
	Academic_Trajectory: Unstable Slight Upwards	0.0	1.6	18
	Academic_Trajectory: Unstable Steep Upwards	0.1	0.8	8
	Academic_Trajectory: Steep Upwards, then Downwards	0.6	0.6	6
	Academic_Trajectory: Steep Upwards	0.4	1.4	6
	Total	5.8	14.0	84
	Years_Until_Professor: Not Professor	-	-	12
	Years_Until_Professor: 0–5	0.2	0.5	21
	Years_Until_Professor: 6–10	1.0	2.0	18
	Years_Until_Professor: 11+	0.2	0.0	33
	Total	1.4	2.5	84
	Years_As_Professor: Not Professor	1.0	8.0	12
	Years_As_Professor: 0–10	0.7	0.2	22
	Years_As_Professor: 11–20	0.4	2.4	21
	Years_As_Professor: 21+	3.6	0.0	29
	Total	5.7	10.6	84
	Number_Countries: 1	0.2	0.6	30
	Number_Countries: 2	0.4	0.1	29
	Number_Countries: 3	0.0	0.6	17
	Number_Countries: 4+	0.2	0.0	8
	Total	0.8	1.3	84
	Number_Affiliations: 1–2	0.1	1.0	15

Dimension	Modality	Dim. 1	Dim. 2	Freq.
	Number_Affiliations: 3–4	0.1	0.5	37
	Number_Affiliations: 5–10	0.2	2.2	32
	Total	0.4	3.7	84
	Number_Roles: 1–3	0.1	0.3	31
	Number_Roles: 4–5	0.0	0.1	32
	Number_Roles: 6+	0.2	1.2	21
	Total	0.3	1.6	84
Ascriptive characteristics	British: No	0.6	3.0	32
	British: Yes	0.3	1.9	52
	Total	0.9	4.9	84
	Sex: Man	0.0	0.0	74
	Sex: Woman	0.1	0.3	10
	Total	0.1	0.3	84

Notes: The average contribution of a modality corresponds to 1.2 and the average contribution of a variable corresponds to 3.1. Modalities in light grey contribute above average to the axis; and variables in dark grey contribute above average to the axis.

Figure A: Position of the 12 interviewees within the map of the individuals on the first two axes

