

Institution: Royal Holloway, University of London		
Unit of Assessment: 17 Business and Management Studies		
Title of case study: Using Critical Management Studies analysis to influence key stakeholders and improve public understanding about Brexit		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2013-2018		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Christopher Grey	Professor of Organisation Studies	1/1/12-31/8/20
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact <p>Based on his research on Critical Management Studies, Professor Grey developed a Brexit Blog which became an invaluable source of up-to-date analysis of the business, trade and other consequences of Brexit. It was used by politicians of all UK parties, business and civil society leaders, and journalists to inform their work, as well as by the general public. Between 2015 and 2020 it was quoted extensively in UK and overseas media including Financial Times, Reuters and CNN. It informed a policy report by a group of MEPs on Brexit and the Irish border and was the basis of invited evidence given to the Scottish Parliament.</p>		
2. Underpinning research <p>This impact case study is an application of a <u>mode of analysis</u> derived from research in Critical Management Studies (CMS) to the public policy issue of Brexit. It draws upon Grey's body of work on CMS as a field (R1), its national variations (R2), and its relation to Brexit (R3, R4). CMS, especially as developed by Grey in R1, is a mode of analysis concerned with the two-way interface between politics and management/ organizations. Politics, here, encompasses both institutional and ideological issues, and includes issues like leadership and strategy. Thus, in principle, CMS analysis can be applied to almost any political issue. R1 is an important field-defining statement of CMS (not, as might be thought from its title, a short textbook). The 2013 edition added substantial new material (chapter 5) on globalization and its impact on organizations and communities, including for the first time discussion of the <u>Eurozone crisis</u>. The 2017 edition was revised to include the rise of <u>populist politics, including Brexit</u>. The 2013 edition also saw the commencement of a weekly blog which provided updates or new illustrations of the themes of the book. This meant that in time the book and the blog became completely intertwined, so that the 2017 edition incorporated blog material from 2013 to 2017. From almost the first blog post the then nascent issue of Brexit figured, and from 2015 about half of the posts were tagged 'Brexit', 'EU', or both. Thus by the time of the 2016 Referendum there was a deep set of interconnections between this field-defining research output and Brexit, at which point a second, <u>spin-off Brexit Blog</u> was launched, as discussed in Section 4. This second blog was the direct application of CMS as a mode of analysis to Brexit.</p> <p>Brexit has not simply provided a new phenomenon for CMS to analyse. As CMS is a political project, Brexit has also changed the nature of CMS analysis in the UK (R4) because national context is crucial to the form CMS takes (R2). This change is explained by in terms of a fundamental re-alignment of CMS political analysis (R4) in the light of this new political landscape (R3). Grey's research shows that Brexit can be seen as a rejection of the socially liberal and cosmopolitan politics that CMS espouses, and in a context where the dominant</p>		

politics consists of two sides, CMS is arrayed with many of the globalist and big business interests of which it has hitherto been critical. The Brexit Blog directly applies that analysis of UK CMS to emergent events in real time.

Grey's research on CMS, and on how CMS had been changed in the UK context by Brexit, provided an analysis of Brexit. It used, primarily, a blog and social media to apply this analysis to (often rapidly) unfolding events as they transpired in order to influence and inform the understanding and practices of politicians, journalists, business and civic institutions and the public.

3. References to the research

R1. Grey, C. (2013, 2017) *A very short, fairly interesting and reasonably cheap book about Studying Organizations*. London: Sage. QI: Evidence of the field-defining nature of this book is that its first edition was, very unusually if not uniquely, the subject of the entire book review section of *Organization Studies* (27, 5: 748-769), the leading European journal in the field (5 year Impact Factor: 5.240), comprising three reviews from leading scholars from 3 countries plus a reply from the author. The reviews describe it as "serious" and "heavyweight". The book has been cited 482 times (Google Scholar). Available from HEI on Request.

R2. Grey, C., Huault, I., Perret, V. and Taskin L. (eds) (2016), *Critical Management Studies: Global Voices, Local Accents*. New York: Routledge. QI: Reviewed in *Política y Sociedad*. Available from HEI on Request.

R3. Grey, C. (2016a) 'The New Politics of Cosmopolitans and Locals', within 'Brexit: understanding the socio-economic origins and consequences,' *Socio-Economic Review* 14 (4): 829-832. QI: 5 year Impact Factor: 4.213. doi: [10.1093/ser/mww043](https://doi.org/10.1093/ser/mww043).

R4. Grey, C. (2018) 'Does Brexit mark the end of Critical Management Studies in Britain?' *Organization* 25 (5): 662-670. QI: Peer-reviewed, CABS 3* journal, 5 Year Impact Factor 3.709) doi: [10.1177/1350508418757567](https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508418757567).

4. Details of the impact

The primary form that impact takes is demonstrable improvements in end users' ability to understand Brexit and to engage more effectively in their own domains of activity as a result. The users (readers and followers) include thousands of very senior figures in the media, politics, business in the UK and elsewhere, including senior officials within the EU, as well as the general public. Crucially, as the [text removed for publication] (E10) emphasises, the use of social media and blogs enables academics to analyse events in real time in a way which would be impossible in conventional academic publishing systems. This means that, as almost all the testimonials mention, the impact comes from the deployment of a mode of analysis derived from the research base which then informs users' understanding and behaviour.

Grey's Brexit Blog was launched in September 2016 to provide research-informed analysis of events related to Brexit as they unfolded. By June 2020 it had received 4,000,000 Unique Page Views. The average weekly readership by then was approximately 35,000 via the website, plus approximately 2,500 by the email sign-up feed. Geographically, approximately half of the total readership is in the UK, with EU-27 countries (~30%) and the USA (~11%) accounting for most of the rest.

The blog is accompanied by a dedicated Twitter feed (launched in February 2017) providing links to a wide variety of sources of information and curated to deliver a focussed and professional 'information product'. By June 2020 Followership stood at 42,100 with monthly 'impressions' (number of tweet views) normally at about 4,000,000. A wider audience has been reached via re-syndications of posts on the blog and/or original articles in *The I*, *Prospect*, *The National*, *New Statesman* and elsewhere (E1, reach list).

Informing governments and politicians at local, national and international levels

Grey provided expert input into the preparation of a report on Brexit and the Irish border published by the European Conservatives and Reformists Group of MEPs in July 2018. Grey gave invited expert evidence to a Select Committee of the Scottish Parliament in May 2020, which was reported in *The Scotsman*. Since 2018 Grey has been a member of the Brexit Policy Panel of the UK in a Changing Europe Centre. Some of the writings appeared on the House of Commons Library pre-Referendum Reading List on UK-EU Relations 2013-2016, and the blog itself is listed as a source of expert information on the Northern Ireland Assembly website (E1, reach list).

The blog and/or twitter feed are read by thousands of local councillors, MPs, MSPs, MLAs. MAs and MEPs from Conservative, Labour, LibDem, SNP, SDLP, Alliance and Green parties including senior Cabinet ministers and government ministers, and including those on 'both sides' of Brexit; current and former senior civil servants; politicians and officials from other countries, including ex-Prime Ministers, numerous current and former diplomats (British and other countries); EU officials including Secretary-General of EU Commission, Deputy Chief Brexit Negotiator, Spokesman for Chief Brexit Negotiator (titles as at the negotiating period) (E1, reach list).

The testimonials about how Grey's research informed politicians include a LibDem County Councillor, a Conservative MP and [text removed for publication], and a Conservative MEP. They evidence that "[text removed for publication]" (E2, Councillor). The work provides [text removed for publication]" and "[text removed for publication]" (E3, MP). Its "[text removed for publication]" (E4, MEP). "[text removed for publication]" (E4, MEP).

Shaping opinion in business and civil society

The blog and/or twitter feed are read by thousands within these domains, including the leaders or senior figures of the CBI, Institute of Directors, FairTrade, KPMG, British Council, NHS, TUC, BT, Google UK, Microsoft Ireland, Sainsbury's. They are also read by 'celebrities' such as Gary Lineker, Brian Cox, Hugh Grant and Richard Coles (E1, reach list).

A survey of readers of the blog (N= 2,234, about 10% of the regular weekly readership at that time; E1, reach list) found that:

Item	Strongly agree (%)	Somewhat agree (%)	Total agree (%)
Helps me understand Brexit better	86	13	99
Provides information and analysis I don't find elsewhere	59	37	96
Explains Brexit more clearly than other sources I access	60	35	96
Trusted source of information and/or analysis of Brexit	86	12	98

81% of respondents identified something that they had done differently as a result of reading the blog. Examples, drawn from approximately one thousand qualitative comments offered (E1), are:

"It allowed me to get the topic [Brexit] on to the board agenda of my company"; "Made proper no deal contingency plans for the business I am chair of"; "I work in the field of science and technology policy. I have advised both the European Commission and British agencies (notably BEIS) differently as a partial result of reading the blog carefully".

The testimonials evidence that the work is valued as "[text removed for publication]" (E5, College Governor). It provides "[text removed for publication]" "[text removed for publication]" in general and in very specific ways including provision of a "[text removed for publication]" (E6,

Consultant). It “[text removed for publication]” which “[text removed for publication]”. It “[text removed for publication] ...” (E7, Union Policy Officer).

Informing journalists and media organizations

The Blog and/or Twitter feed are read by thousands of journalists, producers and presenters in the media worldwide (E1, reach list). Many are household names from TV (e.g. news anchors, political editors, and reporters) and print media. Over 100 are from the BBC alone, with others from outlets including Sky News, ITV News, C4 News, RTE, France 24, ARD, Reuters, Bloomberg, The Times, Guardian, FT, New York Times, CNN, Wall Street Journal, Scotsman, Herald Scotland, Mail on Sunday, The Observer, Daily Telegraph, Irish Times, Times Ireland, Irish Independent. This wide readership led to numerous appearances/ quotations as a Brexit expert by the BBC, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, ARD Germany, Financial Times, Times Ireland, Liberation, Prospect, CNN, Reuters and elsewhere. A review of 25 years of blogging in the Guardian named the blog as one of six exemplifying how blogs can be “amongst the best sources of news information we have” (E1, reach list).

The testimonials evidence that the work “[text removed for publication]” (E8, BBC political correspondent). The work is “[text removed for publication]” (E8, BBC presenter).

His “[text removed for publication]” (E9, ARD journalist).

Senior editors/ journalists at *The Economist* lauded the Blog format as “[text removed for publication]” (E10, [text removed for publication]). His work “[text removed for publication]” (E10, [text removed for publication]).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

E1: Reach list. Includes, firstly, the [Brexit Blog](#) and [Twitter feed](#), including a list of Twitter followers, and a full listing with web links to all media writings and appearances, re-syndications, listings on parliamentary and other websites, committee evidence given to Scottish Parliament [via this weblink](#) 2020. Secondly, an on-line feedback questionnaire for readers of the Brexit Blog was run for four months between December 2018 and March 2019 (the originally intended date for Brexit) and publicised via the blog and Twitter. Evidence includes the survey invitation and a summary of subsequent responses.

Testimonials corroborating impact on politics (all 2019)

E2: Testimonial from a Liberal Democrat Cambridgeshire County Councillor ([text removed for publication]), evidencing impact on her work in general and how it informed specific interventions and CCC’s Brexit planning process.

E3: Testimonial from Conservative MP [text removed for publication] evidencing impact on his understanding and analysis of Brexit, and reach to MPs of all political parties.

E4: Testimonial from a Conservative Party MEP for London ([text removed for publication]) evidencing impact on his work as an MEP, and in particular contribution to a report on Brexit and Northern Ireland for the European Conservative and Reformists Group in the European Parliament, 2019.

Testimonials corroborating impact on business and civil society (all 2019)

E5: Testimonial from the Chair of Governors, [text removed for publication], evidencing impact on his understanding of Brexit and how it informed specific discussions and decisions about Brexit planning.

E6: Testimonials from two Professional services providers: [text removed for publication], 4-Consulting Ltd, Policy, Technology and Management Consultants; [text removed for publication] Buglear Bate & Co, evidencing impact on their firms’ Brexit advice to clients.

E7: Testimonial from the [text removed for publication], General and Municipal Boilermakers Union (GMB, the 3rd largest trade union in the UK), evidencing impact on the formulation of the GMB's Brexit policy.

Testimonials corroborating impact on journalists and media organizations (all 2019)

E8: BBC. Two testimonials: Political Correspondent [text removed for publication]; Presenter and Journalist, [text removed for publication] , evidencing impact on BBC's coverage of Brexit in general and on specific programmes, including as a contributor, and confirming wider use by journalists within the BBC.

E9: Testimonial from the [text removed for publication], ARD TV (Germany's main public service broadcaster), evidencing impact on her and colleagues' coverage of Brexit as one of the main sources of analysis, including as an on-air contributor.

E10: *The Economist*. Testimonials from the [text removed for publication], and [text removed for publication], evidencing impact on their understanding and reporting of Brexit, including impact on the editorial line taken on Brexit by *The Economist*, and testimony to reach and impact of amongst journalists and policymakers more widely.