

## CONCLUSION

The primary purpose of this book, as set out in our introduction, was to conceptually and empirically explore a terrain that opens up when we bring together the more established field of political communication with the emerging one of CES. We split this into two parts. First, we discussed the convergence of political communication with CES, and the context we were interested in examining, conceptually. Second, we examined that convergence through two cases – the 2015 UK General Election and the 2016 UK’s referendum on the EU referendum – as empirical examples.

Chapter 1 set out what we understood to be the main characteristics of both of those areas of academic inquiry. For political communication we offered a brief overview of its history, we also argued that the message communicated could not be simply disentangled from the technology through which it was being produced, reproduced and circulated. In addition, the political imaginary carried by that entanglement of communication and technology could only be understood through the frames of reference permitted within the hegemony of the cultural political economy in which it occurred. That, we suggested, was problematic as it meant the analysis of the dominant hegemony, through a study of political communication in mainstream mass media, was only possible through the application of regimes of truth legitimised by that same hegemony; as such, critique itself became problematised. CES, it was claimed, could help us address this concern. In and of itself CES does not work through a particular methodology. CES is

more of an orientation towards the conceptualisation of *event*, one that has its roots in classical and contemporary European thought, which construes event as complex, multiple, disruptive and essentially contested. A CES scholar is, to a certain extent, more interested in the relationships of power that are exposed by such disruption/contestation, and how power works to mitigate, manage and possibly contain, that disruption, than what abstractly becomes referred to as ‘the event’. We proposed that through a combination of political communication and CES the political discourses carried by the entanglement of message and technology within mainstream mass media could be exposed and discussed. How the disruption is articulated and managed means that the *event*, and the discourses it exposes, provides us with opportunities to ask new questions regarding those discourses. In place of an unstated assumption of potential neutrality that discussions of media bias implicitly carry, the combination of political communications with CES questions what rival forms of contestation are at work, and what do they mean for the context in which they are occurring. We concluded that the context contains many ritualised practices and relationships that become exposed by the *event* of an election or a referendum; it is the disruption of such rituals that enables CES to work with political communications in interrogating what the discourses are, and have been, in operation.

In [Chapter 2](#) we reflected more on what might constitute a context where the dominant political imaginary was, ostensibly, democracy. Our empirical journey was to cover the mass media articulation of political participation during the 2015 UK General Election and the 2016 referendum on the UK’s membership of the EU, both those *events* occurring in a developed European democracy. It was important, therefore, to obtain some understanding of what we should anticipate as the main characteristics of such a political imaginary. This chapter began with a historical overview of the origin of ideas associated with that imaginary, within Europe. We then took a quick trip through the growth of the electoral franchise and development of democratic emancipation in the UK. From that foundation we proceeded to outline, and critically reflect, on four dominant theories of democratic practice. Those theories we referred to as: representational liberal democracy, participatory liberal democracy, models of deliberative democratic practice and constructivist models of democracy. Whilst we acknowledged this was neither a complete list, nor one that would reflected all interpretations of democracy under the headings we had chosen, it was felt to offer an indication of the breadth of theories of democracy available. It also afforded us enough information to

form a set of simple characteristics for what should constitute a member of the electorate's expectation of democratic practice. Though our intention was not, and is not, to set out a theory of democracy we did argue that certain characteristics found in participatory, deliberative and constructivist theories seemed to be more in keeping with what could be construed as important to any formulation of a vital and living democratic practice. A practice that took democracy as something more than putting an X in a box on an occasional outing for members of the citizenry of a state. Participation, we suggested, needed to rest on deliberation and a critical discussion of ideas, but also democracy should be open to a polyphony of voices rather than seeking an end point in one single consensual response. How the mass media has articulated an imaginary of citizen democratic participation, as an 'other' within its *texts*, during two recent political *events*, formed the focus for the second part of the book.

By drawing together political communication and CES, the conceptual exploration undertaken in [Chapters 1](#) and [2](#) enabled us to re-orientate ourselves to questions around how the mass media discourse of democratic participation is articulated during election and referendum *events*. Taking those events to be periods of contestation, disruptions that expose how that media discourse frames what becomes normatively accepted as democratic participatory practice. [Chapters 3](#) and [4](#) took, in turn, the 2015 UK General Election and the 2016 referendum on the UK's membership of the EU. In both we considered how the mainstream mass media characterised the communication of information pertinent to those campaigns, how the different agents (coalitions and parties, and their leading figures) were portrayed and how those same agents attempted to work with (both through and sometimes against) their media representation. In the case of the 2015 televised leader's debate we were in the fortunate position of being able to do some basic comparative work with the televised debates for the 2010 General Election: enabling us to ascertain whether our findings were the product of an individual instance or indicated a possible trend. Whilst there has been a previous referendum on the UK's membership of a European economic community that was 41 years prior to its most recent iteration, and so the scope for suggesting a trend would have been more problematic. However, there are enough similarities between what we found with our two cases, to strongly suggest that our findings do illustrate the contemporary context.

In both cases the articulation of democratic practice was akin to that of entertainment. There was a prominence of spectacle over deliberation and

argumentation. Spectacle was present in how debate was visually presented to its ‘audience’ as well as the language used about and by agents (whether they be a political party, coalition or individual). It also came across very strongly in how agent’s participation was reported on mainstream media platforms. Print media and TV news coverage seemed drawn to the politician’s increased use of Boorstinian pseudo-event over argumentation. The photo-opportunity becoming less about an arrangement that enables the media to capture an image of a political agent so that their areas of interest, or political standpoint on a range of issues, can be expressed and interrogated, and more that which is itself a moment to be reported. Spectacle has become a significant part of that which was produced, reproduced and distributed as political communication. The election was littered with such moments. Nigel Farage, grinning at the camera, holding what seems to be a freshly pulled pint (though probably took a number of attempts by the bar staff to make sure it was aesthetically suitable for a camera shot). Ed Miliband awkwardly eating a bacon sandwich, or standing in front of a stone tablet of election promises: most of the former shot looking down on him, diminishing his status, whilst the latter are mostly shown with the camera looking slightly upward, in an attempt to enhance it. A photo of a child, head on the desk, as David Cameron talks to her; a crowded rally turning out to be a small group of supporters tucked away in a far corner of a barn. We even found that many of the reports around the televised debates focused less on substantive issues of policy and more on a celebrification of its participants. Several commentators in print media noted the game show quality of the broadcasts, but few actually critiquing them for their lack of robust policy debate; many actually echoing to the spectacle through the language they used to describe the personalities involved, their behaviour towards the camera and with each other. We found the coverage of the referendum to be no different. ‘Battle’ buses appeared for leave and remain with slogans and platitudes that resonated with what became characterised as *project fear* or *project hate*.

The disruption of the election and the referendum revealed to us a mass media imaginary of democracy as spectacle, and a democracy of the spectacle was found to be one that eventises the political. Campaigning is shown as being a form of what is commonly referred to as *reality television*; that is – television that presents a fantasy of reality but declares it to be reality. One need only reflect on such programmes as Big Brother; The Voice; I’m a Celebrity Get me Out of Here, The Great British Bake

Off, and their ilk, to recognise the centrality of fantasy in the presentations of such *realities*. Debates, press conferences, policy statement and so on were articulated as need to watch event television<sup>1</sup>; and when we did watch them their use of space, colour, sound, lighting and so forth, was highly choreographed and resonated with iconography we commonly associate with game shows and panel contests. If they were to be viewed as infotainment, they were sadly lacking in the information element. What we encountered during the election and the referendum were less a series of political events that collectively constituted them as an election or a referendum, and more an *evental* politics that unabashedly celebrated in their spectacularity (even when the spectacle was, as in the case of the leader's debate of 2 April 2015, rather unspectacular).

In November 2016, Oxford Dictionaries announced their word of the year was 'post-truth', and suggested we were in a period of 'post-truth politics' (oxforddictionaries.com 2016). They define post-truth as: "...relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief". In order to get a greater grasp of this concept, and its possible place in a democracy of the spectacle, it is helpful to think what might constitute a 'post-falsity'. We may be seeing this in increasing attention being paid to what is popularly referred to as fake news. Operationally, *fake news* is associated with the same context as that of post-truth; we see it in practices such as one of the Vote Leave campaign's bus slogans – "We send the EU £350 million a week let's fund our NHS instead". Even when it was demonstrated to be incorrect, a falsity, it was maintained as a post-truth sentiment, only being removed from the campaigns website after the referendum vote had finished. Thus *fake news* is not to be recognised as *fake news* if it is consistent with the *post-truth* narrative an agent is communicating. As such post-truth still connects to some form of a true/false binary. It has a family resemblance (Wittgenstein, 2001 [1953]) to coherence models of truth; that is where the truth of a statement is understood in terms of its coherence with other statements within a set of beliefs. Within democracy of the spectacle, however, something more is going on, which we would describe as the workings of para-truth; that is where truth is not part of a binary at all – it is part of the spectacle that unfolds, and is only meaningful in terms of the role it plays within the spectacle. As such it is distinct from *truth*, occurring beyond its boundaries in some sense, sitting within an all-together different form of discourse from any existing understanding of truth and falsity,

whilst outwardly exhibiting some of its characteristics – hence παρά (that which is at the side of – near, but not part of). The £350 million claim, following the referendum, has become an anachronistic quirk of the political communication of that period. Its veracity (or, rather, lack of it) is no longer even considered. We have moved on, the spectacle of the referendum campaign is over and a substantial part of its relevance is only significant within the spectacle of that campaign.

How are we to understand the representation of democratic participation in such a post-truth/fake news/para-truth context? If the dominant imaginary of democracy within mainstream mass media has become a democracy of the spectacle, and campaigns exhibiting a discourse of political communication in a period of evental politics that operates from a borrowed iconography of reality and event television, how is an electoral *other* constructed within it? In other words, what is the imaginary of democratic participation that is being articulated? It would seem apparent that participation, in keeping with what we have previously discussed, is consistent with that already mentioned iconography associated with audience interactive elements of other forms of mass media and reality/event television. Such an imaginary offers us a construal of the ‘truth’, expressed by those contesting a position, offering us a performance of some variety, which is to be encountered as a contributory element of the spectacle of competitive entertainment we are being asked to consume. The ramifications of our vote for a participant in such narratives are, within its own frames of reference, slight. Winning through to the next round of such ‘competitions’ may mean we see more of that *competitor*, learn something of their *backstory*, possibly see some as yet hidden or less obvious aspect of their ‘talent’, but in a relatively short-term timeframe we are encouraged to forget the implications of our choice. We move on to other ‘shows’; other performers, other contestants and form alternative allegiances. Consequently, the imaginary of democratic participation within a democracy of the spectacle is one that construes voting for one of the ‘competitors’ (or ‘competing’ coalitions/parties) as axiologically akin to one cast for something like The X Factor, Strictly Come Dancing or Let it Shine. Prospective MPs being voted into the House rather than Housemates being voted out.

It is, however, vital that we recognise that the trend towards spectacle in the mass media articulation of democracy, and the gamifying of participation through its construal of the electoral other, which we have found in the UK, forms part of the hegemony of a wider cultural political economy.

In his book of the same name, the cultural theorist Jim McGuigan (2009) defines ‘Cool Capitalism’ as “... the incorporation, and thereby neutralisation, of cultural criticism and anti-capitalism into the theory and practice of capitalism itself” (p 38). The characteristics of the democracy of the spectacle that we have identified can be interpreted as a means through which globalised capitalism attempts to manage and absorb counter-narratives. Rearticulating critique through its economic and symbolic colonisation of the means by which the communications of any critical imaginaries are produced, reproduced and distributed. It is interesting to note, as an aside, that amongst other contemporary cultural artefacts, McGuigan suggests that the US and UK iterations of the Reality TV programme ‘The Apprentice’ are prime examples of how cool capitalism has integrated itself into contemporary popular culture. It takes little by way of reflection or imagination to recognise that the content, format and tone of the presidential campaign of Donald Trump, host of the US version of that programme<sup>2</sup> and thereby a doyen of cool capitalism, illustrates how democracy of the spectacle (a post-truth/fake news/paratruth politics?) is not just evident in the UK.

Is all lost then? Is cool capitalism the end of the line; democracy of the spectacle irreversible and our democratic participation to be limited to some variant on *The Palace of Westminster’s Got Talent* (maybe Ed Balls’ recent stint on the 2016 season of the BBC’s *Strictly Come Dancing* is a sign of things to come)? That is not our view. As we suggested in [Chapters 3 and 4](#), the rumblings of alternatives can be discerned – even if much of the mainstream mass media remains unsure how to handle them. The election, and re-election, of Jeremy Corbyn to the leadership of the UK’s Labour Party is a symptom of this. In 2010 the MP, and chair of the national Labour Party’s policy forum, Peter Hain suggested membership of the party was around 150,000 (Source: [awake-the-dragon 2016](#)). A major financial crisis for the party was looming. By September 2016, Ewen MacAskill, in the *Guardian*, claimed the party, partly as a result of two periods of rapid growth associated with contestation for the party leadership, had the largest membership of any other political party in Europe: 551,000 (MacAskill, [2016](#)). Though much of the mainstream mass media seems wedded to valorising, or at least proliferating, the political communications and narratives of Right-wing populism, there seems to be an emergence of bottom-up Left-wing populism (in some instances referred to as *inclusionary populism* [see, for example, [Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2013](#)]) and grassroots activism. In Scotland, the rise and

rise of the Scottish National Party has seen it grow to become a real political force in Westminster, as well as domestically; whilst across the UK this can be seen in the approach of progressive Left think tanks like Compass and, more recently, more traditionally Left-wing groups such as Momentum. Around Europe we are seeing the development of inclusionary parties of the Left, for instance Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain, with others currently less successful in Germany and the Netherlands. Mudde and Kaltwasser (2013) point out that this trend has had a long gestation within Latin America (p. 156). One could see the practice of legislative theatre, as developed by August Boal (1998) and discussed in Chapter 2, as a form of inclusionary, participatory, populist Leftism. In the USA, we need only look to the campaign for the Democrat Party's presidential nomination led by Bernie Sanders to find an example that would seem to offer a populist counter-narrative to that proffered by that of the Republican, Donald Trump. Only time will tell if populist Leftism will gain sufficient ground to fully contest the political space that the populist-Right currently seems to dominate. Much of its grassroots, bottom-up, character seems to be growing through young people and the communicative connectivity facilitated by being a truly Internet and social media savvy generation.

Moving forward, we would argue that there is a lot more work to be done in understanding how a democracy of the spectacle has emerged and grown, over what would appear to be a relatively short period. There is a significant amount of research required in examining its reach across other emerging, and established, democratic states; exploring any regional and cultural difference in its articulation. But as the focus also encompasses an interest in a post-truth/fake news/para-truth politics, it is also important to conduct an analysis of spectacle in non-democratic and quasi-democratic states as well. Finally, must try to understand how digital and social media can both be used to support it and undermine it, through the development, production, reproduction and dissemination of the counter-narratives of counter-public spheres. In that regard we identify some resonances with the ideas of Gramsci, and the need to foster the development of an organically emergent alternate culture (Gramsci, 2005 [1971]) that has the capacity to effectively speak truth to power. If, as argued in this book, we have moved to a state where the imaginary of democracy and democratic participation is characterised by the spectacular, maybe we should be finding ways of making it less about entertainment and more about enlightenment? In order to address the issues and concerns that

arise from our current epoch, there is much that can be gained from combining the strengths of the existing field of political communication with the nascent one of CES.

## NOTES

1. 'Event television' is a TV marketing concept that emerged in the early 2010s. It refers to strategies adopted by broadcasters in response to the changing viewing habits of TV audiences. As the popularity of watching TV through catch-up sources has grown, 'event television' attempts to trail and present selected broadcasts in such a way as to draw audiences to watch them as they are being broadcast (Vallarreal, 2014; Kjus, 2008).
2. Donald Trump was host of the US series between 2004 and 2015 (imdb.com, 2017), as well as being executive producer for it and several of its internationally localised variations. The 15th series, the one forthcoming at the time of writing, is to be hosted by another celebrity-cum-politician: Arnold Schwarzenegger.

## ANNEXE: BEYOND THE UK

Over the course of the preceding chapters we have undertaken a conceptual and empirical journey, one that combines several approaches and perspectives drawn from the established fields of political communication and an emerging critical attitude towards the study of events. We used the combination of these academic orientations to develop a conceptual lens, through which we examined the articulation of democratic practice articulated in mainstream mass media around two recent disruptions from what might be considered *business as usual* in recent British political history. Our reflections on the language, imagery and narratives of how mainstream mass media represented the discourse of democratic participation, around key moments and concerns during the 2015 General Election and 2016 referendum on the UK's membership of the EU, suggesting we were in a period where, to use a phrase we borrowed from TV marketing, political events are being replaced with event politics. Deliberation, analysis and critical reflection being given as much credence in campaigning as it seems to carry in the nomination of a celebrity to remain or leave some simulacra of a jungle, talent show, or co-habited domicile etc. Even though our two case studies focused on the UK, the conclusions we have drawn about the imaginary of democracy, within the dominant hegemony of our current cultural political economy, also finds expression in other polities around the world. As such, as we would argue, a democracy of the spectacle would appear to be a central characteristic of what we have referred to as *cool capitalism*. In this annexe to the main text we want

to present a few short sketches, where event politics can be seen to have had and, is having, an impact. These are not intended to be pieces of in-depth analysis; instead, they represent opportunities for extending the work we have begun through applying a similar combined perspective of political communications and CES to other developed democracies in an epoch of *cool capitalism*.

## BRAZIL

In 2014 Operação Lava Jato (Operation Car Was), presently led by Judge Sérgio Moro, began as an investigation into money laundering. An investigation into the claims that the money transfer service based at the Posto da Torre petrol station was being used as part of an illegal money laundering ring has, subsequently, gone on to suggest that it is a symptom of far deeper corruption between Brazil's state-controlled oil company, Petrobras, and several parties within the Brazilian government (Connors & Trevisani, 2015). One political casualty of this upheaval has been Dilma Rousseff who, as its 36th president, was removed from office on 31 August 2016 when the Brazilian Senate voted 61–20 in favour of impeachment over budgetary irregularities (BBC, 2016). Rousseff had been on the board of directors at Petrobras between 2003 and 2010, when much of the illegal activity is thought to have taken place (Leahy, 2016). Much of the mainstream mass media has, even though no direct evidence has, as of yet, been found connecting her to the inquiry being led by Sérgio Moro, linked her, her party (the Workers Party – the PT) and other Leftist groups in the Brazilian government, to that investigation. Whatever the actuality of corruption between Petrobras and any individual or group within Brazil's political elite, the discourse being presented through much of the media is of a corrupt Left and a democracy that is not working. Sérgio Moro has become a symbol of the populist Right. On 4 December 2016, we observed a demonstration of several anti-corruption groups as they congregated along the Avenida Paulista in Sao Paulo. Along with several banners proclaiming the need to confront corruption there were others suggesting the Left had destroyed democracy in Brazil, how liberal values were undermining those associated with *real* Brazilians, and a return to a military or police rule. We saw proclamations as diverse as calls for the return to a Brazilian monarchy, militant action against abortion, Islamophobia and racism,

and a return to dictatorship. As we attempted to walk along what was, at several points, a highly congested street, we also saw several depictions of Moro in a superhero costume – while the logos of several Leftist parties adorning the cash stuffed underwear of a large inflatable, sharp-toothed, pin-stripe suited, executive with his trousers down. The demonstration was, however, peaceful, and much media coverage in Brazil, and globally, seemed to focus on its anti-corruption stance and orderliness, omitting some of the darker tones that we had observed first-hand. Protests of the Left are rarely presented in this way. Much of the reporting around the Black Bloc in Brazil, for instance, has concentrated on its militancy, particularly its use of a tactic that damages property associated with Banks and other global corporations (Solano et al., 2014). The imaginary of dissent in those confluences of political communication and event articulated as intimidatory and threatening, where the imagery and language of the former protests we mentioned were presented as safe and much more family-friendly.

## FRANCE

The Front National (FN) was founded by Jean-Marie le Pen in 1972. It was, for many years, considered a party on the far Right of French and European politics (Polakow-Suransky, 2016), associating itself with other emerging nationalist and anti-European-Union groups emerging around Europe from that time onwards. Under the leadership of Jean-Marie the party gained a reputation for hard line, almost authoritarian, positions on law and order, economic protectionism and mass immigration (Front National, ND). His views on the growth of Islamisation around Europe and France under Nazi occupation, and the Holocaust, drew many to initially associate the party with other far-Right groups then current, such as Italy's Movimento Sociale Italiano, and Britain's own National Front. Though equally as troubling in many of its political positions, the emergence of a more populist Right from the early party of the twenty-first century onwards led to a growing division between the FN's desire for power and the controversy that commonly followed many of Jean-Marie Le Pen's more contentious comments. Arguably some of his most divisive statements, both inside and outside the Front National, have been around the Holocaust, which he described as *just a detail in the history of World War II*. After resigning in 2011 his daughter, Marine Le Pen, assumed the leadership of the FN. Following a high-profile inquiry into Jean-Marie's anti-Semitic remarks Marine expelled her father from

the party in 2015, distancing herself from her father's earlier comments when she publicly described the Holocaust as the *height of barbarism* (Pognon, 2008). Under Marine the FN has undergone a significant rebranding, adopting less extreme and provocative rhetoric than it has done previously. Drawing on rising Eurosceptic feeling growing in France, as it is in many other EU member states, emerging from a sense of ongoing economic precarity which has been entangled with a media imaginary articulated as a crisis of migration and a political elite that cannot be trusted, she has been able to repackage many of the party's formerly extreme views as ostensibly populist centre-Right policies (Lichfield, 2015). There are presidential elections due in France shortly after the publication of this book; at the time of writing, Marine Le Pen is one of the main contenders for that office. To fully grasp the rise and rise of the FN under her leadership requires more than an understanding of political communication. Successfully managing imaginaries that strike a chord with many that currently feel their concerns are going unheard in French democracy, which address discourses exposed through *events* in the cultural political economy of recent European political history, has been a key characteristic of her tenure. A combination of political communication and CES can offer new insight into both her increasing influence in French politics, as well as offering new ways of analysing and evaluating the growth of the Right across Europe.

## USA

Any consideration of a democracy of the spectacle cannot avoid the Republican red elephant in the room. The election of the 45th President of the USA: Donald Trump. So replete with examples of event politics; so rich in spectacle; so resonant with the conceptualisation of *cool capitalism* we outlined in "Conclusion", Donald Trump's campaign would deserve a separate and detailed analysis using the combined perspectives of political communication and CES in its own right. When, in 2011, Lasn and White posted a proposal to occupy Wall Street on the Adbusters website they focused on a simple one message call – to get money out of politics (White, 2016). With a chilling dystopian twist, by overturning a long-held maxim that the US presidential candidate that spends the most money wins the election,<sup>1</sup> the presidential campaign of Donald Trump went some way to delivering on that aspiration (Kolodny, 2016). According to data gathered by the Federal Election Commission ([fec.gov](http://fec.gov), ND) the Trump campaign spent around \$247.5 million, whilst that of Hillary Clinton was \$497.5 million. Though the actual figures are open to some degree of

interpretation (in one report, that presented in Metrocosm.com (ND) for example, put Clinton's spending as around 170% more than Trumps), there is little room for doubting that Trump campaign spent substantially less than that of his rival for the presidency. Using the same FEC statistics, Donald Trump's campaign was one of the lowest spending, successful, presidential campaigns since 1960. Despite controversy at almost every stage of the campaign trail – through the primaries to his nomination and ultimate election – and recurrently being written off as unelectable by many commentators, it seems that those self-same commentators effectively worked to create a perfect storm of messages that only seemed to enhance the spectacle of his campaign. From his proposal for a wall between the USA and Mexico, and the banning of Muslims from entering the country, to his reluctance to divulge details of his tax affairs; from his call for the arrest of Hillary Clinton, and the non-acceptance of a result that would have put her in the White House, to news media stories circulated about his apparent sexist attitude and behaviour towards women, seemed served to support what came over as a managed image of a counter-establishment celebrity. Though his speeches lacked detail, substance or rational argument, they articulated a message that resonated meaningfully to many who had felt excluded by a dominant political elite. Whether we hold a view that his election was a least worst option, or that he spoke for those that felt they no longer had a voice, he was regularly in the media spotlight. Both Clinton and Trump rarely dealt with issues substantively; frequently shown as combatants in an ugly fight where platitude and attitude carried more weight than deliberation and rational argumentation. According to USA Today (Levin, 2016), despite the multi-channel, catch-up viewing, television culture we are now in, the 2016 presidential debates had the largest of any other on record. The election combining event television with event politics: Donald Trump – the candidate with the poll factor; voted into the (White)house. In a campaign season that felt more like a reality TV contest, Trump played it like the bad boy the public love to hate that recurs as a strong trope within that genre. If this had been some sort of role reversed version of the US Apprentice, for which he had been the front-*man*, we would be laughing at the result. Now the spectacle has finished, and we are confronted with the 'novelty' candidate winning, we are left to wonder how such a maverick and unpredictable figure will behave as the US Commander-in-Chief. Though CES may still be an emerging area of research interest, it is one that can work fruitfully with many other areas of academic activity. In the

main text of the book we explored the thesis that we are entering a period where the dominant media discourse of democratic participation is one that articulates it as a democracy on the spectacle. This annexe has presented three short sketches to illustrate how that thesis can be understood as a global phenomenon. As we argued in this chapter, the democracy of the spectacle is something that needs to be confronted. If we are to attain a truly participatory democracy, that develops through deliberation and critical reflection and is open to contestation – one that treats the political as meaningful at a communal and individual level (and not as some form of entertainment) – we need to acknowledge the great responsibility we bear as academics to speak truth to power and work alongside others to empower them. It is only through collaboration and co-creation that this can be achieved.

#### NOTE

1. Whilst this is apocryphal; it is correct that for most US presidential elections, since 1968, the candidate spending the most on their campaign has won the election.

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