Populism as a historical development

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The concept of **Populism**

- **Contested concept**
  - Thin centered ideology (Mudde)? Emphasis on the nominal people (Canovan), heartland (Taggart)?
  - Rhetorical style? (Moffitt)
  - Threat or corrective to democracy (Rovira Kaltwasser)?

- **Response to a crisis**
  - Financial crisis. Disillusionment with democracy – or the elites (Kriesi & Pappas)
  - Crisis of representation > performing the people (Laclau, Moffitt&Tormey)
  - [http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1467-9248.12032](http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1467-9248.12032)

- **Empty articulation of “us”** (Laclau)
  - Mode of articulation with ideological grip (attachment & enthusiasm) that seeks to construct “us” in a dichotomous way (against something).
Heartlands of populism

- Populism may be seen as:
- Targeting heartlands (Paul Taggart)
- Speaking for nativism (Cas Mudde)
- Presenting an alternative of the majority, people or a mob rule (Jacques Rancière, Nadia Urbinati)
- Articulating the people (Laclau – but for him it is not a pre-given but in flux)
- Offering a solution for political identification to those who have suffered from postindustrialism (former industrial heartlands of American economy)
- Restoring faith in something like an abstract idea such as the nation
- Fantasies of salvation (Tismaneanu)
Popularizing and simplifying

• Mediatized politics – or *telepopulisme* (Pierre-André Taguieff)

• Simplification of the political message – or simplification of politics?

• Are you trying to make the audience to understand – or is politics just a *farse* (video from Jul 14, 2015)?
  • How can a meme turn into political strength?

• Reduction of political debate into *mere* identity or identification – rather than political demands, issues, or interests?
  • Modern mass politics is about identities but is that what they all is?

• Reduction of the political debate into a dichotomy: divided society between us and them? (Laclau)
Populism as anti-elitism

- Thin ideology: people and the elite (Cas Mudde)
- The Tea Party and Occupy movements in particular, Obama electoral success in 2008
- Widespread discussion of Latin American populism
- Emergence of populism in Europe have drawn attention to populism in the United States.
- Populism of Modi in India and populist-nationalisms in Asia
- So we can say that emergence of anti-elitism was expected after the economic downturn and recession. First there was “left-wing” populism, now also right-wing anti-elitism is on the rise.
- Attack on the status quo and the style and background of those who have been educated into the political class or even inherited their positions through political clan (Jeb Bush, Hillary Clinton)
- “Dissaffected middle-class”: New Hampshire was the ‘populist moment’ of the election campaigns so far
Populism as a mode of articulation

- Performative-constitutive character of populism (Ernesto Laclau, Benjamin Moffitt)
- Constitutive dichotomy: populism related to a radical division of the social field or field of representation into “us” and “them” (Laclau)
- Temporary or permanent?
- What happens when substance disappear?
- What are the substantive demands?
- Can be grouping many together under a single heading. But populism is not reducible to a single-issue politics. The heading, slogan, leader offers a sense of unity for the heterogeneous groups and demands. Simplifies space of representation.
From Populist Parties to Populism within political parties

- Populism relies on *antagonism* and *simplifying articulation of the ‘people’ (or other overarching empty signifier)* as a common point of identification
- Affects – passions, not irrational politics
- Democracy not demography >>> constitutive people not pre-given people
- **Populism is *not* a permanent characteristic – even of parties calling themselves populist**
  - (inclusive/exclusive? Each articulation of the people is also already exclusive of what is not the people, which is the *raison d’être* for the articulation of the people)
  - (How much? Extent of populism? Intensity of antagonism)
  - (populism vs. institutionalism, articulation vs. 1=1 representation, mere identification vs. technocracy?)
- Perhaps we ought not to look at populism *per se* but...
- **populist dynamics: an analytical distinction**
Listen to the new voices in research
(Benjamin Moffitt, gathers some of the points made at his keynote: PSA Populism SG conference, 23 March 2018)

All parties can resort to populism

“Mainstream parties and populist parties binary is dead”

Gradational not binary (populist or NOT populist)

Instead of clear-cut categories (cat-dog) we should perhaps talk about something else

Categories are difficult...

Populism is not against democracy – but always includes it at some level
Challenge to traditional conceptualisations of democracy and politics

Political meaning-making central

Politics as rhetoric-performative, constitutive

If old cleavages are not working in explaining the developments let us try something else?
What is Populism?

• Most usual reference is the elite-people distinction
  • Who the are the people and the elite? – ‘Mere’ rhetoric?

• Manifesto research offers a wide range of references for the people
  • Populism could be anywhere where there is the nation or us?

• What about the populists (especially when in power) are they not the elites?
  • E.g. Berlusconi, Orbán, even Timo Soini?
Was ist Populismus?

01
Well, it’s not nationalism, as has been suggested between the lines (Müller 2016)

02
Can get entangled with nationalism and racism, xenophobia
Trash that!

If a thin-centred ideology, core is an empty shell

Populism has no content

Thin-centred for Michael Freeden
(Journal of Political Ideologies 2017)
What does this mean?

When things are empty they don’t have content *BUT they may have a form*

Dichotomy and a reference to an “us”

There may even be an emotional, gripping element!? 
Categories to dynamics

If there is something constitutive or even performative in political meaning-making in the populist way...

... why don’t we look at rhetoric to for concepts that could capture this?

Rhetorical moves or tropes for example?

Dynamics or moves in the party system!
(Populist) dynamics in party system

**Mainstream(ing) populism**
= populist meaning-making that emerges in the "mainstream" parties

**Fringe(ing) populism**
= populism that challenges all the other parties from a supposed outside
  NOT niche parties etc.

**Competing populism / bi-polar polarisation (in the "mainstream")**
= two parties co-constitute each other NOT because there is a sedimented/established cleavage BUT because reject each other (often as illegitimate): includes anti-populism (NOT just the content that is rejected but the whole chain of reference)
Problems

- How to measure?
- Long-term development
- Dynamics in the party system
- Transformations have effect on each other
Not only some items get entangled with populism get adopted by other parties (mainstreamed?)

Dichotomous meaning-making has effects on the party system

What effects? Should we just look at dynamics?

Parties move to different positions?

Something gets challenged and something mainstreamed/sidelined?
Six country cases with populist dynamics: Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy.

Parties move to different positions. Examples:
In Finland: Finns Party to the mainstream and then after the split fringing again. Austria and Italy witness similar moves: more fringe parties mainstream. In Hungary: Jobbik mainstreams and Fidesz fringes while trying to hold on to competing populism.

Election results: Chapel Hill expert data: main L&R parties w/ RRP;
- L-R scale;
- (a) the salience of corruption issues and (b) the salience of anti-elite issues to the party. If parties mainstream populism, does that mean that corruption and anti-elite issues become more salient and prominent for mainstream parties?

Political Data Yearbook qualitative analysis of reports

Longterm view 1999-present

Other data?
Austria
Denmark
Finland
Italy
Effects? Anything to do with “populism”?

Parties move to different positions? Not longterm effects on L-R.

Populist moments

Dichotomous language and entangled meanings mainstream

Something gets challenged or sidelined in mainstreaming?

Limits of technocracy on era of fluid meanings and emotions.
Mainstream, fringe, competing populism

- Emilia Palonen
Logic(s) of Populism and Populist Dynamics...
Case Studies: Hungary, Finland, etc.

• The analytical distinction is drawn on Hungarian politics
Populist dynamics

• Exactly how does populism emerge? Which dynamics?

• Mainstream
  • Fidesz, SP
  • SDP, NC

• Fringe
  • Jobbik
  • Finns Party

• Competing
  • Polarisation
  • Political frontier
  • Blocks debate
Viktor Orbán, Fidesz 1989- PM 1998-2002, 2010-
(youth > nation > polgári/civic/bourgeois/progressive anti-communism 2002 > extra-parliamentary village populism in striped shirts > tough anti-immigration statesman)
Populism in Hungary

- Fidesz, Viktor Orbán PM 1998-2002
- Competing populism 2000-2010: “Right” and “Left” (Socialist Party & Alliance of Free Democrats)
- Fidesz government 2010- (vs. fragmented opposition)
- Populism exists also in the mainstream and actually something we call here “mainstream populism” is connected to “fringe populism”
- These analytical concepts are helpful in outlining what is going on in the two countries
Hungarian Politics

• Polarisation late 1990s to the present. Competing populism with strong frontier. Impedes any real debate on concrete policy issues.

• Electoral system that favors large parties, when strategically “used”

• Left and Right gain from the opposition to each other

• Attempts by the small parties to contest the power of the two large Fidesz and SP all fail as their claim always assume and therefore rearticulate the the frontier.

• Jobbik emerges rejects both Left and Right, the political elites themselves, capitalism, and offer to defend the “Hungarian soil”. Fringe populism.
  • Related to an paramilitary organisation, Magyar Gárda. Ant-Semitism, anti-Roma, etc. (Anti-semitism and anti-Roma rhetoric are not unusual in Hungary: this is also widespread among other parties and population.)
## Hungarian elections 1990-2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election Year</th>
<th>SP</th>
<th>Fidesz</th>
<th>MDF</th>
<th>SzDSz/ LMP</th>
<th>ISHP</th>
<th>KDPP</th>
<th>MiÉP/Job bik</th>
<th>Others</th>
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<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>10/11</td>
<td>5/9*</td>
<td>24/25</td>
<td>22/21*</td>
<td>11/12</td>
<td>6/7</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>31/33</td>
<td>8/7</td>
<td>12/12</td>
<td>19/20</td>
<td>8/9</td>
<td>7/7</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>29/32</td>
<td>26/28</td>
<td>(Fidesz) 3</td>
<td>10/8</td>
<td>13/14</td>
<td>3/3</td>
<td>6/6</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>41/42*</td>
<td>39/41</td>
<td>(Fidesz) 7/6*</td>
<td>1/1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>5/4</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>40/43</td>
<td>42/42</td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>6/7</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2/2</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>17 (MiÉP: 0.3)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of vote in the national elections (two rounds)
Elections 2014 – to present

• In 2010 just before the elections, the
• Fidesz had no election manifesto, it had one in 2010 but changing constitution was not included (Transparency International Hungary points out, HVG 5.4.2014)
• Claimed to represent the people and argue that living standards have just risen. Empty mainstream populism that thrives on “feel-good” and presents itself as the only alternative (others bad)
• *Mainstream populism*

• Jobbik, mainstreamed their discourse to ordinary people and families
• *Fringe to mainstream*
Decline of the left

• After the Socialist PM admitted having ‘lied night and day’ about the budget deficit in an attempt to challenge corruption and polarisation, the ‘emperor was revealed naked’. Left voters did not go to the polls or they voted for Fidesz. SP lost their position as political counterforce.

• Liberal left-coalition partner SzDSz divided. LMP was established.

• A number of small parties on the left emerge.

• Democratic Coalition in 2014 aims to challenge Fidesz > they re-establish the frontier when they articulate their position. No substantive demands or independent position.

• Figureheads of the left list include former PMs and ministers. No break with the past for the discredited (corruption scandals) Left.

• Move to the fringe populist position? Or the return of the competing populism? Polarisation among the political elite does not end.
Timo Soini, Finns Party > Blue Reform, Foreign minister 2015-


Mainstreaming: Blue Reform
Fringing back: Finns Party

Challenge from within the party!
Fringe populism

- Challenge from “outside”
- Anti-system
Fringe populism

Hungary: (1990 > Fidesz?), Jobbik, Greens?, LMP?

Finland: 1980s SMP > Finns Party 2000s (in gov’t 2015-)

e.g. UK: UKIP;

ÖÖ
Mainstream populism

• Declares representation of the people (and little else) and generates antagonistic frontier through marginalization of others
Mainstream populism

• Hungary: Fidesz, HSP
• Finland: National Coalition Party under Katainen & Stubb Centre Party in 2015 elections
Competing populism

• “Left” vs. “Right”
• Identification through the negation of the other

• Lack of internal contestation
• “Frozen” political frontier
Competing populism

• “Left” vs. “Right”
• 2000-2010 in Hungary

• Hungarian Socialist Party Fidesz
North American populism

• We discussed the way in which historical populism in the US was a third way emerging
  • initially in the party system: third party to contest democrats and republicans (this is something that emerges regularly, usually people who can afford to run nation wide campaigns)
  • Later (e.g. Trump and Sanders) within the political party

• There are also some similarities in the contexts of argumentation
Economic Populism and the American Farmer

• Populism ‘is a movement of protest by the poor, commodity-producing periphery of industria against its dominance by industria. It arises when the modernization of a society produces growing interaction and growing interdependence between agraria and industria’.

• ‘Populist protest arose in both cases when ideals of independence and equality came into increasing conflict with the reality of interdependence.’ Agrarians needed the industria more than the industria needed the agraria. ‘For the American farmer the ideals of independence, individualism, and equality were reflected in the Jeffersonian model of the independent yeoman farmer tilling his own soil.’ (44)

• ‘The American populists objected to the fact that millions of acres of land, the farmers' most important resource, were owned by outsiders – in the West by land speculators and the railroads and, in the South, by Northern and alien land syndicates. The populists demanded that all land owned by aliens and by railroads and other corporations that exceeded their actual needs "be reclaimed by the government and held for actual settlers only."’ (Johnson 1983, 51)

  • https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300004197
Economic Populism and the third world

• ‘Among the solutions American agrarian radicals proposed for the inequitable distribution of wealth was a progressive income tax. The nearest equivalents among the proposals of the developing countries are the demands that developed countries increase their development assistance to 0.7 percent of per capita GNP (reflecting ability to pay) and that the world's industrial production be reallocated so that the Third World share will have increased from 7 to 25 percent by the year 2000.’ (Johnson 1983, 51)

• Both the new populism which he associates with the Third World and its sympathisers and the old populism of the 19th century shares the call for increased participation by the agraria, direct participation, state ownership and collective action critical of the “interests”.

• **How does populism work today?**
Populism as intersectional & global

• Class
• Gender
• Economics
• Transnationality
• Multi-vocality
• Global
Populist demands

• Political
• Economic
• Identity-based
• Cultural / National?

• As populism is empty, all it offers is a basis for different ideologies to entangle.
Background and further
Populism on the Loose
Eds. Urpo Kovala, Emilia Palonen, Maria Ruotsalainen, and Tuija Saresma

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The Finns Party – from emergence to the split

- Finns Party established in 1995 on the basis of the Finnish Rural Party (Vennamo), Soini as the leader 1997-2017 (split with Blue Reform), landslide in 2011.

- Book Data: 2000s the national daily Helsingin Sanomat; the Finns Party’s own newspaper; Party leader Timo Soini’s own writings two books, the MA thesis in polisci at University of Helsinki

- Chapter 1: Rhetoric-performative discourse analysis = Politics and cultural studies approach to the Finns Party and populism

- Chapter 2: Conceptual analysis (meaning of “populism” and relation to populism theories)

- Chapter 3: poststructuralist analysis (how the Finns Party is articulated relationally: democracy a key signifier)

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Entangling, mainstreaming discourses; Soini’s rhetoric & populism (Canovan, Laclau)

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Mainstreaming Populism Consortium (MAPO) Academy of Finland (2017–2021)

- **University of Helsinki** (communications & political science: PI Juha Herkman, Virpi Salojärvi, Halil Gürhanli, Anniina Hyttinen, Göran Nilsson etc.),
  **University of Turku** (political history, communications & political science: Markku Jokisipilä, Niko Hatakka, Tuula Vaarakallio, etc.),
  **University of Jyväskylä** (cultural studies & political science: Urpo Kovala, Tuija Saresma, etc.)

- What does *mainstreaming populism* mean?
  - There are Populist Parties and populism in parties: Any parties refer to populist articulation (– and they should to some degree? Janus face)
  - Mainstreaming dichotomous speech and overflowing empty signifiers
  - Spread of other ideas and dichotomies (nationalism and xenophobia to other parties)
  - Distinction between nationalism, racism and xenophobia ... and populism (particularly a Nordic challenge, but seems to be there for theory as well)

- **Mainstream(ing), fringe and competing/polaris(ed)ing populism** (e.g. multi-country study – starting with populists in power in Hungary, Finland, Turkey, Venezuela; mixed-methods paper on Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy – PSA & IPSA; comparative work... )

- [Http://blogs.helsinki.fi/populismi](http://blogs.helsinki.fi/populismi)