

T5.3:

Online Tri-lateral Research Panel

PaCE, POPREBEL and DEMOS

WP5 – Dissemination and engagement

T5.3. Links to other projects and public outreach



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**Populism and
Civic Engagement**



Online Tri-lateral Research Panel

Populism '21

Populist Challenges to Liberal Democracy in Europe

The aim of this report is to present the outcomes of the Online Tri-lateral Research Panel organised on in **February, 18-19 2021**, as a joint collaboration among the partners of the Horizon 2020 research and innovation projects *PaCE*, *POPREBEL* and *DEMOS*.

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Disclaimer

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1. Online Tri-lateral Research Panel

1.1. Presentation

General framework

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted everyday aspects of citizens' lives, including the European collaboration including the excellent and valuable opportunities to meet, engage, and exchange research and innovation on the populism movement in Europe.

The City of Reykjavik, under the auspices of the Horizon 2020 project ***PaCE project – Populism and Civic Engagement***, in collaboration with the other two Horizon 2020 research and innovation projects, ***POPREBEL*** and ***DEMOS***, organized an *online tri-lateral research panel on populism on February 17-18, 2021*.

The conference aimed to bring together a multi-disciplinary perspective on populist movements in Europe as a collaborative effort of academics, research schoolers, social activists, democracy innovators as partners of the ***PaCE, POPREBEL, and DEMOS projects***.

Goal of the research panel

The online research panel was an opportunity to gather state-of-the-art research on populism, including causal mechanisms, the negative tendencies associated with populism parties in Europe, the effects on the governance, and the measures taken for reassuring citizens and constructing a firmer democratic and institutional foundation in Europe.

Main outcomes

Each consortium partner has submitted a ***500-700 words research abstract*** reflecting the results on conceptual, empirical, experimental, technologically innovative solutions, theoretical work, or other relevant, innovative methods on populism and sustaining strategies for a healthy democracy in Europe.

The abstracts and PPT presentations of participants are collected in a shared folder created in Dropbox, where all three consortia partners have access.

1.2. Format and content

- a. The workshop's time table: 2 days-workshop from 12:00-18:00 pm GMT
- b. **February 18** - Start-up panel: **Plenary session 1 hour**
 - i. 15 minutes introduction of each project and 15 minutes reserved for discussion and questions
- c. **February, 18** - Three sessions of presentations; each session of 1 hour and 30 minutes, 10 minutes each presentation, 30 minutes reserved for discussion in each session.
- d. **February, 19** - Two sessions of presentation; each session of 1 hour and 30 minutes, 10 minutes each presentation, 30 minutes reserved for discussion in each session.
- e. **February, 19** - One-hour session open for a debate among academics and scholars on interdisciplinary/crossdisciplinarity approach and definition of populism.



2. Agenda

Session 1 – Macro- and micro-causes (10 minutes/presentation)

1. *A semantic network approach to ethnography: what the POPREBEL data say.* **Alberto Cottica, Amelia Hassoun, Edgeryders** (POPREBEL)
2. *Emotions and populism.* **Agneta Fischer and David Abadi** (DEMOS)
3. *Causal mechanisms for populist and nativist voting.* **Ruzha Smilova** (PaCE) *Demand meets supply. A conceptual framework.* **Istvan Benczes** (POPREBEL)
4. *Demand meets supply. A conceptual framework.* **Istvan Benczes and Kristina Szabo** (POPREBEL)
5. *Exogenous shocks and voter behavior in Central and Eastern Europe.* **András Tétényi** (POPREBEL)
6. *Policy-making by tweets: discursive governance, populism and the Trump presidency.* **Umut Korkut and Osman Sahin** (DEMOS)

Session 2 – Macro- and micro-causes & What to do? (10 minutes/presentation)

1. *How agent-based modelling might help political science.* **Bruce Edmonds** (PaCE)
2. *Agent-based simulation.* **Reinhard Heinisch and Ruth Meyer** (PaCE)
3. *From regime change to recession and the emergence of populism in CEE: A Polanyian interpretation.* **Gábor Vígvári** (POPREBEL)
4. *Democratic efficacy and populist attitudes.* **Zsolt Boda and Márton Bene** (DEMOS)
5. *Approaches to foresight scenarios.* **Matthew Hall and David Barnard-Wills** (PaCE)
6. *Between the global and the local: developing foresight scenarios about populism in Eastern Europe.* **Vello Pettai** (POPREBEL)

Session 3 – Culture and media (10 minutes/presentation)

1. *Populism and the politicization of the COVID-19 crisis in Europe.* **Nicolas Hubé and Giuliano Bobba** (DEMOS)
2. *Neo-traditionalism as a concept – examples from Poland and Hungary.* **Zdzislaw Mach** (POPREBEL)
3. *Othering Europe in populist narratives in Poland.* **Joanna Orzechowska** (POPREBEL)
4. *Religion and populism in Poland.* **Lucja Piekarska** (POPREBEL)
5. *Populist narratives.* **Teresa Lindenauer** (PaCE)

Session 4 – Politics (10 minutes/presentation)

1. *Civic strategies addressing populism.* **Hendrik Nahr** (DEMOS)
2. *Populism in the former Yugoslavia.* **Haris Dajc** (POPREBEL)
3. *Mapping patterns of policies by populist parties: A quantitative cross-country analysis.* **Oliver Lembcke and Michael Georgi** (DEMOS)
4. *Populist attitudes and the vote for populist parties.* **Martin Dolezal** (PaCE)
5. *Electoral performance of populist parties in Eastern Europe 1989-2019.* **Piret Ehin and Liisa Talving** (POPREBEL)

Session 5 – Politics & Politics and governance (10 minutes/presentation)

1. *Policy making patterns in Hungary and Poland under populist governance.* **Attila Bartha and Artur Lipinski** (DEMOS)
2. *Nativist in Europe: How they perform in and fall from power.* **Takis Pappas and Dimitris Skleparis** (PaCE)



3. *From cronyism to neo-feudalism: personal dependencies and the varieties of capitalism.* **Istvan Kollai** (POPREBEL)
4. *Ideological and strategic populists.* **Daniel Smilov** (PaCE)
5. *Looking at “relative” trending topics connected populism, nativism, and citizens engagement since 2014 on the public internet.* **Róbert Bjarnasson** (PaCE)
6. *Populist constitutionalism.* **Josep Maria Castella-Andreu** (DEMOS)

Session 6 – Interdisciplinary/cross-disciplinary approach and definition of populism

Open discussion and reflections



3. Abstracts

3.1. Session 1 – Macro- and micro-causes

Presentation 1: A semantic network approach to ethnography: what the POPREBEL data say.

Alberto Cottica and Amelia Hassoun (POPREBEL)

POPREBEL/Edgeryders

Abstract

Semantic Social Network Analysis (henceforth SSNA) is a research method conceived for the social sciences. It consists in a combination of techniques drawn from digital ethnography and from network science. The digital ethnography lineage ensures that SSNA – like all ethnographic methods – remains open-ended and exploratory and can spot novelty that it was not looking for. The contribution of network science is twofold. First, it provides quantitative insight on the extent to which a statement vouched by one informant is shared by the others. Second, it provides a high-level view of the data that remains intelligible when the datasets are large, with many informants, giving many testimonies.

We apply SSNA to the POPREBEL corpus and explore how ethnographic codes co-occurrence graphs can be used generate questions, hypotheses and insights on European populism.

Presentation 2: Emotions and populism

David Abadi & Agneta Fischer (DEMOS)

University of Amsterdam

Abstract

In the course of our DEMOS research project, our team at the social psychology department collaborated with computer scientists (**Pere-Lluís Huguet Cabot, Verna Dankers, Ekaterina Shutova**) at the University of Amsterdam. We used artificial intelligence, deep learning and computational modeling by creating various datasets of populist attitudes, emotions, metaphor and framing within political discourse. Meanwhile, we published two papers at two leading conferences (*EMNLP* and *EACL*) within the field of computational linguistics, which we will briefly present during our workshop:

https://scholar.google.com/citations?view_op=top_venues&hl=en&vq=eng_computationallinguistics

Our first paper was published at the *Findings of the Association for Computational Linguistics: EMNLP 2020* (**h5-index 112**):

Abstract

There has been an increased interest in modelling political discourse within the natural language processing (NLP) community, in tasks such as political bias and misinformation detection, among others. Metaphor-rich and emotion-eliciting communication strategies are ubiquitous in political rhetoric, according to social science research. Yet, none of the existing computational models of political discourse has incorporated these phenomena. In this paper, we present the first joint models of metaphor, emotion and political rhetoric, and demonstrate that



they advance performance in three tasks: predicting political perspective of news articles, party affiliation of politicians and framing of policy issues.

Cabot, P. L. H., Dankers, V., Abadi, D., Fischer, A., & Shutova, E. (2020, November). The Pragmatics behind Politics: Modelling Metaphor, Framing and Emotion in Political Discourse. In *Proceedings of the 2020 Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing: Findings* (pp. 4479-4488). <https://www.aclweb.org/anthology/2020.findings-emnlp.402/>

Our second paper was recently published at *The 16th Conference of the European Chapter of the Association for Computational Linguistics: EACL 2021 (h5-index 45)*:

Abstract

Computational modelling of political discourse tasks has become an increasingly important area of research in natural language processing. Populist rhetoric has risen across the political sphere in recent years; however, computational approaches to it have been scarce due to its complex nature. In this paper, we present the new *Us vs. Them* dataset, consisting of 6861 Reddit comments annotated for populist attitudes and the first large-scale computational models of this phenomenon. We investigate the relationship between populist mindsets and social groups, as well as a range of emotions typically associated with these. We set a baseline for two tasks related to populist attitudes and present a set of multi-tasks learning models that leverage and demonstrate the importance of emotion and group identification as auxiliary tasks.

Huguet Cabot, P. L., Abadi, D., Fischer, A., & Shutova, E. (2021). Us vs. Them: A Dataset of Populist Attitudes, News Bias and Emotions. *arXiv e-prints*, arXiv-2101. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2101.11956>

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Presentation 3: Causal mechanisms for populist and nativist voting

Ruzha Smilova (PaCE)

Centre for liberal strategies and Sofia University, Bulgaria

Abstract

Three types of causal mechanisms (situational, action-formation and transformational) leading to populist (both populist in the narrower sense used within PaCE and nativist (Pappas 2019)) voting are identified and discussed.

Within the situational mechanisms the role of socio-economic, socio-cultural and political factor in triggering crisis of political representation is distinguished and analyzed. The role of individual and social psychological factors for activating populist vote is also discussed.

The presentation draws on D4.1 Causal Mechanisms of Populism within PaCE, available at

http://popandce.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/PaCE_D4.1_Causal-mechanisms-of-populism.pdf.



Presentation 4: Demand meets supply. A conceptual framework

István Benczes, Krisztina Szabó (POPREBEL)

Corvinus University of Budapest

Abstract

Recent research in political science and – to a lesser degree – in economics has devoted considerable efforts to understand and examine the phenomena of populism, still the role of economics is rather limited in studying populism. Economics and economic rationale, however, provide ample grounds and inputs for studying the demand side as well as the supply side of populism. The paper summarises progress and identifies weaknesses in the evolution of economic literature on populism and charts a path forward by detecting the main links between the supply and the demand side of populism. Our paper revolves around the question of why the implementation of some Pareto-inferior policies by populists receive support from a significant fraction of the population, when most of these policies ultimately hurt the economic interests of this majority. We argue that populist politicians exaggerate existing socio-economic issues and deliberately create social cleavages and tensions. The cleavages that populist politicians highlight and render salient often have economic and material roots, yet populists strive to attach some superior values to these cleavages that justify and legitimate their power. Thus, voters support politicians choosing policies in line with their preferences which can loosely be interpreted as policies that are not in their best economic interest but that serve their belief system.

Presentation 5: Exogenous shocks and voter behaviour in Central and Eastern Europe

András Tétényi

POPREBEL

Abstract

Populism and populist leaders have been grabbing the headlines of the international media for the better part of the 2010s. The elections of Donald Trump and Jair Bolsonaro, the BREXIT referendum and Boris Johnson becoming Prime Minister, the growing popularity of populist discourse exemplified by the emergence of AfD (Alternative für Deutschland), National Rally (Rassemblement national), Northern League (Lega Nord) etc. have made these themes a common sight in politics. A stream of literature using econometric methods has analysed the connection between economic factors, cultural factors and the share of the populist vote, however the results have been mixed. While Inglehart and Norris (2016) and Mutz (2018) found that cultural factors influence voters far more when voting for populist parties, Guiso et al., (2018) found the opposite: economic decline will influence voters to vote for populist parties. It is interesting to note that most of the cross-country and comparative articles focused on Western Europe, US or Latin-America therefore it is not known whether the models created, and explanations given, to investigate causal relations will work in Central and Eastern Europe. Therefore, this article wishes to add to the growing literature which explains the rise of populism due to economic reasons, through analysing the case of Central and Eastern Europe.

A major challenge in understanding voting behaviour, is to know which factor led to an individual voting for a particular party, and at the same time limiting endogeneity and ruling out reverse causality. This can be done by focusing on a major, unexpected, and external shocks, which had unexpected effects on certain parts of the population. This paper identifies two major shocks for investigation: the unemployment shock of the Financial



Crisis of 2008/2009 and the globalization shock of China joining the WTO in 2001 and trading more freely with the rest of the world. The shock of the financial crisis led to a huge rise in unemployment for which the traditional parties had no answers, leading for voters to seek out alternative parties, promising them quick and easy solutions. The globalization shock of China joining the WTO, led to manufacturing regions experiencing additional competition for the goods they produced resulting in layoffs and loss of business. This had the same effect by increasing support for populist parties.

This article uses a 2SLS estimation method and IV variables to test the relationship between exogenous shocks and voting for populist parties. The panel dataset used, includes the European Social Survey as well as regional (NUTS-2) datasets. The article finds that both unemployment and both the globalization shock are significant factors in explaining the populist vote, therefore if governments want to act against it, they have to provide fiscal support to people suffering from the exogenous effects of financial crises and globalization.

Presentation 6: Policy-making by tweets: discursive governance, populism and Trump presidency

Umut Korkut and Osman Sahin (DEMOS)

Glasgow Caledonia University

Abstract

Experience in various countries demonstrated that populist leaders enfeeble democracy. Once elected, populist leaders concentrate power in their hands while undermining horizontal checks on their power. By drawing upon the Trump presidency in the US, this article reveals one of the dynamics in which populist leaders bypass institutions of horizontal checks in policy-making. It argues that populist leaders use social media platforms to disseminate discourse to convince people that a certain course of action is necessary and thereafter bypass formal institutions in policy-making. American politics under Trump is the context for this paper. Trump used discourse first to discipline the federal bureaucracy, second to roll back Obama-era social and environmental regulations, and third to reorient the US migration policy. His discourse became pervasive thanks to his efficient use of Twitter, which allowed him to achieve political change without going through formal institutional channels.

3.2. Session 2 – Macro- and micro-causes & What to do?

Presentation 1: How Agent-Based Modelling might help Political Science

Bruce Edmonds (PaCE)

Manchester Metropolitan University, UK

Centre for Policy Modelling

Abstract

This talk briefly explains what agent-based modelling is, and its particular advantages in terms of formally representing political processes (relating micro- and macro-levels, representing true heterogeneity and social embeddedness, allowing experimentation with otherwise hidden processes of change). It then looks at the various purposes/ways in which it might support Political Science, including: for exploring the properties and outcomes of abstract thought experiments, as an analogy - a guide to thinking about politics and to support complex explanations of observed data/outcomes. Simulations need to be validated before one has any empirical confidence in what they suggest, but then a variety of 'what if' experiments can be explored.



Presentation 2: Agent-based simulation

Richard Heinisch & Ruth Meyer (PaCE)

The Paris-Lodron University and Manchester Metropolitan University

Abstract

In a novel approach, we aim to study populism as an interdependent mechanism of an individual-level phenomenon and a supply by political parties. Drawing on data from the Austrian National Election Study (AUTNES) 2013 and the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) 2014, we aim to demonstrate voters' and parties' behavior by spatially mapping attitudes, policy positions, and issue salience. Based on theories of individual-level decision-making, we simulate the behavior of the voters (i.e. the agents) according to their given traits and attitudes that we identify via the survey items. In multiple interdependent mechanisms, the voting and party behavior changes over time, which we aim to show after establishing sets of rules for the actors in the model. After establishing a reference model with the data and context for Austria, we aim to validate the mechanisms and outcomes with more recent survey data, before we proceed by extending the simulation model to other contexts and thus be able to simulate voting and party behavior more broadly.

Presentation 3: From regime change to recession and the emergence of populism in CEE: A Polanyian interpretation

Gábor Vigvári

POPREBEL

Abstract

This presentation is about the proposed D5.5 of our POPREBEL research project and represents the starting point of a six-month long programme.

The transition from socialism into capitalism and a parallel transition from dictatorship into democracy was viewed in the political economic literature by many, as an unfeasible process. Potential losers of the transitional process and economic chaos and recession would create a demand for political parties, who would overturn the process of this dual transition. This approach can be interpreted within a Polanyian narrative, as the possibility of a countermovement against marketization.

In spite of these fears, economic institutions evolved towards a very liberalized competition state like setup, that was supported by the big majority of political parties. Central and Eastern European countries thus became the straight A student of economic liberalization and following the recipe of the Washington Consensus. This has been changing a lot, especially since the Great Recession of 2008. It can be argued that the crisis hit the societies of the region hard for the second time, and this second hit caused the turnaround that was originally expected to happen in the 1990s.

This paper tries to collect and analyse data starting from the regime change in order to illustrate the effect of the transformation on the societies of these countries, especially from a welfare perspective. The goal is to illustrate the devastating effects of the regime change and the 2008 crisis, and to put the political changes of the post-2008 CEE into a Polanyian perspective.



Presentation 4: Democratic efficacy and populist attitudes

Zsolt Boda & Márton Bene (DEMOS)

Centre for Social Science, Budapest

Abstract

The roots of populism are manifold. Hawkins and Rowira Kaltwasser (2019) argue that populist attitudes are present in any society, but specific context and factors are needed to activate them, like political entrepreneurs who exploit the existing problems and frame them along the populist discourse, or blatant failures of democratic representation. Still, populist attitudes exist and they provide the basis for any further populist development. A question this paper is interested in, which individual-level features predict these attitudes, or, conversely, which attitudes may serve as a protective shield against populist feelings. DEMOS proposes the concept of democratic efficacy to study this problem. The concept of democratic efficacy is an analytical framework to understand the challenges of populism and to provide guidance for actions and interventions. The term is designed to capture the way subjective sentiments toward politics—i.e., external and internal political efficacy—are connected to ‘objective’ individual capacities that are assumed to promote democratic behaviour. The concept of democratic efficacy thus embodies both subjective (attitudinal) and ‘objective’ (measurable individual skills) dimensions.

This presentation will shortly introduce the concept of democratic efficacy as well as the results of a quantitative (OLS regression) analysis. The question is which combination of political efficacy and democratic capacities offers the best protection against populist attitudes. Our hypothesis is that high internal and external political efficacy combined with high level of democratic capacities have the strongest negative effect on populist attitudes.

Populist attitudes are effectively measured on a scale based on Cas Mudde’s ideational approach (Akkerman et al. 2014). Some previous studies have already been done on populist attitudes and political efficacy, and it was demonstrated that they are both theoretically and empirically different constructs (Geurkink et al. 2019).

We defined democratic capacities in terms of democratic values (tolerance, autonomy, equality, openness to compromise); political knowledge; political information; and lack of extreme partisanship.

Our results indicate that different combinations of external and internal political efficacy and democratic capacities indeed have different predictive power concerning populist attitudes. Generally speaking stronger democratic capacities provide protection against populist attitudes and people with high political efficacy attitudes and strong political capacities have the weakest populist attitudes. That is, our hypothesis is corroborated. There are, however, two distinct group for whom political capacities do not influence the strength of populist attitudes: first, those with high external and low internal efficacy feeling (that we labelled as ‘paternalist’) have weak populist attitudes; second, those with the lowest level of external political efficacy have strong populist attitudes with or without democratic capacities.



Presentation 5: Approaches to foresight scenarios

Matthew Hall & David Barnard-Wills (PaCE)

Trilateral Research, Ireland

Abstract

Scenario building is concerned with constructing potential narratives that are based on analysis and understanding of current and historic trends. Developing a number of narrative scenarios of populism helps identify and describe a range of possible paths towards desirable or undesirable futures in Europe.

We will develop a range of scenarios based on the analysis of causal mechanisms analysed by the PaCE consortium, studying in detail the causal mechanisms linking different socio-cultural, economic, political and other phenomena impacting the emergence and growth of populist movements and parties in Europe.

This brief presentation will outline what we hope to achieve with scenarios in the PaCE project, how we will achieve this, discuss why scenarios are useful and present a range of possible scenario methodologies that we may use.

Possible foresight scenarios are:

- **Exhaustive scenarios** – we create scenarios to ideally cover the range of possible futures
- **Narrative or Illustrative scenarios** – we pick scenarios to tell a story or to make a point
- **Backcasting** – we identify a desired end state, and work backwards to identify policies/programmes that could connect that future to the present
- **“What if” Scenarios** – illustrations of what might happen under certain circumstances or following a particular trigger event.
- **Response Scenarios** – illustrate what could follow from different ways of responding to populism.

Our preference is to use some kind of **exhaustive scenario**, offering knowledge on a range of possible futures to give insight into potential negative or undesirable states of affairs. How we precisely model this is open to question at this stage and we welcome feedback.

Presentation 6: Between the global and the local: developing foresight scenarios about populism in Eastern Europe

Vello Pettai (POPREBEL)

University of Tartu

Abstract

Foresight scenarios operate at many different levels. Sometimes they are cast at a very general level, tracing out global trends many decades ahead. Other times they are aimed at working out a single company's or country's pathway forward in the immediate future. The task undertaken in the POPREBEL consortium is to develop foresight scenarios about populism in Eastern Europe through to 2030. Hence, the challenge is an intermediate one, with a limited temporal and geographic scope, and yet with any number of global and local trends coming into play. This presentation will lay out some of these issues, particularly in the current situation, where the COVID-19 pandemic has made the development of meaningful scenarios vis-à-vis 2030 particularly demanding.



3.3. Session 3 – Culture and media

Presentation 1: Populism and politicization of the COVID-19 crisis in Europe

Nicolas Hubé and Giuliano Bobba (DEMOS)

University of Lorraine and University of Turin

Abstract

Although populism would normally benefit from crisis situations (e.g., political representation or economic crises), the peculiar nature of COVID-19 crisis does not make the benefit obvious. While populists have tried to take advantage of the crisis situation, the impossibility of taking ownership of the COVID-19 issue has made the crisis hard to be exploited. This presentation will analyse the reactions of populist parties during the entire cycle of the crisis, from the outbreak phase to the vaccination phase in France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Turkey and UK. While we already know that in a very first phase populists in power have tried to depoliticize the pandemic, whereas radical right-populists in opposition tried to politicize the crisis - though failing to gain the relevant public support, little is known about how they the management of the pandemic issue have impacted on their political action and communication. We discuss empirical evidence comparing populist and non-populist discourse of party leaders from the selected countries.

Presentation 2: Neo-traditionalism as a concept

Zdzisław Mach

POPREBEL

Abstract

Neo-traditionalism is understood here as an ideology and a movement which aims at return to tradition in order to find roots of culture and eliminate unwanted elements of way of life which were borrowed from or imposed by the modern society. Tradition provides people with the sense of certainty and belonging, a kind of “ontological security”, a feeling that they live in the world they understand. Neo-traditionalism is not only return to tradition against modernisation but also rejection of what is seen as foreign, imposed by cultural oppressors.

Populist movements use neo-traditionalism as a political strategy, as an instrument of mobilisation of people in a situation of competition of conflict, which also helps to build collective identity. It is especially salient in contexts of rapid social change or when people question the nature or benefits of that which is presented as “developmental” or “modern”. Populists appeal to “masses” in the name of the value of their tradition, against “elites”, who are globalised, cosmopolitan, and alienated from “the people”.

Neo-traditionalism appears in post-communist Europe as a strategy to escape from the unknown, alien and dangerous new values and ways of life which come to the region from globalisation and from the EU.

Openness to the world, and in particular to the EU, meant that new ideas began to flow. New cultural ways, new values, new ideas of how society should be organized began to replace the old, well established order, to which the societies were accustomed. Various minorities (sexual, religious and other) became more visible in the public sphere and public space. What previously seemed to be certain and stable, including religious doctrine and family structure, is now becoming questioned, contested, and relative. All these generated the loss of security experiences by very many people in post-communist Europe. To protect themselves from this danger



Eastern European societies became open not only to change, but also to the alternative idea of traditionalism. They listen eagerly to those from the populist, right-wing side of the political spectrum and the supporting media who were telling them that they should recreate their own tradition and with it the people's healthy and moral way of life and sense of security. Tradition is presented as a sacred treasury of society, heritage received from the ancestors, legitimised by antiquity but also by religion. Tradition in the populist discourse represents the ultimate, absolute truth, which is opposed to relative truth of cosmopolitan elites. As such it provides people with the sense of stability and security. Looking to the past for security may also take form of individual and collective nostalgia.

Traditionalism as a political strategy is often supported by religious authorities. Tradition is here an alternative to openness to the world, unfamiliar, decadent, dangerous, and first of all alien, foreign. Traditional animosities are recalled from mythologised historical narratives, which present others, especially in the case of Eastern Europe western "others", as not trustworthy, culturally different in a significant way, as people who have forgotten traditional values and who bring their culture to the verge of suicide. Too much pluralism, immigrant minorities with their cultural differences, secularity and relativism, often even the image of "civilization of death" are contrasted with the own sacred and healthy tradition which alone may save "the people", the nation from disaster. The Church is here a guardian of traditional symbols which represent the essence of the nation's true identity. These symbols must be, however, interpreted in the only true way, offered to the nation as unambiguous and indisputable, so that any individual interpretation of them could be eliminated as inappropriate and destructive.

What we are looking for, as indicators of this populist strategy? Cultural texts and public events/speeches/rituals. Media content.

- Mythologisation of the past, new historical narratives, by elimination and incorporation of heroes (media, education)
- Traditional model of family as a shrine of tradition and traditional morality
- Traditional sexual morality versus western 'civilization of death'
- Catholic church as a fortress of tradition and 'ontological security' versus secularism and liberal movements in the church
- The need to protect 'the people' against minorities, especially sexual and immigrant

Presentation 3: Othering Europe in populist narratives in Poland

Joanna Orzechowska-Waclawska

POPREBEL

Abstract

This presentation focuses on the strategies of *Othering* used by national populists in Central Europe with the intention to gain and sustain political power and bring about the desired traditional order with all that it implies, including traditional division of social roles, traditional family values, original national culture and folklore (including folk wisdom), national economy and state control and the paradigm of absolute sovereignty. Fundamental for this consideration is the concept of neo-traditionalism which can be seen as a total and all-encompassing programme of the reconfiguration of socio-political order (see: Neo-traditionalism as a concept, Z. Mach) that is pursued and steadily implemented by national populists in CE, most notably in Poland (which



constitutes the case study for this task) and Hungary. *Othering* used in the context of populist actions shall be seen as a political top-down strategy of differentiation and boundary building allowing to demarcate the clear boundary between in-group and what the in-group stands for and the out-group, “the other” perceived as not only not belonging to the group, but disruptive and threatening its well-being.

The very exclusivism of *Othering* is neither novel, not particularly unique to populism, it has indeed a long-standing tradition in (post)colonial relations, power relations and national(ist) ideologies. What is however quite specific to the ways in which populists have used this mechanism is its multiplicity, i.e. *Othering* has ceased to operate only on the level of group differentiation, but has passed onto the level of the social order and the universe of fundamental values.

What originated with the discursive *Othering* of the elites contraposed with “the people” by the populists, with the progressive “thickening” of populist ideology in Central Europe (see Kotwas, Kubik 2019) has gained important ideological charge. Here we can speak of three interrelated levels of *Othering*.

On the first level *Othering* refers to the groups that do not belong to the homogenous (i.e. Catholic, traditional, family oriented) nation, as well as those who may threaten the uniqueness and uniformity of interpretation of the world promoted by national populists in Poland and the Polish Catholic church. This excludes from the community of the united nation as promoted by the populists, variety of different groups including sexual minorities (LGBT), religious and national minorities (most notably Muslims), but also women and youth participating in women protests (pol. *Strajka kobiet*) that broke out after the opening of the debate of leading to the tightening of the abortion law in Poland, as well as liberal intellectuals and activists promoting values of openness, liberalism, cosmopolitanism and inclusion.

On the second level *Othering* refers to the international and civilizational order. It is mostly embedded in the progressive *Othering* of the EU and its perceived elitist institutions, as well as the *Othering* of the liberal Western Europe, which is believed to be corrupted and untrue to its original true Christian values, thus subject of “rechristianization” in which Poland may play the key role.

Finally, on the third level, we may talk about the *Othering* of the very fundamental values of (post)modernity, such as rationality, pluralism, individualism, liberalism and universalism which are incongruent with the vision of neo-traditionalism based on the notions of uniformity, collectivism, traditionalism and particularism.

Presentation 4: Religion and populism

Łucja Piekarska - Duraj

POPREBEL

Abstract

As part of justifying the order of power, populism uses a belief system that is para-religious in nature. In this system, the key role is played by the values intended to unite society. One of the results of exercising power as a mission to defend values is populist normativism, i.e. the paradigm of unifying common values in the name of integrating society.



The basic definition of a people / sovereign is belonging to a nation. The concept of the nation is sacralized and the heritage becomes a domain that petrifies the past.

The populist nation state maintains a tactical alliance with the Catholic Church with which it shares a number of interests. At the symbolic level, both the populist state apparatus and the Church strengthen the mythical framework for interpreting diversity: the state above all in relation to heritage (and national identity), the church above all in relation to everyday life, which it gives meaning (not only in the context of eternal life that is to be a reward for a good life on earth). The Church and the populist nation-state spread patterns that strengthen normativism and the alliance between the state and the church. The pantheons of patron saints (especially the temple of Divine Providence) and the newly emerging museums (Museum of Poles Saving Jews, Museum of Cursed Soldiers) are a good illustration.

Moreover, the Church and the state have a policy of excluding other / strangers presented as public enemies. Mobilization to fight the enemy takes traditional forms, or at least related to traditional religiosity. Many of these activities take place in public space, e.g. public rosaries, processions, and monthly festivals. What is associated with neo-traditionalism is primarily an attempt to discredit diversity, pluralism, secularism, or the idea of personal freedom, and to strengthen the hierarchy of the social world. On a symbolic level, many feudal visions can be found in the Marian cult (maximalist Mariology) and the Christ's enthronement movement, or pseudo-chivalrous associations (Knights of John Paul II, Warriors of Mary).

Moreover, both the Church and the national populist state strengthen collectivism, which takes place by: valorizing everyday sufferings and sacrifices (presented as victims) by setting them in a broader context, strengthening the importance and sense of common sense (as opposed to the abstract truths of the elites) and strengthening integration around common origin (and sometimes also common fate). The effectiveness of these actions is enhanced by the frequent use of (unifying) metonymy, which allows, among other things, to apply the victim mythology.

Presentation 5: Populist narratives

Teresa Lindenauer (PaCE)

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Abstract

Narratives are powerful tools in various contexts (Braddock & Dillard 2016; Wojcieszak & Kim 2016) but empirical research on populist narratives is still scarce. Narratives also play an important role for the construction of political behaviour and are used to interpret and understand political realities (Patterson & Monroe 1998). However, the conceptualization of narratives suffers from vague definitions, lack of clarity, and unclear differentiation from related concepts, such as framing, which complicates empirical analysis.

We define narratives as patterns of interpretations assigning social actors to stereotypical roles and composing events to a dramatic plot (Labov and Waletzky 1967; Prince 1980; Propp 1928; Somers and Gibson 1994). They can be distinguished from related concepts (e.g. frames) by their action-based and dynamic nature. Populism can be regarded as a thin ideology that is based on the antagonism between the 'pure homogenous people' and the corrupt elite. It propagates politics as the expression of the general will of the people (Mudde, 2004). Bringing the definition of narratives and populism together, we present a definition and operationalization of populist

narratives to use for content analysis of different kinds of media. Additionally, we present first results of our computational analysis, leading to a quantitative and qualitative analysis of populist media content and a typology of populist narratives.

3.4. Session 4 – Politics

Presentation 1: Civic strategies addressing populism

Hendrik Nahr (DEMOS)

ECAS

Abstract

There are different approaches taken by liberal actors to tackle populist narratives. One approach that has not attracted particularly great attention from the research community are projects carried out by civic actors dedicated to tackling populism.

This report presents the analysis of the populist narratives addressed by ten projects, their applied strategies, the circumstances in which they were created, the challenges they faced and their indicators for success. The formulated recommendations on the methodologies can serve as a basic guide on how to design future projects addressing populism.

In order to illustrate different civic strategies addressing the populist challenge, ten projects were selected as case studies in a five-step process:

1. An extensive desk research on different databases of EU funding programs and further sources (mainly foundations);
2. the identification of four relevant EU funding programs (Erasmus+, Horizon2020, Europe for Citizens, Creative Europe) and 13 further sources, resulting in a selection of 338 projects;
3. the analysis of the respective project descriptions;
4. the identification of 31 projects that are generally relevant in light of the conceptual framework and
5. the identification of 10 projects that fit best the established conceptual framework and goals of the Task 7.2.

The overall conclusion of the report is that there is a great diversity of action taken by civil society and the academic community to tackle populist movements. Every project can do its part to plant the seeds for more democratic, open and pluralistic societies.

While there is **no silver bullet to countering populist movements**, supporting relevant synergies between different projects can help make projects even more effective. The shared willingness of all project managers to connect with one another in the future is a promising finding.

MAIN FINDINGS:

- The **approaches taken towards addressing populist narratives** in participatory projects were more open than in research projects, which tended to focus on more narrowly defined types of populist narratives. Euroscepticism was a common populist narrative addressed in many projects.
- **Common strategies applied to tackle populism** included listening to everyone and their diverse perspectives, implementing intercultural training, creating participatory space, identifying and

deconstructing populist narratives, and engaging stakeholders. Research and awareness-raising projects focused more on identification and deconstruction while participatory projects focused more on intercultural training.

- Engaging less interested or less active citizens was one of the most common **challenges in the implementation of project strategies**. The question of how / whether or not to include populist actors or narratives was also found to be a difficult question. Multicultural conflicts in intercultural training environments (including language barriers), the commitment of participants (especially youth) and the bureaucracy associated with project management were also elements that complicated the implementation of some project strategies.
- Defining the **indicators of success for projects tackling populist narratives** was a common challenge. It appears to be difficult to identify suitable qualitative approaches, most projects used numerical indicators to evaluate their success.
- All interviewees were adamant that their projects were successful in reaching their goals and contributed to tackling populist narratives.
- Project managers shared a number of **poignant recommendations for future projects** seeking to address populist narratives such as (1) listening to all citizens and all perspectives expressed to create the most inclusive environment possible, (2) embracing self-production by participants and introducing more organic, bottom-up processes and (3) thinking outside of the box in relation to the physical environments of activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **Sufficient and easy-to-access public funding** for (innovative) projects addressing populism must be ensured.
2. Policy makers should become more **proactive in using the outcomes** of projects addressing populism.
3. More **synergies between different kinds of projects** should be enabled to embrace the added value of diverse projects addressing populism.
4. Civil society actors should establish **dedicated channels to facilitate the exchange** of expertise between project managers addressing populism.

Presentation 3: Mapping patterns of policies by populist parties. A quantitative cross-country analysis

Oliver Lembcke & Michael Georgi (DEMOS)

Ruhr-Universität Bochum

Abstract

The aim of this paper two-fold. It will try to identify populist policy fields' patterns in contrast to non-populist positions; it will measure the impact that populist parties have on other parties' policy positions and the party system. The analysis's critical questions are the following: (1) Do populist parties have a stable core of policy positions? Or does their essential policy direction change over time? On which policy positions do they give up? (2) Is there a distinct cluster of populist policy positions that distinguishes populist parties from their contenders within the party system? (3) What impact do populist parties have on other political parties' policy positions, and (4) the party system's competition modum (centripetal or centrifugal)? These four perspectives may also contribute to the broader discussion if the rise of populist parties reflects the emergence of a new cleavage in Europe.



The research design is based on a quantitative cross-country data analysis with party manifestos as the core unit of analysis (MARPOR data set). Four hypotheses will guide this analysis: The first hypothesis (flexible policy program) refers to the widely acknowledged definition of populism as a ‘thin ideology’ due to the few core concepts introduced by Mudde (2010). It will test if populism is more flexible in terms of its policy goals and or guiding principles than fully-fledged ideologies like liberalism or socialism. The second hypothesis (representation gap) picks up on the notion of populist policy supply. It takes a closer look if populist parties try to pursue a different kind of policies outside of or in contrast to the mainstream (Franzmann & Lewandowsky 2020). The third hypothesis (contagion effects) points to the relation between the electoral success of populist parties and the policy adaption of other parties, especially among established parties. It will test the impact of the electoral success by populist parties on other political parties, especially parties with a conservative, nationalist, or centrist-right ideology. Finally, the fourth hypothesis (polarization effects) deals with the impact of populist parties on the party system (Wolinetz & Zaslove 2018). It will analyze if populist parties have polarizing effects on the political party system, changing the party competition mode from centripetal to centrifugal.

The sample, extracted from the MARPOR data set, includes manifestos of political parties from twenty different European countries. For a comparative approach between West- and East-European party systems, this analysis restricts itself to the recent ‘wave of populism’ 1990-2020 (Mudde 2013; Andersen & Bjørklund 1994).

Presentation 4: Populist attitudes and vote for populist parties

Martin Dolezal (PaCE)

Paris Lodron University Salzburg, Austria

Abstract

Scholars of populist parties and their voters have started to explore the relevance of populist attitudes for party choice only recently, not least due to lacking comparative data. A common understanding of populism as political ideology, typically based on the ideational theory, has led to the inclusion of populist attitudes in a growing number of election studies. But better data are not only available for the demand side. Analyses of the supply side of populism benefit from an increasing number of expert surveys and (quantitative) content analyses that provide estimates of the populist character of political parties. Based on a dataset covering recent national elections in twelve European countries, the presentation explores how important populist attitudes are for voters of populist parties. Following extant research, these parties are treated as belonging to distinctive categories that distinguish them from non-populist parties and differentiate also between left- and right-wing populism. Populist attitudes turn out to be important predictors of party choice even after controlling for attitudes associated with left (economy) and right-wing populism (migration). Populist positions on the supply side and populist attitudes on the demand side of party competition thus tend to converge.

Presentation 5: Electoral performance of populist parties in Eastern Europe 1989-2019

Piret Ehin and Liisa Talving

POPREBEL

Abstract

The rise of populism can be observed across the world, but has been particularly prominent in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). However, few works have systematically tracked populist support within the region and over time. This paper focused on mapping the electoral performance of populist parties in 11 post-communist member states



of the European Union (EU) in 1989-2019, i.e. the time period during which the countries have been able to conduct multi-party elections. The analysis demonstrates a remarkable rise in the number populist parties and their electoral appeal in CEE. These patterns vary extensively across countries, with Hungary and Bulgaria having registered some of the highest populist party vote shares in the EU. Data also indicate that populists in CEE have moved from the political periphery to power, typically participating in a coalition with non-populist parties. Yet, the rise of populism in the region does not seem to be associated with Europe's recent crises, including the financial and the migration crisis, as demonstrated by the lack of correlation between countries' macro-economic performance and electoral gains of populists.

3.5. Session 5 – Politics & Politics and governance

Presentation 1: Policy making patterns in Hungary and Poland under populist governance

Attila Bartha & Artur Lipinski (DEMOS)

Centre for Social Sciences, ELKH and Corvinus University of Budapest; and

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan

Abstract

The rise of populist parties and leaders into government position has been a global trend in the last decade. This pattern has been particularly pronounced in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), especially in Hungary and Poland. This offers a specific opportunity to study the way in which CEE populist leaders and parties' rule in a comparative context. Our study first conceptualises populist policy making: we theoretically address the procedural features of policy making under populist governments and the substantive and discursive components of populist policies. As usually applied policy making models assume the context of liberal democracies, we first reconstruct the implicit ideal type of policy making in liberal democracies based on the mainstream governance and policy making scholarship. Then we elaborate the theoretical model of the populist policy making: this ideal type is built upon the recent populism literature along the dimensions of policy content, policy procedures, and policy discourses. The empirical part of the paper is a qualitative comparative study of two CEE country cases, Hungary, and Poland. We apply a qualitative congruence analysis to assess the conformity of the cases with the populist policy making ideal type in three policy areas: criminal justice policy, economic policy, and family policy. Although patterns strongly vary by countries and policy areas as well, some specific features of populist policy making are identified. Concerning the policy content, policy heterodoxy, strong willingness to adopt paradigmatic reforms and an excessive responsiveness to majoritarian preferences are distinguishing features of any type of populist policies. Regarding the procedural features our cases demonstrate that populist leaders tend to downplay the role of technocratic expertise, sideline veto-players and implement fast and unpredictable policy changes. Discursively, populist leaders tend to extensively use crisis frames and discursive governance instruments in a Manichean language. These heightened emotional discourses tend to be particularly hostile against unpopular minorities and reinforce polarisation in policy positions. Finally, our findings suggest that in CEE countries populism is more tangible in family policy than in criminal justice policy and economic policy. In family policy, policy making patterns of governments dominated by populist parties and leaders are largely congruent with the ideal type, while in criminal justice policy and economic policy populism is more pronounced in government policy discourses and less in the policy content.



Presentation 2: Nativist in Europe: How they perform in and fall from power

Takis Pappas and Dimitris Skleparis (PaCE)

Helsinki University, Finland

Abstract

Whether in academic or in laymen's terms, it is common that "nativism" is empirically mistaken for, and conceptually muddled up, with populism. Yet, as shown in more recent research, nativism should be studied as a phenomenon that is analytically distinct from populism. This paper, based on the careful distinction between nativism and populism, focuses specifically on the performance and relative success, or failure, of the nativist parties that have enjoyed office in post-1990 Europe. From this plethora of nativists, the proposed paper will focus specifically on the nativist parties that have actually participated in government, typically as junior coalition partners, namely, FPÖ, PS, FrP, and the Italian League under Matteo Salvini's leadership. The paper asks three interrelated questions: When invited by a larger party to join in power, how do nativist parties have fared as agenda setters and policy makers? What is their overall impact on their respective political systems? And: How, and to which degree does their policy-related performance may explain their endurance in office and help us make credible prediction about the future of Europe's nativist parties? By answering those questions through an empirically informed and comparatively sensitive way, the paper seeks to make four contributions to existing literatures on democracy, populism, and nativism: First, it will show that nativist parties are of a quite different type than populist parties, and urge against lumping these party types together; second, it will offer the first full-scale empirical analysis of nativist parties in office as coalition partners; third, it will assess the performance of the nativist parties in power, empirically as well as theoretically; and, fourth, it will use the new insights gained to suggest fresh ways of theorizing the challenge nativist parties pose for the current state, and future, of Europe's liberal democracy.

Presentation 3: From cronyism to neo-feudalism: personal dependencies and the varieties of capitalism.

István Kollai

POPREBEL

Abstract

Among the current strands within the research on capitalism, the scrutinization and categorization of *personal relations* between state actors (politicians, public institutions' leaders) and business actors (entrepreneurs, managers) occupies a prominent place, however the research of *impersonally coordinated* bureaucratic state-business relations seems to surmount to it. The present study also attempts to analyse this issue, focusing on the following question: how the domestic personal political embeddedness of company leaders – i.e. the depth of their politicization – and the corporate competitiveness interplay with each other.

Different definitions can be attached both to the concept of politicization and competitiveness, depending on the aspect from which we approach their meaning; our approach is now the aspect of embeddedness. From this aspect, competitiveness can be indicated by a company's *impersonal* (structural) embeddedness in an extra-local relational web with other companies, and politicization can be regarded as the *personal* political embeddedness of business actors in the decision-making processes between the state and the business sphere. As it can be stated based on the existing literature, our definitions are not far from various academic attempts to describe corporate competitiveness and politicization; but we have noted too that embeddedness – originally a Polanyian term with



strong cultural implications – has several dimensions apart from structural and political ones (like e.g. cultural and cognitive embeddedness). Now, we focus just on domestic political embeddedness and on foreign structural embeddedness.

After this conceptual clarification, our research question can be formulated as follows: how personal political embeddedness of business actors on domestic level (i.e., in their home country) can interplay with their companies' impersonal structural embeddedness on foreign markets? This question will be scrutinized on the examples of three CEE countries, namely Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic.

Presentation 4: Ideological and strategic populists

Daniel Svilov (PaCE)

Centre for Liberal Strategies Foundation, Sophia, Bulgaria

Abstract

On the basis of an analysis of the causes of populism we outline two types of populist voters - ideological and strategic. While the ideological voters are motivated more by economic and cultural grievances, strategic voters are politically frustrated by the cartelized and consensus-oriented politics in a consolidated democracy. Charismatic populist leaders cater for both strategic and ideological voters with their radicalism. To the ideological groups they promise to radically transform liberal democracy; to the strategic group they are a useful instrument to pressure on political opponents in order to obtain greater concessions. Charismatic populist leaders are also skillful operators of public emotions, capable of transforming background anxieties into intense fears and even anger. The combination between crises, specific types of voters and the actions of the populist leaders ultimately leads to a successful populist project.

Presentation 5: Looking at “relative” trending topics connected populism, nativism, and citizens engagement since 2014 on the public internet

Róbert Bjarnason (PaCE)

Citizens Foundations, Iceland

Abstract

The Citizens Foundation is working on the PaCE Dashboard that searches the CommonCrawl public web archive each month from 2014 and until the end of the project for various populist, nativist, and civic engagement topics and subtopics.

The CommonCrawl web archive is the world's largest archive of crawled public web pages and the project has been crawling the public web since 2014. With most social media now blocked for web crawlers, even if the content is supposedly public, CommonCrawl is by far the best source of public web data available. During the PaCE project, the Citizens Foundation has developed a high-performance open-source search platform, the PaCE Commoncrawl Scanner (<https://github.com/CitizensFoundation/pace-commoncrawl-scanner>), that can search a whole month of CommonCrawl data, billions of web pages, in 4-8 hours on a 72 CPU computer on the Amazon Cloud at a cost of \$14-\$28. This open-source tool already has synergies with the DEMOs project where we are helping out as well.



The results, on the PaCE Dashboard website, of the topic searches from 2014 will give us a timeline where we show the relative trends between the different topics we track moving forward each month. We also calculate how close each topic is to each other, how close they appear on different websites, web pages, and how many paragraphs away in the text, showing a 3D Force Graph in a simulation over time.

We plan to launch the first iteration of the public PaCE Dashboard website on the 28. February with searches in English with more languages added in the next couple of months.

Presentation 6: Populist constitutionalism

Josep Maria Castella-Andreu (DEMOS)

University of Barcelona

Abstract

As far as the effects of populism on constitutional systems are concerned, there is no consensual concept amongst legal scholars. The relation between populism and constitutionalism is, in fact, not necessarily antithetical, but can manifest itself in various manners, depending on the specificity of each legal system. So it has to be kept in mind that, when we employ the term ‘populist constitutionalism’, we are not referring to a constitutional doctrine in its own right. Rather, the concept of populist constitutionalism embraces a number of different tendencies in the populist discourse which are often in tension with representative democracy, the rule of law and fundamental values.

At the outset of our research, we adopted a neutral stance on the effects of populism on constitutional democracy. Yet, the normative and empirical research confirmed the common view that populism is a phenomenon essentially dangerous for the well-being of contemporary democracy.

The well-known claim to embody the will of the ‘true people’ indeed has a series of downstream consequences which are corrosive of democratic quality if populist parties manage to transpose into practice this pretension.

The first consequence - especially visible in Central European Countries, where there are long-standing populist governments - is the over-empowerment of the ruling majority, which perceives itself as *legibus soluta*, in particular vis-à-vis the constitutional courts which should enforce the respect of rule of law and fundamental values. The corollary to this malaise towards legal and constitutional constraints, is that when they reach the power populist parties immediately attempt to capture and neutralise the judiciary, the constitutional court and any other counter-majoritarian institution.

Another, somehow paradoxical, consequence of the claim to be the sole bearer of the people’s will and interests is the populist contempt towards parliamentary assembly. On the one hand populist parties, in an attempt to delegitimise the parliament, tend to invoke a more frequent use of referenda and insist on the necessity to size parliament down. On the other, when on power, they tend to hollow out the parliament - which in any case they control - of any meaningful power. To this regard, is noteworthy that, with the notable exception of the U.S, populism came closer to power in parliamentary democracies. Even not considering Central European States, who are in overwhelming majority parliamentary democracies, Italy and Spain, for instance, both saw the participation of populist-leaning parties in their governments in the last two years.



Affirming its superiority over the law and the constitution and asserting the necessity to eliminate any intermediate body for the representation of the people, populism ultimately shrink down any space for pluralism. When populist leaders speak, they speak in the name of ‘their people’ to the exclusion of all others. And this can only lead to polarisation in the society - the Catalan secession movement makes a perfect example to this regard - and in putting at stake the rights of political, social and ethnic minorities.

All in all, populists respond to the complexities of constitutional democracy and its checks and balances by offering simplicity, a simplicity that is blatantly unfit to the complexity of contemporary politics. Issues like environmental protection or the balancing between economic interest and the health protection in this pandemic cannot be solved adopting a dichotomic approach. This is why, the answer from liberal constitutionalism can only be one offering more complexity in decision making processes. From judicial appointments to constitutional revision procedures, the legal framework should ensure the participation of a plurality of actors making it harder for a decisive influence to be played by a populist majority.

On the other hand, increasing the complexity of decision-making processes also mean to render them more transparent, open and participatory. Such an approach should be extended also to ambit that in the European legal culture are traditionally enshrouded in secrecy, at least in the European tradition, such as the administration of justice. In this light the move of the European Court of Justice, which in the last year opened its archive and decided to make available to the general public all the requests for preliminary references coming from national courts, certainly go in the right direction.

On the point of legal reaction of liberal constitutionalism, however, I would like to point that together with the other partner of the legal team of DEMOS we are elaborating a methodology aimed at mapping the best practices to counter populism adopted by international organisations, especially EU and CoE, and national institutions.