

Political Theory of Populism

to be published in *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 22 (2019)

Nadia Urbinati

Department of Political Science, Columbia University, New York, New York 10027;

email: nu15@columbia.edu

Key words

audience, direct representation, fascism, majority principle, populist democracy, representative democracy.

Abstract

Populism is the name of a global phenomenon whose definitional precariousness is proverbial. It resists generalizations and makes scholars of politics comparativist by necessity, as its language and content are imbued with the political culture of the society in which it arises. A rich body of socio-historical analyses allows us to situate populism within the “gigantic” and global phenomenon called democracy, as its ideological core is nourished by the two main entities, the nation and the people, that have fleshed out popular sovereignty in the age of democratization. Populism consists in a transmutation of the democratic principles, the majority and the people, in a way that is meant to celebrate “a part” of the people against another one through a leader embodying it and an audience legitimizing it. This may make populism collide with constitutional democracy, even if its main tenets are embedded in the democratic universe of meanings and language.

INTRODUCTION

The topic of populism has become increasingly visible and important in contemporary political experience, although political theory finds it difficult to grapple with. Populism is not new. It emerged along with the process of democratization in the nineteenth century, and since then its characters and forms have mirrored the modes of democracy it challenged. What is novel today is the intensity and simultaneity of its manifestation in almost all countries ruled by a constitutional democracy. From Caracas to Budapest to Washington to Rome, any understanding

of politics needs to take into account a phenomenon that until recently was studied as a subspecies of fascism (Shils 1956; Germani 1978; Griffit 1996) and relegated to the margins of the West, essentially Latin America (Finchelstein 2017; Traverso 2017; Finchelstein and Urbinati 2018). Also novel is its reception among scholars and citizens. Indeed, whereas until the end of the twenty century, interest in populism was strongest among those who saw it as a problem (Tugueff 1997; Taggart 2000; Mény and Surel 2002), in this new century, scholars and citizens have started conceiving it not only as a symptom of decline of representative institutions but also as an opportunity for rejuvenating democracy (Laclau 2005 and 2005a; Frank 2010; Mouffe 2006 and 2016). However, despite the power contrasts drawn by scholars sympathetic to it, populism remains still much more employed polemically than analytically, often as a *nom de bataille* to brand and stigmatize political movements and leaders (D'Eramo, 2013) or as a marker of those who use it with the intention of reclaiming the liberal-democratic model as the only valid form democracy can take (Müller, 2016). Finally, particularly after the referendum on Brexit (June 23, 2016), politicians and media experts have listed as populist all opposition movements, from xenophobic nationalists to critics of neo-liberal policies, as if the adjective “populist” applied to all those who do not themselves rule, and criticize rulers, regardless of the principles underlying their critique (Mounk 2018). The side effect of this polemical approach is to make politics consist of either governability or populism, with the result of making the latter essentially the name of all movements of opposition and democratic politics essentially an issue of institution management (Riker 1982).

Populism is an ambiguous term that escapes sharp and uncontested definitions, because it “is not an ideology or a political regime, and cannot be attributed to a specific programmatic content,” but rather is a form of collective action aiming to power. Yet although “a way of doing politics which can take various forms, depending on the periods and the places,” it can hardly be compatible with non-democratic forms of politics, because it poses itself as an attempt to build a collective subject through consent and to question a social order in the name of the interests of the large majority (Mouffe 2016). According to the Oxford English Dictionary, populism “strives to appeal to ordinary people who feel that their concerns are disregarded by established elite groups.” Yet while the populist interpretation of the people stresses the inclusion of the “ordinary” many, we cannot fail to notice that this process of inclusion is possible because it occurs through a parallel process of exclusion: the political establishment is the basic externality

against which populism's people poses itself and without which populism cannot exist. Hence, regardless of the ideological connotation that the appeal to the people may take, right or left, I argue that populism is structurally marked by a radical partiality in interpreting the people and the majority; this implies that, if comes to power, it can have a disfiguring impact on the institutions, the rule of law, and the division of powers, which comprise constitutional democracy. In effect, it can stretch constitutional democracy toward its extreme borders and open the door to authoritarian solutions and even dictatorship; the paradox is that, should this regime change happen, populism would no longer be in place. Populism's destiny is tied to democracy's and "the *never quite* taking place [is] part of its performance" (Derrida 1988, p. 90); hence, some scholars have employed the metaphor of a parasite to explain its peculiar relation to democracy (Arditi 2007). Whatever the analogy, although it is deeply contextual and its manifestations and its impacts are dependent upon the political, social, and religious culture of the country, populism is more than an historically contingent phenomenon and a movement of contestation; it pertains to the transformations of modern democracy: this is the reference point for any theoretical approach. Therefore, although "we simply do not have anything like a *theory* of populism" (Müller 2012, p. 23) we can profit from its endogenous link with democracy, whose normative foundations and procedures are very familiar to us.

Populism is not a regime of its own. Its style and tenor are derivative of democracy: a type of democracy that is grounded on representation and the constitution; that uses elections along with, occasionally, direct forms of popular vote, like the referendum and the plebiscite; and whose political arena is made of issue-based associations and partisan affiliations, not solely individual actors and elections. Populism emerges within the domain of opinion and questions all of that. More specifically, it exploits the perception that parliamentary and party politics fail to provide adequate representation for some key portions of the population (Norris 1997); it questions electoral or mandate representation because of the gap it creates between the people as a norm and the social people, and then between the electors and the elected. Populism wants to fill that gap and make its people the measure of political justice and legitimacy, because it claims that this is the only strategy to restate the sovereign power of the nation against its internal and external enemies, such as the powerful few, the establishment, global capitalism, immigration, or Islamic fundamentalism, the determinant factors in today's success of populist rhetoric (Skocpol and Williamson, 2012). The problem is that in populism the people does not represent itself and

populists do not call for direct self-government; populism's adversarial identity is claimed by a representative leader, who mobilizes the media to convince the audience that he embodies the people's many forms of discontent against traditional parties' spineless mainstreamism. Ernesto Laclau has thus argued that all populist regimes take "the name of the leader" (2005a, p. 40). Without a unifying narrative and a leader claiming to embody it, populism cannot achieve power and remains very much a movement of contestation against a trend in society that betrays some basic democratic principles, equality in particular. Yet populism is more than a rhetorical style and political protest. Therefore, a political theory of populism has to focus on populism in power, or the way populism interprets, uses, and changes representative democracy, its main target in contemporary experience. The analysis of populism in power leads me to conclude that, although it is an internal transformation of representative democracy, populism can disfigure it because it makes the principles of democratic legitimacy (the people and the majority) the possession of a part, which a strong leader embodies and mobilizes against other parts (minorities and the political opposition). Populism in power is an extreme majoritarianism.

In the first section, I illustrate the context-based character of populism and show how its cyclical appearances reflect the forms of representative government. In the second section, I review the main contemporary interpretations and argue that some basic agreement now exists on populism's rhetorical character and its strategy for achieving power in democratic societies. Based on this rich body of scholarship, in the last section I sketch the main characteristics of populism in power and explain how it tends to transform the fundamentals of democracy: the people and the majority, elections, and representation. This is the novelty of contemporary populism, which promotes a direct relation between the leader and the people, relies upon the superlative authority of the audience, and shatters intermediary actors, such as parties and accredited media, but also institutional rules, bureaucracy, and monitoring agencies. In Pierre Rosanvallon's fortunate terminology (2006), populism takes advantage of the mechanisms of "negative politics" or "counter-democracy" that constitutional democracy guarantees. A populist democracy challenges party democracy, and when it succeeds, it stabilizes itself by using in excess the means democracy offers: it fosters a permanent mobilization of the people's opinion in support of its leader in government, and if possible re-writes the constitution. As Andrew Arato writes (2018), today "populism seeks to occupy the space of the constituent power."

CONTEXTS AND COMPARISONS

Populism is the name of a global phenomenon whose definitional precariousness is proverbial. It resists generalizations and makes scholars of politics comparativist by necessity, as its language and content are imbued with the political culture of the society in which it arises. In some countries, the populist representation takes religious traits, while in others more secular and nationalist ones; in some, it uses the language of republican patriotism, while in others that of nationalism, indigeneity, nativism, and the myth of the first occupants; in some others, it stresses the center-periphery cleavage, while in others the city-countryside one; in the past, some populist experiences were rooted in collectivist agrarian traditions' attempt to resist modernization, westernization, and industrialism, while others embodied a "self-made man" kind of popular culture that valued small-scale entrepreneurship, and still others reclaimed state intervention to govern modernization, or to protect and succor the wellbeing of the middle class. The variety of past and present populisms is extraordinary, and what may be right in Latin America is not necessarily right in Europe or the United States; what holds true in North and Western Europe may not do so in the Eastern or Southern areas of the old continent. What Isaiah Berlin (1999, pp. 1-2) wrote of Romanticism can be said of populism: "whenever anyone embarks on a generalization" of the phenomenon (even an "innocuous" one), "somebody will always be found who will produce countervailing evidence." This should suffice to guard us against *hubris definitoria*.

Yet the importance of populism does not spring from its ability to be rendered in a clear and distinct idea, but rather from its being a "movement" that escapes generalizations and yet is very tangible and capable of transforming the lives and the thoughts of the people and society embracing it. As scholars at a 1967 conference at the London School of Economics showed with their pioneering interdisciplinary analyses of "global populism," populism is a component of the political world we live in and signals a transformation of the democratic political system (To define populism, 1968, p. 138). Perhaps we cannot say of populism what Berlin said so confidently of Romanticism (1999, p. 2): that it is "a gigantic and radical transformation, after which nothing was ever the same." Yet we can say with enough confidence that populism is part of the "gigantic" and global phenomenon called democracy, and that its ideological core is nourished by the two main entities, *ethnos* and *demos* (the nation and the people) that have

fleshed out popular sovereignty in the age of democratization, beginning with the eighteenth century. What populism *does* to (and the traces it leaves on) a democratic society is primed to change both the style and the content of public discourse, even when it does not become a ruling power or does not change the constitution: this transformative potential is the horizon within which I suggest we situate a political theory of populism.

Since populism cannot be rendered as a precise concept, scholars are rightly skeptical that it may even be treated as a phenomenon endowed with its own distinctiveness and not as an ideological creation instead. This objection is well posed. However, the simple fact that this term is currently used with such persistence in everyday politics and academic publications is enough reason to justify our critical and scholarly attention. Studying populism demands that we be attentive to the context without being locked within it. In the early stages of the study of populism, scholars identified it with a reaction against the processes of modernization (in pre-democratic and post-colonial societies) and the difficult transformation of representative government in democratic societies (Germani 1978). The “term” emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century, first in Russia (*narodničestvo*) and then the United States (the People’s Party) as respectively an intellectual vision and an ethical-political movement that idealized an agrarian society of communitarian villages and individual producers, thus against industrialization and corporate capitalism; although in Russia the populist voice was first of all that of the intellectuals who imagined an ideal community of uncontaminated peasants, while in the United States it was the voice of the very citizens who contested the ruling elites in the name of their constitution (Walicki 1969; Hofstadter 1956; Taguieff 1997). The latter is thus the first instance of populism as a political movement that proposes itself as the true representative of the people within a party system and government (Canovan 1981; Mudde, 2004)

Yet in the United States first, and shortly thereafter in Canada, populism did not bring about regime changes but developed along with a wave of political democratization that spoke the language of the inclusion of large strata of the population, at a time in which the polis was in fact an elected oligarchy (Macpherson 1953; Canovan 1981; Kazin 1995). In democratizing contexts, populism can become a strategy for re-balancing the distribution of political power among established and emerging social groups (Urbainati 1998).

Important historical cases of populist regimes emerged in Latin American countries. Here, populism was capable of becoming a ruling power after World War Two and met with mixed feelings in relation to its historical phases, depending on whether it was evaluated at the beginning of its career or at its apex: as an opposition party mobilizing against an existing government or as a government itself; and then also, as a regime in its consolidation or a regime facing a succession in power (De la Torre 2010). As in Russia and the United States, in Latin America populism emerged in the age of socio-economic modernization, but much like fascism in Europe's Catholic countries, it led the path towards modernity by using state power to protect and empower popular and middle classes, dwarfing political dissent, taming the liberal ideology, and meanwhile implementing welfare policies and protecting traditional ethical values. Finally, in Western Europe, populism made its appearance with pre-democratic regimes in the early twentieth century, along with colonial expansionism, the militarization of society coinciding with World War One, and the growth of ethnic nationalism, which, in response to an economic depression, unraveled existing ideological divisions under the myth of an encompassing Nation (Ionescu and Gellner 1969). In pre-democratic Europe, populism's response to the crisis of representative government translated into the promotion of Fascist regimes.

Populism became the name of a form of government after the collapse of fascism, in Latin America. Since then, as a political form located between constitutional government and dictatorship, it displays family resemblances to opposite political systems, such as democracy and fascism. Today, populism grows within both democratizing and fully democratic societies although it takes its most mature, vexing profile in constitutional representative democracy, which is its real target. As a general trend to be drawn from the contextual differences, we may say that populism challenges representative government from within, eventually moves beyond denunciation, and wants to substantially reshape democracy as a new political regime. Unlike fascism, however, populism does not suspend free and competitive elections, nor does it deny them a legitimate role. In fact, electoral legitimacy is a key defining dimension of populist regimes (Peruzzotti, 2013; Finchelstein 2017).

INTERPRETATIONS

Contemporary scholarship on populism can be divided into two broad groups: one more attentive to the circumstances or social conditions of populism; the other mainly interested in populism itself, its political nature and characteristics. The former is the domain of political history and comparative social studies; the latter of political theory and conceptual history. The first one is concerned with the conditions and specific developments of populism and is skeptical of the reliability of theorizing from empirical cases (Murillo 2018). As with democracy, socio-historical experience is essential to understanding the subtypes of the broad category of populism. Yet unlike with democracy, in the case of populism, and because populism is an ambiguous concept that does not correspond to a specific political regime, it is hard to find an agreement on what exactly this category consists of, so that the subtypes of populism that historical analysis produces risk locking scholars within the context they study, with the paradox that each subtype becomes a case of its own. The end result would be to have many populisms but no populism. What historical-social analysis gains in its depth of study of the various experiences it loses in generalization and normative criteria for judging those experiences. A theoretical integration of contextual analysis is thus necessary.

An early attempt to combine contextual analysis and conceptual generalization was to be found in the taxonomy of the variations of types and subtypes of populism in relation to cultural, religious, social, economic, and political conditions. This taxonomy is the object of an important corpus of work represented by the edited volume by Ghița Ionescu and Ernest Gellner (1969), as well as the pivotal essays by Margaret Canovan (1981; 1999; 2002; 2005), a true pioneer in the study of populism. Canovan relied upon a broad range of sociological analyses inspired by Gino Germani and Torcuato di Tella, two Argentinian scholars (the former an exiled from Fascist Italy), who were forerunners in devising a descriptive category of populism apt to explain how, in not-nation-state societies, constructing the people was the task that made populism a functional project (Laclau 2011). To Canovan, the relation to political regimes and the conception of the people were thus the two basic reference points that scholars would need for interpreting the very conditions and circumstances of populism. Canovan brought scholarship on populism to an exquisitely theoretical and normative domain, related to issues of political legitimacy.

The theories of populism we dispose of today follow two main directions: achieving a *minimalist* theory, and devising a *maximal* theory. The former aims at sharpening the tools of

interpretation that enable us to recognize the phenomenon when we see it – the extraction of some minimal conditions from the several cases of populism for analytical purposes. The latter wants instead to devise a theory that has more than an analytical function, and in effect claims an effectual validity as it offers citizens a template they can follow in order to put together a collective subject capable of conquering the majority and rule. Particularly in times of institutional crisis and the decline of traditional parties' legitimacy, this project can play a political role and reshuffle an existing democratic order.

Within the minimalist theory, we include all those interpretations of populism that analyze its ideological tropes (Mudde and Kaltwasser), its style of politics in relation to rhetorical apparatus and national culture (Kazin and Moffitt), and the strategies devised by leaders to achieve power (Weyland and Knight). The goal of this endeavor is to avoid normative judgments for the sake of an unprejudiced understanding and in order to be as inclusive as possible of all experiences of populism. Cas Mudde has most contributed to defining the ideological frame within this a-normative minimalism. He claims populism looks like “a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups...and which argues that politics should be an expression of the general will of the people” (Mudde 2004, p. 543). Capable of straddling the left/right divide, movements are populist in reason of their Manichean moral appraisal of politics, thanks to which they elevate “*la volonté générale*” and demote the liberal respect for civil rights, and the rights of minorities in particular. Neither representation, nor the role of the leader, nor the radicalization of the majority figures in this minimalist rendering (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2013, p. 383). However, the ideological contraposition between the “honest” many and the “corrupt” few is not unique to populist rhetoric; it comes from the republican tradition that dated back to ancient Rome, whose polity was structurally based on a dualism between the people and the elite, and on popular mistrust in that elite (McCormick 2011). Furthermore, although with different intensities, the dualism of “we good”/“they bad” is the motor of all forms of partisan aggregation; clearly, a certain populist style can be detected in almost all parties, particularly when they radicalize their claims near elections. Stressing the “political style” makes us capable of crossing “a variety of political and cultural contexts” (Moffitt 2016, p. 3), but of not detecting what is peculiar to populism vis-à-vis democracy. The limitation of the ideological and the stylistic approach lies in the fact that it is not attentive enough to the institutional and procedural aspects that qualify

democracy, within which populism emerges and operates. These approaches diagnose the emergence of the polarization between the many and the few but do not explain what makes populism's antiestablishment different from what we find in the republican paradigm, in traditional oppositional politics, and in democratic partisanship.

This is what the third trajectory internal to the descriptive approach is able to do, when it reads populism primarily as a strategic movement that highlights the party structure, the manipulation of institutions and procedures, and the role of the leader, all in view of achieving ruling power by conquering the consent of the majority (Knight, 1999). According to Kurt Weyland (2001, p. 14) populism is "best defined as a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers." Despite its grassroots discourse, populism boils down to the manipulation of the masses by the elites; moreover, although upraised as a blow against the corruption of the existing majority, it may predictably end up by accelerating rather than curing corruption, because once in power, in order to preserve its large coalition/majority, it needs to distribute favors and use the state's resources to protect its majority over time. Populism in power is a form of a "delegative democracy" (O'Donnell 1994), a gigantic machinery of nepotistic favors with an orchestrating propaganda that imputes the difficulty in delivering on promises to the conspiracy, international and domestic, of an all-powerful global machinery. This strategic approach is persuasive and capacious, although it does not link populism directly to a transformation of democracy. It judges the strategy's success by the outcome it produces but does not dispose of normative criteria that evaluate its impact on democratic institutions and procedures (Peruzzotti 2013). Moreover, since electoral success is part and parcel of democracy, and all parties aspire to a majority that is large and long-lasting, it is still unclear what makes populism so different from, and moreover risky to, representative democracy.

An explicit connection of populism to democracy is the motor of the *maximal* theory of populism, which offers not only a conception but also a practical template for the making of populist movements and governments. This theory proposes a discursive, constructivist conception of the people. It overlaps with the ideological conception as to the rhetorical moment it stresses, but does not regard populism as a scheme of a Manichean moral dualism between the

people and the elite, while it renders politics itself in Carl Schmitt's friend/enemy dualism capable of hegemonic consensus. Ernesto Laclau (the founder of this theory) makes populism the very name of politics and of democracy, because it is a process by which a community of citizens constructs itself freely and publicly as a collective subject ("the people") that resists another collective (not popular) and opposes an existing hegemony in view of conquering power (Laclau and Mouffe 2001; Laclau 2005; Panizza 2005). Populism is democracy at its best, because the will of the people is constructed through the people's direct mobilization and consent. It is also politics at its best, because it employs only discursive devices and the art of persuasion. So conceived, populism shows how the people is an identity fully and totally artificial, an "empty signifier" that is ungrounded in the structure of society and based exclusively on the ability of a leader (and his intellectuals) in exploiting the dissatisfaction of a variety of groups, and mobilizing the will of the masses whose claims are unheard by the existing political parties and thus lack adequate representation. Populism is thus not simply an act of contestation of the way the few rule. It is a voluntarist quest for sovereign power in order to determine the decisions concerning the social and political order by those whom the elites treat as "underdogs"; exclude the elites; and, finally, win the majority and use the state to repress, exploit, or contain its adversaries. Populism expresses at the same time the denunciation of exclusion and the construction of a strategy of inclusion by means of exclusion (of the establishment) and is thus a serious challenge to constitutional democracy from the point of view of the redistributive promises the latter makes when it declares itself a government based on the equal power of the citizens (Saffon and González-Bertomeu 2017). The question is that in a populist democracy the domain of generality as a criterion of judgment and legitimacy disappears in the constructivist reading of the people, while politics consists in power-seeking and -shaping, in which winning the political conflict is by itself the measure of legitimacy. In this sense, Laclau has claimed that populism is the demonstration of the formative power of ideology and the contingent nature of politics.¹ Populism becomes here the equivalent of a radical version of democracy against the liberal-democratic model which enhances mainstream parties and debilitates electoral participation (Mouffe 2005; Errejón and Mouffe 2016).

A THEORY OF POPULISM IN POWER

These several readings and theoretical proposals have greatly contributed to throwing light on some essential moments of the populist phenomenon, although taken in isolation they remain partial, because they stress one factor and reduce the complexity of populism. Analyses of populism ought to presume a democratic conception of the political space and process that allows us not only to understand the formation of the populist subject but also to evaluate its level of compatibility with the normative foundations that make democratic procedures and institutions function legitimately thorough time and for all citizens equally. My proposal is that we utilize all of the above mentioned lines of interpretation within a domain of research that is socio-historically contextual but also politico-theoretical, and which moreover presumes a distinction between populism as *a movement of opinion* (oppositional, not always interested in constructing a presentative constituency and not unusual in electoral democracy)ⁱⁱ and populism as movement that wants to become *a ruling power within the state* (Urbinati 2014, chap. 3). The study of populism in power is the object that a theory of democracy should attend with special care. Ideology and discourse construction arm a strategy for achieving power that a leader (within a given party or a newly made one) and its audience-experts actualize through democratic means. The relation of populism with democracy is the main point of contention among democratic theorists; my claim in this final section is that populism in power is a transmutation of democratic principles, though not (yet) an exit from democracy.

Central in populism's narrative is the antiestablishment rhetoric, which does not, however, refer to socio-economic elites and is neither class-based nor money-based. Ross Perot, Silvio Berlusconi, and Donald Trump were and are part of the economic elite, in fact very wealthy persons; yet this seems to be acceptable to their electors, who are in effect looking for someone successful but with the same values as theirs. People who voted for Perot felt uplifted by someone who "made it" and displayed competence and skill.ⁱⁱⁱ On the other hand, to be one of the people does not mean to be pure in the sense of subjective morality. Berlusconi was like many ordinary men of his country, and like them he practiced what in Trump's campaign was called "locker room talk." To be "a man of the people" was also the slogan of Alberto Fujimori, whose campaign in 1990 was crafted with the non-elite slogan "A President Like You" (Levitsky and Loxton 2013, 167). The list can go on and on and include all populist leaders (Id., 162). Like ordinary citizens, Trump tried to navigate the law and was smart enough to take effective care of his interests and take advantage of tax loopholes; he was proud to confess during his

campaign that he used all the legal means at his disposal not to pay taxes or to pay as little as possible. Thus, all in all, populist voters did not want Berlusconi or Fujimori or Trump to be pure like saints, because they themselves were not. Subjective immorality is not an issue. The issue is the exercise of power.

Populism's hostility is against the political establishment, which has the power to connect the various social elites and challenge political equality (Mills 1956). Elites combine (in Italy, the populist catchword for them is "la casta"). This is also what makes populism capable of taking advantage of democracy's endogenous discontent with the domineering attitude of the few over the people. In effect, criticism of the political elites was at the very origin of the several transformations of representative government throughout its history; as shown by Manin (1997), party democracy was also born out of an antiestablishment cry against liberal parliamentarianism and its government of notables. What populists' rendering of democracy studiously ignores is that the process that democratic practice promotes is not that of not making a place for leadership but that of pluralizing leadership – this is the condition that makes vote counting and majority rule co-essentials to democracy; this is also the condition that makes electoral representation a politics of pluralism and the lawmaking assembly a non-unanimity assembly. As in Hans Kelsen's prescient insight, the creation of many leaders is the central issue of democracy, which is "not a leaderless society. It is not the lack, but the abundance of leaders that in reality differentiates democracy from autocracy. Thus, a special method for the selection of leaders from the community of subjects becomes essential to the very nature of real democracy. This method is election" (Kelsen 2013, p. 91).

Populists have a singular relation with elections. They use them as a strategy to reveal a majority that, in their mind, already exists in the country, and which the leader brings to surface and makes victorious. For populists, elections are like a ritual that celebrates the "authentic" people, treating the opposition as not fully legitimate; the opposition is in effect tolerated as a foreign body and conspiratorial force. In the leader's discourses, his majority is not one majority among others, but the "true" majority whose validity is in fact not merely numerical but primarily ethical (moral and cultural), autonomous from and superior to voting procedures. Populism, one might say, aspires to achieve power through electoral competition but uses elections as plebiscites that serve to prove to the public the force of the winner, rather than to assess the various representative claims (Tarchi 2015). Thus, I argue that if successful, populism

tries in extreme cases to constitutionalize “its majority” and does so by dissociating “the people” from any pretense of impartiality and staging instead the identification of a part (the “good” part) with the ruler representing it (*pars pro parte*). This makes populism different from fascism (which does not need elections to prove its legitimacy) and in effect a form of radical majoritarianism that uses the ritual of elections to show its power through vote counting (Urbinati 2017).

Of course, in a democracy, a majority always manages the government and shapes the politics of the country according to its plans, which electors supported. As Adam Przeworski reminded us (1999), votes are power, hard power, and a majority tends to rule with all the strength and determination that institutions and constitution allow. Yet the populist majority is different, as it is not solely an affirmation of electoral strength. A populist majority installs itself in power not *as if* it were a temporary winner but *as if* it were the right winner with the mission of bringing the “forgotten” and “true” country back, as President Trump’s inauguration speech claimed. We can thus say that even if a populist government does not erase elections and its majority is in principle transitory, it is the *as if* approach to the principle of majority that makes all the difference. The *as if* fiction is representational and operates in the domain of belief. Governing *as if* the government were the expression of the “right” and “true” majority is a modality that encourages a permanent mobilization of the audience, an endless work of humiliation of those who are in the opposition and thus part of the “wrong” people. Without suspending elections and the free and secret ballot, a populist government uses the means of propaganda and communication to dwarf the opposition and make it feel weak and powerless to challenge the existing majority. A populist regime is thus recognizable by the way it humiliates the political opposition and propagates the conviction that the opposition is morally illegitimate, because it is not made of the “right” people, and by the way it makes the audience its amplifying voice, much more relevant than elections. Such a regime is capable of creating a climate in which it may happen that the majority is tempted and ready to operate at the expense of the rights and legitimacy of the disliked minorities.

Its cockeyed relation to democratic procedures makes the populist government an authoritarian rendering of how democracy should be implemented, in which the term “authoritarian” means as self-concerning with the will of the majority as a leader makes it, in

disdain of pluralism of visions and the principle of a “legitimate opposition.” Populism in power is an ideological construct that depicts only one part of the people as legitimate. Thus, once elected, the leader feels authorized to act unilaterally and decide without meaningful institutional consultation or mediations while in permanent communication with the people outside, in order to reassure they are the master of the game while he is their knight, as Trump has implied time and again. The “thin ideology” of the politics of morality hides a clear strategy for conquering power that has intolerant ruling at its constitutive core, as we can see from the way in which populist electoral victory is interpreted: as “taking the country back,” *as if* the people were not represented before the populist leader was elected. The implication of this not-innocent claim is that all prior majorities were illegitimate, and that mistreating and disparaging them is right.

It is thus inadequate to deem populism an ideology of the people that claims to mobilize the people against the establishment or that wants to mobilize the people in order to make them the actor of their own emancipation. It would be more appropriate to say that populist leaders use this anti-establishment imagery in order to ask the people to identify with them, and moreover to believe that to have faith in them will work for their emancipation by avenging them against the other part or parts – more importantly, that leaders will do this job for them (Roberts 2015). Rather than a species of direct democracy, populism is a form of *direct representation* (Urbinati 2015). I employ this oxymoronic expression to make sense of the following empirical fact: the construction of the leader as representative of the true people occurs by means of his direct and permanent communication with the audience (which the new electronic media facilitate). It is the representative agent that is *direct* in its relation to the citizens; the populist leader bypasses intermediary associations, like parties and traditional media, and holds quotidian communication with “his people” in order to prove he is always identified with them and not a new establishment.

In a textbook manner, the trajectory of the populist leader starts with the attack against the political establishment; once he has achieved an electoral majority, he has to go on attacking the other state elites and institutions that obstruct his government, and humiliating the checks and balances and independent institutions that limit his power (for instance, the bureaucracy)—proving ceaselessly that he is not and will never be a new establishment. Thus populist leaders face two temptations, the first more benign than the second. On the one hand, they try to be and

remain in a permanent electoral campaign in order to reaffirm their identification with the people and assure the audience they are waging a titanic battle against the entrenched establishment in order to preserve their purity (“Chavez spent more than 1,500 hours denouncing capitalism on *Alo Presidente*, his own TV show” (Morozov 2011, p. 113); Berlusconi was for years a daily attraction on both state and his private national television stations; Trump is on Twitter night and day to attack his adversaries and wage symbolic wars against the many enemies of America). On the other hand, the leader may want to change the rules and the existing constitution in order to strengthen his decision-making power.

The construction of a more inclusive sovereign and the injection of more mobilization from below, which these two strategies import, are not necessarily democracy-friendly, and in fact can come at the expense of democracy (Roberts 2013, p. 153). In countries in which constitutional revision is essentially based on a parliamentary majority, although qualified and sometimes accompanied by referenda, populist leaders or parties that have enough power are not content with simply winning a majority but want a more unbounded power. Moreover, they want to stay in power as long as possible; they “will seek to establish a new populist constitution—in both the sense of a new sociopolitical settlement and a new set of rules for the political game” (Müller, 2016, p. 62). The cases of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela and of Viktor M. Orbán in Hungary fit this trajectory almost perfectly. Chávez “imposed his will, armed by his plebiscitary mandate and seventy per cent approval ratings in public opinion surveys. Upon convening the new constituent assembly claimed ‘super-constitutional power,’ a claim subsequently upheld by the Supreme Court, and moved quickly to dissolve both houses of the national congress as well as state legislative assemblies, effectively eliminating institutional checks on executive power that were located in other elected bodies. By December 1999, a new constitution had been drafted and approved in yet another popular referendum by a crushing majority of 71,4 per cent of voters, and a committee was formed out of the constituent assembly to exercise legislative power in place of the disbanded national congress” (Roberts 2013, p. 149). On March 11, 2013, the Hungarian Parliament, with the Fidesz as its majority party, approved changes to the constitution that curtailed the power of the Constitutional Court and civil rights, and fostered a majoritarian democracy. Among the twenty-two modified articles there are some that make it easier for the government to limit free speech and freedom of political association, some that criminalize homeless people who sleep in public areas, and some that subvert the constitutive

principles and the rule of law, such as the separation of powers and constitutional control on lawmaking. Although different as to the content, these are stories of majority's occupation of the state with the help of orchestrated propaganda that makes minorities and opposition scapegoats of the nation's social and economic distress.

The constitutional change is ideally intended to freeze the existing majority into a permanent one. Unlike fascism, which revokes the tenure limitation of its executive leader and with it the process of checks and balances, populism does not seek an *iron security*, and relies upon audience democracy. Enlivening propaganda against the never fully doomed enemies is a tonic the populist leader uses to secure his appeal through a quotidian building of people's faith. The populist leader who wants to avert the risk of becoming a new establishment should be able to use two registers: involving and mobilizing the people beside the plebiscitary act of acclamation; and seeking recurrent kinds of plebiscitary evidence of his lovability, through his massive presence in the media and frequent recourses to formal appeals to the people. In both cases, the role of the anti-establishment rhetoric is pivotal, as the leader always has to perform, and not only inside the institutions and through procedures and rules, in order to reassure the people that he is always their voice and at war with the establishment. Populism in power is recognizable as a permanent electoral campaign (Mazzoleni 2008, 58).

The trajectory of populism in power toward the making of a populist constitution (whether de facto or formal) brings me to the last character of populism we need to stress in order to see its work of disfiguring democracy: the fact that it is an ideology based on trust through *faith* more than trust through free and open deliberation (and thus also dissent) among the followers, and between them and the representative, and in this sense a trust that is essentially linked to its opposite, mistrust. Populism does not cultivate or actually appreciate the idea of accountability, because it claims that to have a beloved and populist leader is condition enough for trust. This is, of course, an imaginary rendering and one that asks its audience to surrender demands for empirical demonstration. And in fact, the idea of the people that populism sponsors is structured in a way that is congenial to this surrender into the leader's hand because, as said before, the victory of populism is not merely the victory of a majority but of the "authentic" people. In fact, the actual people are transformed into an imaginary entity incarnated in the leader, who "extracts" the "true" people from the empirical people that inhabit

a country or are subjected to a country's legal order (Arato 2013). As Trump stated in his inaugural speech: "What truly matters is not which party controls our government, but whether our government is controlled by the people. January 20th, 2017 will be remembered as the day the people became the rulers of this nation again. The forgotten men and women of our country will be forgotten no longer."

The identification of trust with faith neutralizes the meaning of elections, as Schmitt made clear in criticizing the then-moribund parliamentarianism. In offering a capacious argument to the authoritarians of his times, Schmitt disclaimed electoral accountability as a liberal concept that presumes a transactional kind of relationship, peculiar to the market rather than politics. The people – the *actual* existing people of the nation – is the right sovereign, and there is nobody outside that can question it or limit it; hence, the public manifestation of the consent of the people in the form of identification with and acclamation of "its" leader is the only valid accountability because it is the truly political one, not procedural and formal, not mediated but immediate (Schmitt 2008, p. 370). The intensity and acclamatory power of the people is the evidence of their strength and their leader's legitimacy.

This leads us to argue that the ideological discourse that opposes the authentic people to the establishment is like the top of the iceberg sustained by a view of the people (represented by its leader) that because it is sovereign cannot be wrong. The populist people transform the democratic people by giving it a social determinacy that it does not have because the democratic people is itself an open game of determination through the process of opinion and will formation, from one majority to the next one. As Paulina Ochoa Espejo writes of populists (2017, p. 94), "since they are the people, they cannot be wrong; since the people are sovereign, they cannot lose. Thus, when populists find themselves in the electoral opposition, they see that as itself a flagrant injustice that requires 'taking back' the country from those who have stolen it from the authentic people." Berlin's observation was prescient: "Populism cannot be a consciously minority movement. Whether falsely or truly, it stands for the majority of men, the majority of me who have somehow been damaged" ("To define populism," p. 175).

In claiming that they want to reinstall the true people in power, populists reveal an ontological and anti-procedural interpretation of the people and the majority (Laclau 2011, p. 189). They claim a form of democracy in which the issue of *who* rules or uses the procedures

acquires much more relevance than the issue of *how* procedures are operated and used. Political scientists call this “discriminatory legalism”—the idea of “everything for my friends; for my enemies, the law” (Weyland 2013, p. 21). A theoretical rendering of this factuality would suggest we connect it to the *ad personam* paradigm of legality vs. *erga omnes*, which is the translation of the logic of *pars pro parte* vs. *pars pro toto*. Let us briefly explain this crucial and neglected point.

Scholars of democracy have associated populism with the strategy of “linking an increasingly undifferentiated and depoliticized electorate with a largely neutral and non-partisan system of governance...populist democracy primarily tends towards partyless democracy” (Mair 2002, p. 84 and 89). Yet populism’s antiestablishment discloses a project that is more radical and fits a public sphere of opinion that “partyless democracy” makes expressive but imprecise. How are we to make sense of the project of “partyless democracy,” given that populism utilizes, even if instrumentally, the means of the party in its struggle against established parties, and moreover that it does *not* think of its party as identical to “the whole people”? This question contains a puzzle that speaks for populism’s cockeyed relation to representative and constitutional democracy – a puzzle that pertains to the relationship between “the part” and “the whole” (Polin 1977, pp. 229-55; Bobbio 1987, p. 123). In derogating from the general indeterminate meaning of the people that belongs to democracy, which is inclusive of all citizens because it is not identified with any part of the society or social configuration, we said above that populism identifies the people with the best “part” and makes majority the ruling force of that part against the other part(s). This is a radical change in relation to representative democracy, because it is a logic that violates the synecdoche *pars pro toto* and puts one part (assumed to be the best one) against or instead of the other/s – the logic of populism is the glorification of one part. *Pars pro toto* was the *fictio iuris* intended so as to characterize representative institutions in their generality and does not apply to populism, which rejects the notion of generality.^{iv} Populist government is *pars pro parte*. It is essentially *factional government*, because it is government of a part (defined as the best) that rules openly for its own good (needs and interests) – this makes it a radical challenge to the party system, electoral representation, and constitutional democracy. In this process of solidification of the political-legal people we can detect populism’s attempt to achieve an identification of “the people” with *one part* that a leader and her followers incarnate. Populism in power plans to resolve the tension between “parts” and “the whole” (which is the

essence of representative democracy) by identifying the whole with a part. This leads me to conclude that it is a substitution of *pars pro parte* for *pars pro toto*; an explicit declaration of democracy as a regime *of* rather than *by* the majority.

If the root of populism in power is not the whole people, it is really incorrect to associate it with Rousseau's *volonté générale* – the claim of sovereignty is indeed a claim made by the people *minus* some of them, a part that *ex-ante* is defined as violation of the people (Canovan 1981, p. 277). In Montesquieu's language, we would say that the dualistic scheme (people vs. the establishment) is the “spirit” of populism, what makes its party unlike all existing parties that compete for power. Through it, democracy risks become the ruling power of a specific majority that purports itself to be and rules as, in Nancy Rosenblum's words, an “holistic party” (2016, chap. 1), or a part that acts *as if* it were the only good majority, which elections reveal but do not create, and *as if* the opposition does not belong to the same people. The difference between populism and authoritarian transformation rests mainly in this fictional scheme of political action.

Populism consists in a disfigurement of the democratic principles, the majority and the people, in a way that is meant to celebrate a part through its leader, who uses the support of the audience to purify elections of their *formalistic and procedural character*. In this sense, populism's ambition is to construct new forms of popular sovereignty that enhance partial inclusiveness, which occur at the expense of democracy as majority/opposition or an open game of contestation of and competition for government. Certainly, these outcomes are not inevitable, as populism is not an anti-democratic move, but their possibility is contained in the populist project of anti-normative as anti-procedural affirmation of the people. This may lead populism to collide with constitutional democracy, even if its main tenets are embedded in the democratic universe of meanings and language.

CONCLUSION

Contemporary populism is not the product of some malevolent force but of the very model of democracy, representative and constitutional, that has stabilized our societies after World War Two. The success of that model in burying totalitarianism and favoring economic growth for several decades has run the risk of freezing it into an eternalized scheme that works as a cage,

whether it serves the interests of genuine democrats, who think that this is the only model that can make participation secure and capable of delivering effective decisions, or whether it serves the interests of democracy skeptics, who think that it is simply a fake popular regime, which gives the citizens the illusion of ruling while legitimizing the power of an elite. What is missing in the literature on populism is the awareness of the historicity and context-specificity of what we call liberal democracy, a term that has become synonymous with democracy. However, making democracy into an ideology inhibits a critical understanding of its forms and achievements—in effect, its historicity. It also obfuscates the relationship between the social conditions of citizenship and the political forms of participation. It narrows democracy to an abstract paradigm of normativity that can hardly explain ideological constructions, partisan divisions, and the rhetorical work of justification, which is hardly impartial and disembodied. In the end, it leaves us with no argument against internal political adversaries of democracy. The thesis I proposed in this article is that populism in power is a new form of mixed government, in which one part of the population achieves a pre-eminent power over the other(s), and that it competes with constitutional democracy in conjoining a specific representation of the people and the sovereignty of the people, which it attains by instantiating what I call direct representation, a kind of democracy that is based on a direct relationship between the leader and the people. To understand and critically evaluate populism we have to assume democracy in its representative and party form, a condition that is scarcely appreciated in the current theory of democracy, whether procedural or deliberative.

LITERATURE CITED

- Anderson, P. 2017. *The H-Word: The Periphery of Hegemony*. London: Verso
- Arato, A. 2013. Political Theology and Populism. *Social Research* 80 (1): 143-72.
- Arato, A. 2017. How we got there: Transition Failures, Their Causes, and the Populist Interests in the Constitution. October 11. <http://www.publicseminar.org/2017/10/how-we-fot-here/> (accessed January 2018).
- Arditi, B. 2007. *Politics on the Edges of Liberalism: Difference, Populism, Revolution, Agitation*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press.

- Berlin, I. 1999. *The Roots of Romanticism*, ed. H. Hardy, Second Edition, with a Foreword by J. Gray. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton Univ. Press.
- Bobbio N. 1987. *The Future of Democracy*. Transl. R Griffen. Minneapolis: Univ. Minn. Press (from Italian).
- Canovan, M. 1981. *Populism*. New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Canovan, M. 1999. 'Trust the People!' Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy. *Political Studies* 47: 2– 16.
- Canovan, M. 2002. Taking Politics to the People: Populism as the Ideology of Democracy. In *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*, eds. Y. Mény and Y. Surel, pp. 25-44. Oxford: Palgrave.
- Canovan, M. 2005. *The People*. Cambridge: Polity.
- De la Torre, C. 2010. *Populist Seduction in Latin America*. Athens: Ohio State Univ. Press.
- Derrida, J. 1988. *Limited Inc.*. Transl. S. Weber. Evanston, IL: Northwestern Univ. Press.
- Espejo, P.O. 2017. Populism and The People. *Theory & Events* 20 (1): 92-99.
- Finchelstein, F. 2017. *From Fascism to Populism in History*. Oakland: Univ. of California Press.
- Finchelstein, F. and N. Urbinati. 2018. On Populism and Democracy. Unpublished manuscript.
- Frank, J. 2010. *Constituent Moments: Enacting the People in Postrevolutionary America*. Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press.
- Germani, G. 1978. *Authoritarianism, Fascism, and National Populism*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.
- Griffin, R. 1996. The 'Post-fascism' of Alleanza Nazionale: A Case Study in Ideological Morphology. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 1 (2): 123-145.
- Hofstadter, R. 1965. *The Age of Reform*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Kazin, K. 1995. *The Populist Passion: An American History*. New York: Basic Books.
- Kelsen, H. 2013. *The Worth and Value of Democracy* (1929). Transl. B. Graft, eds. N. Urbinati and C. Invernizzi Accetti. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Knight, A. 1999. Populism and Neo-Populism in Latin America, Especially Mexico. *Journal of Latin American Studies* 30: 223-48.
- Iñigo, E. and C. Mouffe. 2016. *Podemos in the Name of The People*, preface by Owen Jones. London: Lawrence & Wishrat.
- Ionescu, G. and E. Gellner, eds. 1969. *Populism*. London: The Macmillan Company.

- Laclau, E. 2005. *On Populist Reason*. London: Verso.
- Laclau, E. 2005a. Populism: What's in a Name. In *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, ed. F. Panizza, pp. London: Verso.
- Laclau, E. 2011. *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism, Fascism, Populism*. London: Verso.
- Laclau E. and C. Mouffe. 2001. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. London: Verso.
- Levitsky S. and J. Loxton. 2013. Populism and comparative authoritarianism: the case of Fujimori's Peru. In *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy?* eds. C. Mudde and C. R. Kaltwasser, pp. 160-181. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Macpherson, C.B. 1953. *Democracy in Alberta: The Theory and Practice of a Quasi-Party System*. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press.
- Mair, P. 2002. Populist Democracy vs. Party Democracy. In *Democracies and The Populist Challenge*, eds. Y. Mény and Y. Surel, pp. 81-98. New York: Palgrave.
- Manin, B. 1997. *The Principles of Representative Government*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Mazzoleni, G. 2008. Populism and the Media. In *Twenty-First Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy*, eds. D. Albertazzi and D. McDonnell, pp. 49-64. London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- McCormick, J.P. 2011. *Machiavellian Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Mills, C. Writes. 1956. *The Power of Elite*. Oxford and London: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Moffitt, B. 2016. *The Global Rise of Populism: Performance, Political Style, and Representation*. Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press.
- Mouffe, C. 2005. The 'End of Politics' and the Challenge of Right-wing Populism. In *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, ed. F. Panizza, pp. 50-71. London: Verso.
- Mouffe, C. 2016. The Populist Moment. *OpenDemocracy.net* 21 November (consulted on June 2017).
- Morozov, E. 2011. *The Dark Side of Internet Freedom: The New Delusion*, New York: Public Affairs.
- Mounk, Y. 2018. *The People vs. Democracy: Why Our Freedom is in Danger & How To Save it*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

- Mudde, C. 2004. The Populist Zeitgeist. *Government and Opposition*, 39 (3): 541–63;
- Mudde, C. 2017. Populism: An Ideational Approach. In *The Oxford Handbook of Populism* eds. C. R. Kaltwasser, P. Taggart, P. O. Espejo and P. Ostiguy, chap. 2. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Mudde, C. and C. Rovira Kaltwasser. 2013. Populism and (liberal) democracy: a framework for analysis. In *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy?*, eds. C. Mudde and C. Rovira Kaltwasser, pp. 1-26. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Murillo, M.V. 2018. La historicidad del pueblo y los límites del populismo. *Nueva Sociedad* (Marzo-Abril): 165-174.
- Müller, J.-W. 2012. Towards a Political Theory of Populism. *Notizie di Politeia*, n. 108.
- Müller, J.-W. 2016. *What Is Populism?* Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press.
- Norris, P. 1997. *Passages to Power: Legislative Recruitment in Advanced Democracies*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- O'Donnell, G. 1994. Delegative Democracy. *Journal of Democracy*, 5: 55-69
- Peruzzotti, E. 2013. Populism in Democratic Times: Populism, Representative Democracy and the Debate on Democratic Deepening. In *Latin American Populism in the Twenty-First Century*, eds. C. de la Torre and C. J. Arnson, pp. 61-84. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press.
- Polin, R. 1977. *La liberté de notre temps*. Paris: Vrin.
- Przeworski, A. 1999. Minimalist conception of democracy: a defense. In *Democracy's Value*, eds. I. Shapiro and C. Hacker-Cordón, pp. 23-55. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Riker, W. R. 1982. *Liberalism against Populism: A Confrontation Between the Theory of Democracy and the Theory of Social Choice*. Long Grove, Ill.: Waveland Press.
- Roberts, K. M. 2013. Populism and democracy in Venezuela under Hugo Chávez. In *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy?* eds. C. Mudde and C. R. Kaltwasser, pp. 136-159. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Roberts, K. M. 2015. "Populism, Political Mobilization, and Crisis of Political Representation," In *The Promise and Perils of Populism: Global Perspectives*, ed. C. De La Torre, pp. 140-158. Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky.
- Rosanvallon, P. 2006. *La contre-démocratie. La politique à l'âge de la défiance*. Paris: Seuil.
- Rosenblum, N. 2008. *On the Side of the Angels: An Appreciation of Parties and Partisanship*. Princeton NJ: Princeton Univ. Press.

- Saffon, M. P. and J. F. González-Bertomeu. 2017. Latin American populism: An admissible trade-off between procedural democracy and equality? *Constellations* 24:416–431.
- Schmitt, C. 2008. *Constitutional Theory* (1st ed.1928). Transl. and ed. J. Seitzer, foreword by E. Kennedy. Durham: Duke Univ. Press.
- Skocpol, T. and V. Williamson. 2012. *The Tea Party and the remaking of Republican conservatism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Shils, E. 1956. *The Torment of Secrecy*. Glencoe: Free Press.
- Taggart, P. 2000. *Populism*. London: Open Univ. Press.
- Taguieff, P.-A. 1997. Populism and Political Science: From Conceptual Illusions to Real Problems. *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire* 56 (4):4-33.
- Tarchi, M. 2015. *Italia populista. Dal qualunquismo a Beppe Grillo*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- To define populism. 1968. *Government and Opposition*, 3 (2):137-179.
- Traverso, E. 2017. *Les nouveaux visages du fascisme*. Paris: Textuel.
- Urbinati, N. 1998. Democracy and Populism, *Constellations* 5 (1): 110-24.
- Urbinati, N. 2014. *Democracy Disfigured: Opinion, Truth and the People*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Urbinati, N. 2015. A Revolt against Intermediary Bodies, *Constellations* 22 (4):477-486.
- Urbinati, N. 2017. Populism and the Principle of Majority. In *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, eds. C. Rovira Kaltwasser, P. Taggart, P. O. Espejo, and P. Ostiguy, pp. 571-89. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Weyland, K. 2001. Clarifying a Contested Concept: Populism in the Study of Latin American Politics. *Comparative Politics* 24 (1): 1-22.
- Walicki, A. 1969. Russia. In *Populism*, eds. G. Ionescu and E. Gellner, pp. 62-96. London: Macmillan Company.
- Weyland, K. 2013. The threat from the populist left. *Journal of Democracy*, 24 (1): 18–32.
- Worsley, P. 1969. The concept of Populism. In *Populism* eds. G. Ionescu and E. Gellner, pp. 212-250. London: The Macmillan Company.

ⁱ Populism’s malleability makes it just as suitable a vehicle for rightist parties as for leftist ones; its detachment from socio-economic referents entails that it “can in principle be appropriated by any agency for any political construct” (Anderson 2017, p. 96).

ⁱⁱ This is the case of extra-party and popular movements of contestation like Girotondi (Italy 2002), Occupy Wall Street (USA 2011) and Indignados (Spain 2011). Hence, there is a populist style of rhetoric but not yet populist power when the anti-representative discourse is made up of a social movement that wants to be independent of elected officials, wants to resist becoming an elected entity, neither has nor wants representative leaders unifying its claims, and wants to keep elected officials under public scrutiny.

ⁱⁱⁱ “When Perot supporters talked about ‘us’ against ‘them’, they meant the people – all the people—against the politicians” (Kazin 1995, 280-81). Thus millionaires like Berlusconi, Perot, and Trump fit populist antiestablishment rhetoric as they “can be considered more authentic representatives of the people than leaders with a more common socio-economic status” (Mudde 2017, p. 28).

^{iv} “Pro” may mean both “instead of” and “on behalf of”; because of this ambiguity in meaning, this paradigm has been the most effective way to render the condition of political representation, which is structurally open to contestation and pluralism because of its double drive. To attach it to populism would be inappropriate, because populism seeks to solve that ambiguity when it declares its people the “right” one.