POPULISM IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

A Performative and Discursive Approach

Edited by Pierre Ostiguy, Francisco Panizza, and Benjamin Moffitt

Chapter 13
Reflections on The Lessons Learned

13

CONCLUSIONS

Reflections on the Lessons Learned

*Francisco Panizza, Pierre Ostiguy,
and Benjamin Moffitt*

The central aim of this collection has been to draw together scholars working in two distinct but complementary traditions in the study of populism—Laclauian scholars who adopt a discursive approach, and scholars who adopt a socio-cultural or performative approach—and synthesise their insights to put forward what we have called a "post-Laclauian" approach to the phenomenon. We have thus sought to link Laclauian theories of how populism formally operates—particularly around how "the people" is formed as a political subject, and the important role of the populist leader—together with the more sociologically grounded work of socio-cultural and performative scholars, which has stressed the social, cultural, and mediatic aspects of populism's operation, as well as the relational nature of populism sometimes elided in Laclauian work. In doing so, we have synthesised high theory with insights garnered from the study of populism "on the ground", moving across the globe to ensure that we go beyond regionally specific (and often Eurocentric) understandings of the phenomenon and also thus learning much about our reality along the way.

In the process, we have shown that, when dealing with a concept as complex as populism, the question of what a concept "is" and how it is defined is inextricable from the question of what a concept "does", and how it is developed and applied within a community of scholars. Operationalisation relies on problematisation and vice versa (Spanakos 2016, 3)—and we have indeed engaged with problematisation here, rather than leaning on old insights into the subject at hand. We have also drawn on Laclau's (and Mouffe's) work, but in a spirit of critical engagement and respect, have also challenged some of their assumptions, adding new theoretical insights and grounded understandings of our reality to push forward the research agenda for populism. The result is an approach that respectfully acknowledges Laclau's work, but is not limited by it and also in many ways moves

beyond it. In this light, we outline in this Conclusion some of the theoretical and empirical contributions of the combined discursive-performative approach to the study of populism we have laid out in this book. We concentrate on five questions that are at the heart of the contemporary debate on populism: the relation of identification between the leader and the people; "the people" as a relational category; populism, anti-populism and antagonism; populism and institutions; and populism and democracy.

The Leader and Populist Identification

The populist leader is at the core of the study of populism—including in this volume. But why is the leader so relevant for understanding populism, and what role does the leader play in processes of populist identification? In this section, we focus on three questions that are addressed across different case studies: the leader's role in embodying the people, the name of the leader, and the leader's populist performances.

Embodying the People ("I Am a People")

To claim that populism is about the constitution of the people amounts to understanding populism as a mode of political identification. While a relational notion of populism rejects identification as top-down manipulation, the relation between the leader and his/her publics or audiences is central to populist identification. And indeed, at the core of Laclau's theory is the claim that the name of the leader takes on the role of an "empty signifier"—a signifier without a signified, in which "the people" invest their demands, meanings, and desires.

We argue that there are two problems with this powerful claim. The first one, as formulated by Mazzolini (Chapter 5), follows Arditi (2007) in arguing that Laclau shifts in his writings from the name of the leader to actual individuals, without noticing the structural differences between the two (see also Ostiguy 2017). While a name can *tendentially* be filled by any political signified (with the proviso that no signifier is ever completely empty), the persona of the leader is always already saturated with meaning, as argued by Ostiguy and Moffitt in Chapter 3. Second, and following from this, it is not clear what actually triggers populist identification with a particular leader.

In order to address these questions, contributors to this volume have explored the socio-cultural dimensions of the leader's populist appeal. Appeals have performative power (Moffitt 2016), but, as pointed in the introduction to this volume and further elaborated in Chapter 3, the performative constitution of the people does not take place in a socio-cultural vacuum. Populist appeals are public manifestations of social aspects of the self in society based on an assumption of sameness or coded understandings of similarity. Embodying

the people, however, is not a mere exercise in sameness. As María Esperanza Casullo put it (Chapter 4), the leader resembles the people ("he/she is like me") only partially, and only in the aspects that he/she has chosen as markers of identity. He/she is also set apart from the people by his/her extraordinary qualities that have allowed him/her to accumulate wealth or power or both ("he/she is better than me").

Casullo analyses the leader's father/brother (Laclau 2005, 59) incarnation of the people with regards to Bolivia's former president Evo Morales. As she notes, Morales' ethnic features, bodily image, clothes, and other socio-cultural references mirror his poor, indigenous base. Yet, as Casullo puts it, Morales does not simply embody the popular classes of the *altiplano* of his country to perform a folksy representation of indigeneity. Rather, he blends indigenous symbols and rituals with the modern trappings of the presidency to subvert racialized social hierarchies. As she puts it, the transgression does not simply lie in dressing or eating "like an indio", but in doing so *while also* performing things that "indios" are not supposed to do—namely exercising presidential power. A similar display of ordinariness and extraordinariness by Turkey's president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was analysed by Toygar Baykan, in Chapter 10. The Justice and Development Party's political narrative presented Erdoğan as the son of a modest migrant family in İstanbul and a devout Muslim educated in an Imam and Preacher School, who "knows the streets of city", has devoted his life to work for Islamist political organisations and has suffered for his political ideas. As Baykan (citing Kaplan 2014) puts it, in his story we encounter someone who has come from the lower class and has climbed the ladder of life despite suffering various impediments. Extracts of a 2014 elections campaign song, called "Recep Tayyip Erdogan: The Man of the People", stated:

> He is the free voice of the silent world. . . . He is confidant to the downtrodden, he is comrade to the excluded, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. He is determined in his cause; he is in the prayer of mothers, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. He walks in the way he believes, he is the leader who has been awaited for years, Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

This very duality of "just like us" and "much better than us" is equally central in the much-repeated chorus of the emblematic Peronist March, where Perón is "the first worker", while "being so great!" and "so worthy!": "Perón, Perón, great leader, you're the first worker!".

More than Just a Name

The distinction between socio-cultural and discursive elements of the leaders' populist appeals is analytical rather than ontological. Laclau's emphasis, certainly,

is very much on populism's discursive logic of articulation. According to Laclau, populist identification is achieved by the articulation of demands in an equivalential chain that is inscribed in the name of the leader that operates as an empty signifier. However, in Chapter 3 Ostiguy and Moffitt questioned the claims that unfulfilled demands can be projected into an empty signifier (a signifier without signified or referent). Rather, they argue, the leader's (or his/her name's) ability to signify an equivalential chain of demands cannot be arbitrarily separated from what the leader *is* and what he or she *does*. Indeed, as Laclau writes, the "inscription undoubtedly gives the demand a corporeality which it would not otherwise have" (2005, 88).

Ostiguy and Moffitt argued that not only is it impossible to erase the traces of particularity in the leader, but that it is these traces, which, amplified, and even exaggerated, become the basis for the condensation and identification. Thus, the particularities "stand for", help, make it easier for the name or persona to become a signifier that unifies the equivalential chain. Laclau states that the particular come to stand for the broad equivalential chain through an operation of hegemony; Ostiguy and Moffitt explain how. They further argue that instead of being empty of any particular meaning in order to represent a pure universality ("the people"), the leader represents a *multiplicity* of concrete, very different meanings and affective investments—not necessarily logically coherent amongst themselves, but historically and contextually situated, and linked to traits and practices of the persona of what the leader is and what he/she does. As Casullo put it in Chapter 4, the leader becomes a signifier through performance. We believe that the theoretical chapters, as well as the more empirical chapters in this volume, have cogently addressed this issue, effectively bridging the gap between Laclau's—more formal—theory of populism and the more sociologically grounded relational approach.

Nicole Curato's description in Chapter 12 of the Philippines' president Rodrigo Duterte's actions in the wake of Typhoon Haiyan illustrates how Duterte's actions gave credence to his appeal in this regard—not as empty signifier, but as a concrete, very real, and "overflowing" persona full of contradictory meaning. It is worth quoting her in full to illustrate this:

> The crude mayor known for running death squads was among the first on the scene after Haiyan devastated the islands of Central Philippines. And he was just a city mayor, 650 kilometres away from Tacloban. He had no responsibility towards the disaster victims, and yet he brought with him a convoy of medical teams and relief workers. . . . Duterte's people handed relief goods with no questions asked. Unlike the bags of relief goods plastered with politicians' names, Duterte's relief goods were packed into a red sack, with a sticker that said "YOU ARE NOT FORGOTTEN. From: Davao City." Alive in the memory of disaster survivors is the image of a humble city mayor who worked without fanfare, free from an entourage

snapping selfies with a broken city as background. Duterte was a man who "did something" as opposed to the government that only "said something."

Moreover, leaders do not just represent demands: they actively activate, politicise, and control them (De Cleen, Glynos and Mondon, Chapter 8). Drawing on the case of former president Rafael Correa in Ecuador, Mazzolini (Chapter 5) argued that while in the initial stages of the country's process of constitutional reform, many highly heterogeneous demands for constitutional rights coalesced in the name of Correa that functioned as something akin to an empty signifier, at a later stage, Correa, rather than being a passive recipient of demands, took up a much more active role, thus becoming the final arbiter as to which demands were to be incorporated into the new constitutional document, and which ones were to be discarded or even ostracised. In our discursive-performative approach, we make clear that the relationship between the leader and their people is, in fact, a very dynamic one in which, as elaborated later, demands are grounded in the people's lived conditions, and articulated and politicised by the leader.

Performing Populism

Understanding the performative nature of populism requires a particular focus on the style of the leader's appeal, a question that is not fully developed in Laclau's work, but is at the centre of Moffitt's study of populism (2016, 2020) and is further developed by Ostiguy and Moffitt in Chapter 3. By challenging socio-cultural standards of good taste and "proper behaviour", the leader's populist appeals are often transgressive of mainstream conventions of political speech (including more recently so-called political correctness). Ostiguy and Moffitt argue that populist leaders often performatively contribute to the coming to the fore of sociologically latent (or of sociologically present but not yet politicised) divisions in the party system of what political sociologists have called cleavages—based on cultural, socio-economic, ethnic or regional divisions. Cleavages can certainly not be created *ad nihilo*, since appeals that create long-lasting divisions must resonate with the lived experiences of everyday daily life and with social history. They further argue that the transgressive display of resentments and of socio-cultural differences with deep social roots is meant to emphasise the desired socio-political cleavage to be relevant in the national arena.

These transgressive practices—what Ostiguy calls "the embodiment of the low"—are vital for understanding the affective dimensions of populism. Because of this, Moffitt's performative approach requires, epistemologically, an audio-visual component, including meaningful vignettes: such as the story of the shirts of Evo Morales in Casullo's chapter, or the vignette of "the man who rubs his belly" in Baykan's anti-populist depiction. Not surprisingly, the socio-cultural approach for studying populism abounds in anecdotes; what is often methodologically viewed

as peripheral "noise" becomes central to the argument's meaning. These are not just "nice" additions to the study of populism, but are very much performatively constitutive of the phenomenon itself. This focus on performance and affect is not only substantively crucial, but also serves to anchor analysis and comparisons of populism methodologically.

Our case studies offer a number of examples of the performative impact of populist leaders' transgressive style. In Chapter 6, Joseph Lowndes showed how Trump's public interventions peppered with crude language, insult, mockery, and bullying are meant to symbolise that he speaks for what Ostiguy (2017, 75) calls the "unpresentable other". Similarly, in Chapter 12, Curato noted that Rodrigo Duterte captured the attention of domestic and international audiences by comparing his approach to the country's drug problem to Hitler's "final solution", joking about raping women, and calling President Obama a "son of a bitch". As she put it,

> from speaking in Bisaya—a language that many elites from Imperial Manila could not understand—to literally raising the middle finger to the European Union, Duterte's politics of the low can be construed as the people telling their old masters it's their turn to be a centre of politics.

Transgressive performances also contribute to setting up a political frontier with the Other. This performative role is exemplified by South Africa's Economic Freedom Fighters' leader Julius Malema's remarks after EFF's legislators were expelled from a provincial legislature, for acting disruptively while being dressed as maids and miners (Mbete, Chapter 11). Malema claimed that by expelling them, the ruling African National Congress' leadership was treating the EFF legislators in the same way they treat their domestic workers at home, and he articulated "dressing properly" to being white, European, and interiorising a colonialist criteria of decorum:

> To you proper is white, to you proper is European. We are not white; we are going to wear those uniforms. . . . We are defying colonialist decorum. We are not English-made. We are workers, and we are going to wear those clothes and we are unapologetic about it.
>
> *(Pillay 2014)*

As we wrote in the introduction, form is also content. Transgressive performances change the limits of what is sayable and hence doable in a given society. For example, by shocking the public by associating Mexican immigrants with rapists and drug dealers, Trump brought immigration once again to the centre of the political agenda in the USA, and constituted a discursive frontier between being (white English-speaking) American and (brown Spanish-speaking)

foreigner, with his "bad hombres". In a different political context, Mbete (Chapter 11) noted that the EFF's legislators' disdain for parliamentary norms and their challenges to the conventions of the South Africa's parliamentary system through the use of bad manners opened political spaces for a substantive debate about whether the country's political institutions were still relevant in post-Apartheid South Africa. Furthermore, she also counter-intuitively argued that by challenging parliamentary staid conventions, the EFF legislators raised interest in parliamentary politics among ordinary South Africans.

Populism and "the People" as a Relational Category

While acknowledging the important role of leadership in populism, a relational notion of the phenomenon also incorporates multiple and complex practices of identification—included among these, horizontal political practices of solidarity and antagonism centred on the subject of "the people". Panizza and Stavrakakis (Chapter 2) argued that that it is not possible to consider vertical populist identification with the (name of the) leader in isolation from the more horizontal everyday practices of association, solidarity, and resistance that contribute to generating these passionate attachments, relations of trust, and forms of agency constitutive of collective identities (including populist ones). Furthermore, populist identification is never limited to the political sphere, but extends to various aspects of society and culture that in the case of populism draws on high/low socio-cultural divisions, as thematized by Ostiguy and Moffitt (Chapter 3). Contributors to this volume elaborate on how a relational notion of the people in populism connects with adjacent signifiers; how it contributes to understanding horizontal mechanisms of popular identification and the role of subalternity in characterisation of the people; and how it challenges conceptions of the people as a passive, moralistic and homogenous entity.

Horizontal Identification

Vertical and horizontal political practices are intertwined dimensions of populist identification that usually reinforce each other. Our relational concept of identification takes into consideration the co-constitutive role of social movements and cultural agents in the construction of popular identities. Panizza and Stavrakakis (Chapter 2) called for a genealogical account of populist identification in order to challenge top-down notions of populism based on the leader's strategic mobilisation of a vast aggregate of mostly anomic and unorganised followers (Weyland 2017)—a definition that denies agency to the people. A number of case studies focused on the role of horizontal practices of identification in this regard.

As Grattan argued in Chapter 7, the populist imaginary harbours visions and practices of popular sovereignty embodied and contested in a history of movements

and campaigns across the ideological spectrum. Grattan noted that while Bernie Sanders' 2016 campaign cultivated its candidate's popular appeal, it also encouraged people to identify themselves as part of a people-powered "political revolution". Sanders' campaign dialectic of vertical and horizontal identification is exemplified in the claim by Becky Bond, a senior advisor to the campaign, that "Bernie didn't create this movement. He recognized the movement moment we are in" (cited by Grattan, chapter 7).

Moreover, the constitutive relation between grassroots movements and populist leaders is not limited to radical democratic forms of populism. A similar dialectic of horizontal and vertical identification is described in Lowndes' analysis of the relations between Trump and the alt-right. Discussing Trump's transformation of the Republican Party into a political vessel for his own populist appeal, Lowndes claimed that it was less the case that Trump had single-handedly changed the party, and more that he brought to fruition changes already underway in the GOP spurred by the mobilisation of activists who had identified with the Tea Party movement and the politico-cultural influence of evangelical Christians. Lowndes further noted that Trumpism also ignited a movement in the streets beyond the institution of the presidency or the reach of the Republican Party.

The analysis of the co-constitutive role of vertical and horizontal identification also challenges mainstream theories of populism that present the people as a homogeneous entity. In Chapter 9, Markou described the close political relation between SYRIZA and the grassroots anti-austerity movement of the *Aganaktismenoi* (The People of the Squares). As part of this process, the party appealed to a wide variety of social actors, including the workers, the unemployed, the Roma people, immigrants, and LGBQT people. The populist identity resulting from this interaction between horizontal practices and vertical appeals was a diverse and inclusionary coming together of social and political actors that was imagined as a heterogeneous popular actor unified by their opposition to the EU-imposed austerity and the political establishment.

The People as Responsive and Agential

Related to the previous point and against liberal critiques of populism as a one-sided communicative strategy in which the people are passive recipients of the leader's appeal, we understand populism as a relational phenomenon that operates as a two-way street: populist leaders and representatives make claims on behalf of the people, and the people participate in rejecting, being indifferent to, modifying or accepting such claims (Ostiguy and Moffitt, Chapter 3). As Moffitt (2016, 105) puts it,

> there is more to successfully "performing the people" than just speaking in their name. . . . [A]udiences are not just voiceless masses waiting to be interpellated into popular subjects, but practice agency in regards to choosing to accept, reject or modify claims made to them.

The ways in which the people interact with the leader's appeal and the extent to which they exercise agency varies significantly according to communicative and political contexts. The iconic image of populism is the leader addressing an adoring and cheering crowd in a public rally in which the role of the audience is limited to showing their love and support for the leader. But even in this communicative scenario, the reaction of the audience is crucial for performing identification. In his description of Trump's rallies, Lowndes (Chapter 6) noted that the audience modulated the rally's energy and emotional charge by remaining silent, offering tepid applause or roaring with approval depending on what Trump said in the unfolding moment. It wasn't full-blown demagogy, but rather a performance being judged by an audience who was at times distinctly bored and, at others, engaged by what was being offered to them.

As it could be expected, in the radical democratic varieties of populism studied in this volume, audience participation was more substantive, drawing on the open and incomplete nature of populist identities. Against claims that populism is a phenomenon that homogenises the people, Grattan argued in Chapter 7 that the Sanders coalition foregrounded their disparate visions and disagreements—fuelling what has been referred to as an "open-source" campaign and movement. Grattan described how black activists engaged in a strategy of disruption of the rallies that included chanting slogans, interrupting Sanders' speeches and grabbing the microphone to push the issue of anti-black racism to the foreground of his campaign. Sanders' initial difficulties with Black Lives Matter, or Correa's increasing isolation, are relational failures highlighting the difficulties of the top-down understanding of populism.

Even in more authoritarian contexts, the publics may exercise at least some narrative agency in interpreting the leader's performances. In her ethnographic study of reactions to Duterte's pronouncements, Curato (Chapter 12) found that far from being fanatical, the Philippines' populist publics were quite critical of the leader's messages, and able to render nuanced moral judgments. As she put it, Duterte's supporters do not passively consume the populist narrative; they reflect and engage with it. They put forward reasons for critiquing and supporting the strongman's appeal. Each respondent demonstrates differing interpretation of what is right and wrong, what is good for the collective, and what is excessive use of force.

There are, however, clear limits to the ability of the people to shape the populist message. In Chapter 3, Ostiguy and Moffitt argued that the rise of the internet—and in particular social media such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram—has given the appearance of citizens being able, more than ever, to "answer" representational claims made on their behalf by accessing social media (including the account of the populist leader) with comments, tweets, and "likes". As the authors note, however, this does not mean that online populist communication is actually in any way *direct* and responsive to "the people". Rather, populist leaders

respond to their followers' social media interventions in a limited way, such as retweeting selected tweets to bolster their own voice.

The People as "Underdog"

"The people" in populist discourse is not "everyone", in the Rousseauian sense, but those who are (or who perceive themselves as) excluded from political and, often, societal decisions. They are, as the well-accepted contrast between "the people" and "the elite" goes, some sort of ordinary underdogs—a term which Laclau frequently used. A certain sense of powerlessness, in the people, together with a search for power and public presence through populism, is a fairly accepted component of the populist logic. What is more polemical is the question whether "the people" also involve as well as certain *subalternity*. Stavrakakis, with his notion of a vertical axis, and Roberts (1995, 88), from an entirely different disciplinary school, answer positively in this regard. The chapters of Casullo, Mazzolini, Grattan, Markou, Baykan, Curato, and Mbete all certainly examined a populist public that is socially subaltern and sees itself as such. Moreover, victimisation plays an important role in populist discourse, with appeals to the grievances of "the people" playing into perceptions of subalternity. Here, we have seen the importance of the populist leader's "flaunting of the low" in bringing into the open, not only in content but in *form*, the hurt that "the elite" and various Others have inflicted on the people, and for validating these grievances in a public way.

In this regard, an interesting question epistemologically in our approach is whether to focus on the theatricality of the leader or on the "social pain" from which populism feeds and which it claims to express politically. There are probably epistemological dangers on both extremes: the former can potentially lead to a "circus-like" interpretation of populism, amplified further by the mass media, seeking viewers' attention; and the latter, to a belief in already-present and long-standing sociohistorical cleavages, which as expressed politically is not always the case, and in which situation there would be no real need of an embodied signifier. Certainly, Baykan's, Curato's, and Casullo's chapters, together with Grattan with the public of Black Lives Matter, leaned on the side of the underlying, very real and historically long-standing "social pain" of subalternity.

The People and the Nation

The vertical and horizontal linkages of populism are also addressed in the discussion of the relationship between populism and nationalism in this volume. We have argued that the signifier "the people" operates as a *nodal point*, a point of reference around which other peripheral and often politically antithetical signifiers and ideas can be articulated (Panizza and Stavrakakis, Chapter 2). Hence, hegemonic struggles in the construction of the people involve articulating the

signifier "the people" with other signifiers, such as "the nation", to which it is often closely associated. Populist leaders articulate nationalism to different and often antithetical chains of equivalence and relations of antagonism. In so-called "post-colonial societies", the issue of nationalism is often related to that of a colonial (and also often racist) past, while in Europe, nationalism currently stands more in opposition to the high and cosmopolitan EU project and institutions. For much of the European populist right, however, the cultural Other is related empirically to former colonized subjects, now "inside the nation" (perhaps most particularly in France), or to nationals of clearly poorer neighboring countries immigrating or receiving refugee status. One way or the other, it seems mistaken to study nationalism abstractly, "in its pure form" (if that exists), in relation to populism, instead of *contextually*. "The people" is always "*a* people", but what it means, is, and stands for can vary widely.

The nature of the relation between populism and nationalism in the European context is discussed by De Cleen, Glynos, and Mondon (Chapter 8) in their study of populist radical right (PRR) parties in Europe. They claimed that the intensive use of the term "populism" as a negative catch-all term for everything these parties stand for has not allowed for a proper appreciation of the crucial but *precise* and *limited* role played by populism in these parties' broader political projects. For them, in contrast to populism's vertical down/up distinction between the powerless people and an illegitimately powerful elite, nationalism revolves around the claim to represent the people-as-nation envisaged as a limited and sovereign community that exists through time and is tied to a certain space. The nationalist representation of the community is constructed through an in/out (member/non-member) opposition between the nation and its outgroups. As they argue, the (almost exclusive) focus on populism has had the effect of deflecting attention away from what lies at the very heart of the ideology of the radical right in Europe: an exclusionary ethno-cultural nationalism. They argue that nativism is the ideological heart of the PRR, while populism is a political logic performed by the PRR first and foremost in order to legitimate exclusionary nationalist demands. In doing so, PRR parties use populist discourses to present nativist demands as expressions of the what "the people" want, and to discredit those who oppose nativism as a politically correct "elite" that attacks "the party of the people" or even "ordinary people" themselves.

Populism, Anti-Populism, and Antagonism

We have argued in this volume that there are a number of reasons why it is important to study populism in parallel with anti-populism. Firstly, as Panizza and Stavrakakis noted in Chapter 2, the identity and consistency of each camp is predicated on their mutual antagonism. The way by which Hillary Clinton's anti-populist "basket of deplorables" jibe contributed to the galvanisation of support for Trump in the 2016 campaign is a well-known example of the

unintended but powerful impact of anti-populism on populist identification. In parallel, Lowndes' description (Chapter 6) of the audience reaction to Trump's rally speeches highlighted how populist attacks against the anti-populist camp produced a strong emotional reaction from the audience. After noting that at times Trump's speech failed to excite attendees, he wrote: "It was only when he got them to participate by chanting 'Build the wall,' *when he discussed Hillary Clinton's emails, or when anti-Trump protesters made themselves available for collective attack that the energy was truly high*" (emphasis added).

Secondly, the relation between populism and anti-populism is not limited to speeches and rallies, but more broadly contributes to the shaping of political identities and party systems. In his study of the populist appeal of Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party in Turkey, Baykan (Chapter 10) argued that the populism/anti-populism divide (crystallised in Ostiguy's "high-low" socio-cultural and socio-political cleavage) has been dominant in Turkish politics. He argued that this divide has its source in the historical failure of political parties to activate a left-right alignment in the population, due to the political weakness of the working class and the traumatic legacy for the "low" popular sectors of a process of modernisation from above led by a "high" westernised elite. As Baykan noted, the populist/anti-populist divide has been ever more powerful in Turkey because it is not limited to national politics or party systems, but permeates socio-culturally every aspect of the country's polity and society, from local politics to everyday mundane practices.

The centrality of the populist/anti-populist divide in the structuration of political frontiers will be familiar to scholars of Latin American politics and other semi-peripheral (Mouzelis 1986) regions and countries, as is the case of Greece. While the populist/anti-populist divide has been an ever-present feature of Greek politics, the frontier between the two sides have shifted as a result of the country's 2012 economic crisis. In Chapter 9, Markou analyzed how SYRIZA was able to redraw the country's historical populist/anti-populist divide between PASOK and New Democracy into a new antagonism between, on the one hand, SYRIZA (representing the populist camp) and, on the other, PASOK and New Democracy, brought together in SYRIZA's discourse as representing the political establishment and the politics of austerity. Markou notes that during SYRIZA's coalition government, anti-populist attacks against SYRIZA and ANEL on the part of ND and PASOK (and vice versa) resulted in high levels of hostility between the populist and anti-populist parties, thus sharpening the divide between them, and strengthening the cohesion of the two antagonistic blocks.

Thirdly, the normative implications of the populism/anti-populism divide have been used by the anti-populist camp to delegitimise certain political options and legitimize others. De Cleen, Glynos, and Mondon (Chapter 8) studied the effects of anti-populist discourses on the relation between mainstream and populist radical right parties in Europe. They argued that the largely negative connotations

attributed by the media, political actors, and academics to the signifier "populism" has had the paradoxical effect of making criticism of right-wing populism less severe. The focus on the dangers of populism rather than of nativism or, even more so, racism, has shifted attention away from the parties' reactionary ideological beliefs, and towards their alleged populism, allowing mainstream conservative parties to adopt some of the radical right's ideas (such as anti-immigration) under the argument of neutralising their populist appeal.

Populism, Institutions, and Populism in Office

A notable gap in Laclau's works on populism is the lack of analysis of its institutional dimensions, as well as of the politics of populism in government. This lacuna is to a considerable extent the product of Laclau's sharp dichotomy between the political and administration, rooted in his core epistemological distinction between relations of difference and relations of equivalence. He argues that social demands operating in accordance to a system of differences pertain to a non-political, administrative domain. He further argues that since the construction of "the people" through the creation of an equivalential chain and the production of an empty signifier is the political act *par excellence*—as opposed to pure administration within a stable institutional framework—the political becomes synonymous with populism (Laclau 2005, 36). While Laclau makes clear that the political (and hence populism) and administration are extremes of a continuum that in real life do not exist in complete separation from each other, the result is an anti-institutional bias in Laclau's understanding of populism.

Ostiguy and Moffitt (Chapter 3) cast in a different light the peculiar, "subversive" relation of populism to institutions. Populism, they argue, is generally associated with a specific *form* of public institution that Ostiguy (2015) calls "dirty institutionality". Indeed, they remind us that populism encompasses not just words but also a certain style of making decisions in politics. In this characterisation, populist "dirty institutions" are clearly located on the socio-political "low" of Ostiguy's (2017) high-low axis, in contrast with the socio-political "high" of the good-governance rulebook. At its more basic, the difference between the two institutional models is between constitutive, personalistic, decisionist, rule-eroding, antagonistic, politicised, "hot" forms of exercising public authority versus constituted, impersonal, procedural, depoliticised, rule-bounded, "cold" rational-legal ones. More broadly, dirty institutionality is related to what Ostiguy and Moffitt characterise as *plebeian grammars* that incorporate performative elements of the socio-cultural low into the practices of governing.

This volume included case studies of populists in office across five different world regions, and a comparison between them helps to better identify different aspects of this relation between populism and institutions. Perhaps the most prominent case of populism in office has been Donald Trump's presidency in the

USA. In Chapter 6, Lowndes presented a detailed study of the relation between the president and the country's political institutions. Three aspects of his study are particularly relevant for our analysis. A first one concerns the relation between populism and presidentialism. Lowndes noted that while the power of the presidency in a Madisonian system is strongly constrained by the separation of powers, checks and balances, federalism, and staggered elections (see also Weyland and Madrid 2019 for a rich discussion), the institution of the presidency offers populist leaders a unique platform to claim that they, and only they, represent the sovereign people against counter-majoritarian institutions, fractional interests, and bureaucratic interference.

The second one follows from the first, and concerns what Lowndes calls the politics of norm erosion. As Lowndes put it, what makes Trump's norm defiance populist is the implication that the norms he disrupts are either elitist or corrupted forms of bureaucratic interference and technocratic expertise that conspire against the will of the people (which he claims truly to embody). Prominently included in this narrative are denunciations of the so-called "deep state", to signify high civil servants from within the highest levels of the public administration representing the politics of the Obama administration and the interests of powerful global elites.

The president's struggle against vested interests and the "deep state" are also elements of the third aspect of Trump's populist presidency, namely his permanent campaigning that is essential in reproducing the antagonistic dimension of populism. As long as Trump can assert that he is under attack by the media and powerful hidden political enemies, he can claim to be both government and opposition at the same time, and rally supporters to his cause in campaign mode to set up and reinforce political frontiers that divide backwards (the Obama administration), inwards (the public-sector functionaries and judges that do Obama's dirty work), outwards (international organisations, the European Union, the World Health Organization, China) and downwards (immigrants, non-white people, environmentalists, etc.).

The studies of populism in government in Ecuador and in Greece raise important questions about the reach and limits of populism in office. Three questions are also central to this analysis. The first one refers to how political institutions shape relations between the leader and the people. Scholars of Latin American presidentialism are all too aware of the paradox of the presidency as an institution conceived to exercise limited power in a system of checks and balances and rule of law that has effectively become a hyper-centralised institutional tool of personalistic leaders in most countries of the region. As in the USA, in Latin America the president is elected by universal suffrage, which gives populist office holders a unique claim to represent the people against fractional interests embedded in other state and political institutions, such as the judiciary and parliament. In his study of former president Rafael Correa in Ecuador, Mazzolini (Chapter 5)

described how, while the new constitution contemplated a number of participatory institutions designed to devolve decision-making to the people, Correa became increasingly personalistic and autocratic, with decision-making ultimately centralised in the person of the President.

The second one refers to the differences between populism in opposition and populism in office with regard to their capacity to articulate demands. (A distinguishing feature of this collection, moreover, is that most of the cases examined here are of populism in government, the more unstudied version.) While the equivalential articulation of unmet demands is at the center of populism in opposition, when in office, leaders, including populist ones, face the differential challenge of selectively addressing, neutralising, rejecting or simply failing to address demands. Mazzolini exemplifies these changing roles in relation to the political tension between indigenous and environmentalist movements' demands for the Correa administration to uphold the president's campaign promise to preserve the Amazonian jungle from oil drilling, on the one hand, and the redistributive demands of other social sectors that depended on oil rents, on the other. As Mazzolini argues, Correa's decision to allow oil exploration in the Amazon basin shows that, first, the concreteness and particularities of the demands are never fully eroded in the empty signifier of the populist leader, and, second, that particular demands are clearly not all "strictly equal" or "interchangeable" in the way the adjective "equivalential" may convey. In Laclauian terms, the equivalential moment may be difficult to sustain while in office.

Indeed, since populism in office can no longer be "only" an equivalential articulation of unmet demands, the question of whether and under which conditions demands can be actually satisfied or *met* becomes central. Regarding socio- economic demands, this raises questions of economic constraints. If, as Ostiguy and Moffitt (Chapter 3) argued, a narrowly defined discursive approach risks throwing away the sociological baby with the bathwater, the discursive critique of economicist understandings of populism entails the same risk. Recognition and redistribution often go side by side, in populist appeals, particularly in unequal societies.

Both SYRIZA in Greece and Correa in Ecuador strongly campaigned against neoliberalism while in opposition, but, under different circumstances—and more clearly so in the case of SYRIZA—ended up adopting significant elements of the neoliberal model when in office. To be explicit, it is not necessarily the case that populism and neoliberalism are ontologically incompatible, as there have been several cases of populist governments in Latin America and elsewhere that have adopted neoliberal economic policies. Rather, when populists used "neoliberalism" as a signifier of the Other of the people, and, as such, once neoliberalism could not function any more as a constitutive outside, it left the two governments vulnerable to anti-populist attempts to deconstruct the populist equivalential chain and set up alternative political frontiers, as was the case with the Macedonian issue in Greece.

The third point in our analysis of populism in office is how the cases of Ecuador and Greece help to understand the political limits of populist logic. In the case of Ecuador, Correa's so-called Citizens' Revolution eventually unravelled, and his handpicked successor took a strong anti-populist turn. Mazzolini makes an important analytical point in his exploration of the limits of Correa's populist appeal about the power and limits of antagonism. There is no populism without antagonism, but antagonism loses the power to constitute popular identities if it fails to resonate with the lived perceptions of the people. In his third mandate, President Correa continued and even ramped up his antagonistic discourse against different domestic sectors of society (such as the media), but the president's polarizing rhetoric was perceived as excessive, arbitrary, punitive, and far removed from the existing concerns of the citizens, leading to a process of de-identification. In this situation, populist antagonism can be turned into a weapon for the opposition that use it to promote an anti-populist backlash by denouncing the divisive politics of populism and promising to unify society, while effectively creating a new anti-populist political frontier.

In the case of Greece, what is relevant here is the extent to which it makes sense to keep the label "populist" when characterising SYRIZA in office. As Markou put it (Chapter 9), SYRIZA's political discourse, performance, and politico-economic agenda became more pragmatic as the party sought to become a force of "political realism" that would replace PASOK as one of the country's two main political forces. As part of this drive, the party ended up capitulating to the country's lenders, accepted the context of austerity, and recognised the need for fiscal discipline and neoliberal reforms as necessary tools of governance, while it also cooperated with social-democratic forces from the anti-populist spectrum. Markou argued that, in office, SYRIZA was transformed into a centre-left party that continued to embrace a strong populist rhetoric. The question here is whether a populist rhetoric combined with distinctive anti-populist political practices merits continuing to classify SYRIZA as a left populist party. Perhaps the answer to this question should take into consideration and apply to SYRIZA the argument of De Cleen, Glynos, and Mondon regarding radical right populist parties in Europe—namely that the continuous use of the term "populism" as a catch-all concept for everything these parties stand for has not allowed for a proper appreciation of the crucial but limited role played by populism in these parties' broader political projects.

Populism and Democracy

Finally, the relationship between populism and democracy has long been at the centre of scholarly debates on populism and, not surprisingly, has also been discussed in detail by contributors to this volume. In Chapter 2, Panizza and Stavrakakis address the topic from a post-Laclauian perspective. They agree with

Laclau's argument that democracy requires the constitution of a people, but note Laclau's lack of attention to the actual conditions under which a democratic people can be constituted, particularly in Laclau's seminal book *On Populist Reason* (2005). There are two concerns worth exploring here that are of particular importance for the relations between, on the one hand, populism and, on the other, participative and deliberative forms of democracy.

The first is that Laclau's aforementioned focus on the *name* of the leader in processes of populist identification betrays a lack of attention to the networks of social, political, and cultural relations in which collective agents come into being as a democratic people. From this argument, it follows that it is not possible to consider vertical populist identification with the (name of the) leader in isolation from the horizontal relations of identification generated by everyday struggles and cultural practices. Rather, horizontal and vertical forms of identification constitute intertwined dimensions of democratic populist identities in which horizontal forms of identification—social, political, and cultural—are crucial conditions for the reception of the leader's populist appeal, as well as potential effective barriers to authoritarian personalism. By highlighting the role of shared practices of social struggle in processes of populist identification, it is thus possible to better understand the conditions under which the people become a "democratic we" through participative democratic practices.

Laura Grattan (Chapter 7) elaborated on the relations between vertical and horizontal forms of identification, and their implications for radical democratic populism. She claims that the populist imaginary harbours visions and practices of popular sovereignty, embodied and contested in a history of movements and campaigns. As such, radical democratic populism remains a key strategy for organising broad-based popular movements to resist multiple forms of discrimination, domination, and exploitation. Yet, she warns that counter-hegemonic movements inevitably reproduce some of the structures and hierarchies they are meant to challenge. She notes that even a broad radical populist movement such as the one led by Bernie Sanders in 2016 did not escape the temptation to erase divisions (which themselves stood for structures of domination and subordination) for the sake of "standing together" behind a common cause. To overcome this danger, she called for the recognition of the incomplete nature of popular identities and for the adoption of practices of identification, often from actors at the margins of the margins, which encourage solidarity without suppressing difference or camouflaging specific forms of dominations.

While Grattan examines the conditions under which grassroots and populist movements can coalesce to further populism's emancipatory promise, populism has widely been considered as incompatible with deliberative democracy. This negative relation is grounded in arguments about populism's alleged top-down plebiscitary appeal and homogenising effects. Yet, Curato (herself a scholar of deliberative democracy) (Chapter 12) challenges the populism/deliberation

dichotomy. Based on her ethnographic study of Duterte's populist appeal and of his supporters' reactions, she claims that Duterte's publics actively weighted arguments, justifying their support with contextually situated and emotionally laden reasons and moral judgments. Curato further claims that the populist style can also in fact contribute to the quality of reason-giving. Against Habermasian notions of an ideal speech situation, she claims that passions perform a central role in the constitution of a collective will, and that what Ostiguy (2017) refers to as the "flaunting of the low" can serve an epistemic function by exposing lingering tensions, giving voice to views that are at the margins of civilised conversations, and, thereby, setting in motion a series of critical deliberations in the public sphere.

It must be stressed, however, that Curato is not claiming that populism is always deliberative, or that it is a higher form of democratic deliberation compared to other deliberative practices. She suggests that populist performative claim-making can be viewed as a contribution in the early stages of sequenced deliberation, such as agenda-setting. But she warns that once issues are put on the table and have received considerable attention, populist politics should be assessed based on the norms of reason-giving. Curato is also aware of the democratic limits of Duterte's populism, noting that while it may have invigorated the voices of those who have long been left out of politics; it has also created its own voice-denying rationalities that further exclude not only the elites but the most vulnerable communities.

Exclusion is a question that impacts in all forms of democracy, including liberal democracy. While several scholars distinguish between inclusionary and exclusionary forms of populism, there are no people without antagonism, and no antagonism without some form of exclusion of a certain other. Panizza and Stavrakakis (Chapter 2) argue that political antagonism's polarising effects open up an important flank to critics of populism that claim that the homogeneity of the people is a threat to democratic pluralism, and that the setting up of a "non-people" is always, necessarily undemocratic and, most certainly, anti-liberal. They critically engage with Mouffe's (2009) claim that while antagonism is ineradicable from social relations, democratic populism is based on relations of agonism that considers the other as an adversary, but as a legitimate one that is as a holder of certain rights—such as freedom of expression—and of the shared values that underpin these rights.

Panizza and Stavrakakis question how Mouffe's notion of agonism applies to populist antagonism to prevent the equivalential logic of populism reaching its antagonistic vortex, with the risk of becoming an authoritarian political construction, as has been the case of some cases of populism, such as Venezuela. In addressing this question, they introduce the concept of populist citizenship (Aitchinson 2017), an alternative model of citizenship conceived as the active participation of the people in politics and in the transgressive re-politicisation

of public spaces. They argue that populist citizenship practices involve a range of political interventions aimed at the performative staging of a wrong that, by being brought into the political domain, seeks to redraw the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion of the political order (Norval 2012, 824). As argued by Aitchinson, given the limits and exclusions of formal citizenship, populist struggles have a vital role to play in political renewal, creating and securing citizens' rights for excluded political subjects whose claims fall outside the dominant values and procedures of constitutional legitimacy citizens' rights (Aitchinson 2017, 352). Furthermore, populist citizenship incorporates populism's democratic excess, not just vis-à-vis ossified liberal democratic institutions, but also against authoritarian regimes that conflate the identity of autocratic leaders with that of the people, and substitute the will of the state for the sovereignty of the people.

Conclusions

In their seminal book *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Laclau and Mouffe noted that "if our intellectual project in this book is *post*-Marxist, it is evidently also post-*Marxist*" ([1985] 2001, 4), meaning that while they were moving beyond orthodox Marxism, they also remained heavily indebted, both politically and theoretically, to the Marxist project. To use a similar formulation, we might humbly submit that if our intellectual project in this collection has been *post*-Laclauian, it has also evidently been very much post-*Laclauian*. We have, in some ways, sought to move "beyond" the work of Laclau by challenging, questioning, extending, and critically analysing his influential work on populism, but have also remained much indebted to the broad theoretical framework that Laclau and Mouffe set out many years ago. The productive synthesis between discursive and socio-cultural/performative approaches that has taken place in this volume has generated important new insights, both theoretically and empirically. They also open up three important avenues in future research on populism.

First, we hope the volume has shown that the critically minded work that takes place under the broad rubric of post-Laclauian populism research is not "too abstract" for empirical analysis, as some comparative politics scholars have previously assumed, but can indeed be useful in its application to real-life instances of populism. As such, we hope more scholars take up the tools offered in this volume, and seek to bring together theory and empirics in innovative ways to further our understanding of populism. Second, we hope our global perspective on the phenomenon has shown the indispensability of cross-regional dialogue in the study of populism, and demonstrated that regionally specific—and in particular, Eurocentric—approaches to the phenomenon cannot capture the variation and richness of the phenomenon more broadly. Instead, a truly global approach

is clearly needed. Third, we hope this volume has demonstrated the importance of putting the relational aspects of populism at the centre of our analysis: populism is not "just" about a top-down leader preaching to faceless masses, nor is it about "the people" independently investing their passions and desires in a leader as an empty signifier, but is a back-and-forth process of representation between both parties—one that is dynamic, contested, and ongoing. In the spirit of this dynamic, we look forward to seeing how our approach is challenged, used, extended, and critiqued in the years to come.

References

Aitchinson, Guy. 2017. "Three Models of Republican Rights: Juridical, Parliamentary and Populist." *Political Studies* 65 (2): 339–355.

Arditi, Benjamin. 2007. *Politics on the Edges of Liberalism: Difference, Populism, Revolution, Agitation.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Kaplan, H. 2014. "Erdoğan'ın hikayesi." *Yeni Şafak,* 4 July 2014. Available at: http://yenisafak.com.tr/yazarlar/HilalKaplan/erdoganin-hik%C3%A2yesi/54649

Laclau, Ernesto. 2005. *On Populist Reason.* London: Verso.

Laclau, Ernesto and Chantal Mouffe. 2001 [1985]. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy.* 2nd ed. London: Verso.

Moffitt, Benjamin. 2016. *The Global Rise of Populism: Performance, Political Style, and Representation.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

———. 2020. *Populism.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Mouffe, Chantal. 2009. *The Democratic Paradox.* London: Verso.

Mouzelis, Nicos. 1986. *Politics in the Semi-Periphery: Early Parliamentarism and Late Industrialisation in the Balkans and Latin America.* London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Norval, Aletta. 2012. "'Writing a Name in the Sky.' Rancière, Cavell, and the Possibility of Egalitarian Inscription." *American Political Science Review* 106 (4): 810–826.

Ostiguy, Pierre. 2015. "Gramáticas plebeyas: exceso, representación y fronteras porosas en el populismo oficialista." In *Gramáticas plebeyas: Populismo, democracia y nuevas izquierdas en América Latina,* edited by Claudio Véliz, and Ariana Reano, 133–177. Buenos Aires: Ediciones UNGS.

———. 2017. "Populism: A Socio-cultural Approach." In *The Oxford Handbook of Populism,* edited by Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, Paul Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo, and Pierre Ostiguy, 73–97. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pillay, V. 2014. "Malema: We're not White, We're Going to Wear those Uniforms." *Mail & Guardian,* 4 July 2014. Available at: mg.co.za/article/2014-07-04-malema-we-are-not-white-we-are-going-to-wear-those-uniforms

Roberts, Kenneth. 1995. "Neoliberalism and the Transformation of Populism in Latin America: The Peruvian Case." *World Politics* 48 (October): 82–116.

Spanakos, Anthony Petros. 2016. "Conceptualising Comparative Politics: A Framework." In *Conceptualising Comparative Politics,* edited by Anthony Petros Spanakos, and Francisco Panizza, 1–14. New York: Routledge.

Weyland, Kurt. 2017. "Populism: A Political-Strategic Approach." In *The Oxford Handbook of Populism,* edited by Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, Paul Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo, and Pierre Ostiguy, 48–72. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Weyland, Kurt, and Raul Madrid, eds. 2019. *When Democracy Trumps Populism: European and Latin American Lessons for the United States.* Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.