POPULISM vs the political lifeworld

- 1) The crisis of representative democracy
- 2) Populism as a response to the crisis
- 3) The uncoupling of the lifeworld from the system
- 4) Self-governance as problematization by associated individuals
- 5) Connective action in the lifeworld as a challenge to populism
Hanna Pitkin’s definition of representation

- For representatives to be democratic
  - (a) they must be authorized to act;
  - (b) they must act in a way that promotes the interests of the represented; and
  - (c) people must have the means to hold their representatives accountable for their actions.

- Electoral democracy is that subset of representative relationships in which representatives are authorized through election to represent the citizens of a constituency to act on behalf of their interests, and then are held accountable in subsequent elections.
But representative democracy is in crisis

a) Authority is increasingly delegated to a variety of national and transnational institutions (national banks, World Economic Forum in Davos, IMF, the EU, multilevel governance networks.

b) Parties no longer connect to groups or classes with distinctive sets of preferences, nor do they any longer mirror their social constituencies’ preferences.

c) Voting has turned into an ‘after the event’ or ‘ex post facto’ activity where individuals can vote with their feet, and say no to a specific policy-package.
Goodbye to representative democracy as we know it

• ’What we now see emerging is a notion of democracy that is being steadily stripped of its popular component – easing away from the demos’ (Peter Mair, *Ruling the Void*, 2013: 2).

• ‘Far from being an answer to disengagement, the contemporary concerns with renewing democracy is about coming to terms with it’ (p.9).

• ‘What we see…is a wide-ranging attempt to define democracy in a way that does not require any substantial emphasis of popular sovereignty’ (p. 9).

• There is a world of the citizens… and a world of the politicians and parties, and the interaction between them steadily diminishes (p. 98).
And Gooday to Populism

- Populism may be a permanent temptation where democracy (or at least mass politics) exists, but it thrives only where established institutions are incapable of marshalling the loyalties of substantial numbers of citizens. For this reason, populism is often thought to be associated with a crisis of political representation (Roberts p. 146-147).

- Populist mobilization is quintessentially outsider politics; it cannot occur, on a large scale at least, unless a sizable number of voters (or potential voters) are alienated or detached from established parties and political elites.

- Such mobilization is a sure sign of failed or ineffectual political representation—a crisis, so to speak, in the transmission of societal interests, values, and preferences to the policymaking arena by parties and other intermediary organizations.
• *Institutionalism*: Institutions matter more than anything else. Their values, norms, rules, resources, patterns of interaction explain the decisions that governments make (B. Guy Peters 2005).

• Institutionalist explanations should start with institutions themselves, regarding them and not other phenomena as the chief object of analysis, and, indeed, the variable that explains most of political life (Lowndes and Roberts 2013).

• *Authoritarianism* is characterized by highly concentrated and centralized power maintained by political repression and the exclusion of potential challengers. It uses political parties and mass organizations to mobilize people around the goals of the regime. *[Adam Przeworski]* has theorized that "authoritarian equilibrium rests mainly on lies, fear and economic prosperity" https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Authoritarianism
NO! POPULISM IS ‘POWER TO THE PEOPLE’

• ‘Intuitively, the term is relatively straightforward, and it is central to any conception of democratic governance as popular sovereignty. In practice, however, the term can be appropriated by a wide range of political subjectivities, with distinct modes of political mobilization, participation, and leadership’ (Roberts p. 140)

• ‘The meaning and empirical extension of the populist concept often center precisely on this question of “power to the people” and the political subjectivities—that is, the patterns of identity construction, political mobilization, and popular participation—embodied therein’ (p. 140).
Populism is a moral standpoint

- ‘Populism is predicated on a moral opposition between the people, who are viewed as the only legitimate source of political power, and the elites, whose interests are perceived as inherently contrary to those of the populace’ (Bonikowski and Gidron 2015: 4).
- ‘The “post-political” situation has created a favourable terrain for populist parties that claim to represent all who feel unheard and ignored in the existing representative system. Their appeal is to “the people” against the uncaring “political establishment” that, having abandoned the popular sectors, concerns itself exclusively with the interest of elites’ (Chantal Mouffe 2016 in The Conversation)
POPULISM:
“Our country cannot be the victims of horrendous attacks by people that believe only in Jihad, and have no sense of reason or respect for human life. If I win the election for President, we are going to “Make America Great Again”
"We cannot be misty-eyed about this"
"We have to be very clear and determined in our national purpose"
“They will not come to Australia"
Populism is representational: ‘it is necessary to locate the study of populism squarely within the larger domain of political representation, where populism arises alongside, and often intersects with, other patterns of representation associated with political parties, civil society, and social movements’

Populism is discursive: as an ideological and discursive construction of the political order in terms of a binary elite-popular divide.

Populism is empowering. ‘[It] claims to incorporate and empower “the people” in opposition to established elites.

Populism is multi-facetted: discursive appeals to popular sovereignty—to give power to the people—can be embedded in strikingly divergent types of political movements and mobilizational patterns. That, after all, is what allows a discursive conceptualization of populism to “travel” across time and space, wherever the minimalist rhetoric is found’

Populism is mobilizational: Populism’s political power, along with its disruptive potential, is ultimately rooted in its ability to wed antielite and antiestablishment discursive appeals to the political mobilization of the excluded and the alienated.

Populism is ‘top down’ and ‘bottom up’: ‘Debates centre on…whether subjects can be self-constituted and mobilized “from below,” or whether populism refers more narrowly to the top-down mobilization, by dominant personalities, of diverse popular constituencies that lack a capacity for autonomous political expression’
Brian Tamanaha:

Yesterday and today the New York Times published articles suggesting Donald Trump would endanger the rule of law:

*When Donald J. Trump told Hillary Clinton at Sunday's presidential debate that If he were president, "you'd be in jail," he was threatening more than just his opponent. He was suggesting that he would strip power from the institutions that normally enforce the law, investing it instead in himself.*

‘it is a mistake to focus on [Trump] rather than on the institutions that give rise to the rule of law. Leaders with authoritarian personality traits are common, but authoritarian governments exist only when surrounding institutions enable them to express their authoritarian impulses and do not throw up barriers to restrain them.’
MY VERSION:

*Populism is:*

- A property of political communication which takes form in a retrospective demand (‘Make America Great Again’).
- A totalizing discourse that celebrates the exceptional, promptly deciding and acting leader as primary to safeguarding and securing the home of ‘we the people’.
- A conflict-driven political discourse, constructing the political order in terms of a binary friend/foe opposition.
- A crisis-driven energizing and mobilizing of ‘the people’ against the established power structure and its dominant ideas and values.
- A moralistic political discourse that condemns everyone who neglects, devalues, or exploits the common home of ‘we the people’.
- A counter-elitist strategy for replacing established political elites with new leaders who are drawn from, or more effectively represent, the interests and values of ‘the people’.
- A homogenizing discourse promising to remove all those alien forces that threaten ‘we the people’s’ unity and deep sense of belonging.
I'm not proud of my locker room talk. But this world has serious problems. We need serious leaders. #debate #BigLeagueTruth

For those few people knocking me for tweeting at three o'clock in the morning, at least you know I will be there, awake, to answer the call!

The media and establishment want me out of the race so badly - I WILL NEVER DROP OUT OF THE RACE, WILL NEVER LET MY SUPPORTERS DOWN! #MAGA

This election is being rigged by the media pushing false and unsubstantiated charges, and outright lies, in order to elect Crooked Hillary!

Disloyal R's are far more difficult than Crooked Hillary. They come at you from all sides. They don’t know how to win - I will teach them!

RT @TeamTrump: "She calls our people deplorable and irredeemable. I will be a president for ALL of our people." - @RealDonaldTrump #BigLeag…

It is a MOVEMENT - not a campaign. Leaving the past behind, changing our future. Together, we will MAKE AMERICA SAF… https://t.co/Lt2L3NKzyi

A great day in New Hampshire and Maine. Fantastic crowds and energy! #MAGA

What do African-Americans and Hispanics have to lose by going with me. Look at the poverty, crime and educational statistics. I will fix it!
Habermas: System and lifeworld

• ‘Nazis reflect a devastating lapse in social progress and for some indicate the arbitrariness of various ethical and moral standards. This no doubt impacted a young Habermas who was a teenager in Germany during World War II. He claims, “It was the events of the year 1945 that set my political motives.”
• Habermas like other Germans was devastated by how Germany engaged in systematic murder. On a more personal level, as a philosophy student at Göttingen, Zurich, and Bonn he was perturbed how German intellectuals, particularly Martin Heidegger, were complicit buttressing the regime.
• Habermas dedicated himself to conceiving a theoretical framework that could help people understand how human progress was inextricably connected with using our capacity as social beings to come to terms with one another in a process of mutual betterment.’ (Max Schiller 2012 Jürgen Habermas and the Third Reich, Claremont McKenna College)
The (un)coupling of system and lifeworld

- Uncoupling results from negligence of how political authorities and laypeople are coupled together by a politically communicated message about ‘what has to be done’.
- The political system’s basic integrative principle is that it must provide for a set of political authorities (politicians and their associated leaders and managers) that can make and implement authoritative policies for the population.
- The political lifeworld’s fundamental integrative principle is that any member must possess some power, knowledge and trust in the others to secure the autonomous and joint involvement in the articulation and pursuit of common concerns.
- Neither politically integrative principle can be derived from legal, moral or institutionalist principles.
- Politicians’ political integrity comes from their ability to systematically articulate, organize and acquire acceptance and recognition for their policies.
- Laypeople’s political integrity comes from their shared capacity to intuit or guess what their most basic concerns are in the situation and how to do something about them in, and through, their spontaneous communicative activities and networking.
Populist System Colonization

• Is about laying authoritative and normalizing system mechanisms down upon laypeople’s more spontaneously functioning and crowd-enabled lifeworlds.
• Is placing what is *of* and *by* associated individuals in the lifeworld in the shadow of what the system is doing *for* and *with* them.
• Is flattening out all difference by imposing a collective identity on personalities and commonalities.
• Is exercised by enabling, rhetoric and persuasive modes of strategic communication rather than by systematic use of manipulation, deception and commands
#realDonaldTrump

• ‘America needs strong leaders. Politicians can talk, but they don’t get things done.’
• ‘This election is being rigged by the media pushing false and unsubstantiated charges, and outright lies, in order to elect Crooked Hillary!’
• ‘I will make our military so strong and powerful again that no one will mess with us.’
• ‘A new terror warning was issued for European cities. At what point do we say that we have had enough and get really tough and smart? Weak leaders.’
• ‘We will stop heroin and other drugs from coming into New Hampshire from our open southern borders. We will build a WALL and have security.’
• ‘For those few people knocking me for tweeting at three o’clock in the morning, at least you know I will be there, awake, to answer the call!’
• ‘A great day in New Hampshire and Maine. Fantastic crowds and energy! #MAGA’
• It is a MOVEMENT - not a campaign. Leaving the past behind, changing our future. Together, we will MAKE AMERICA SAF… https://t.co/Lt2L3NKzyi
• Disloyal R's are far more difficult than Crooked Hillary. They come at you from all sides. They don’t know how to win - I will teach them!
What Trump gets right

• Political authority must communicate fast and directly to laypeople about what has to be done, if it is to deal with an immediate problem, crisis or risk

• It cannot rely for its acceptance and recognition on:
  • a slow deliberative process of deep persuasion
  • direct force
  • distorting manipulation and deception

• Political communication concerns:
  • ‘the interplay between institutionally structured political will-formation and spontaneous, unsubverted circuits of communication in a public sphere that is not programmed to reach decisions and thus is not organized’ (Habermas 1997, p. 485).
Trump is more advanced in his communication with laypeople than the old right and left

- **Symbolic inclusiveness**: Trump recognizes that large-scale connective mobilizations often involve political content in the form of easily personalized ideas like ‘Make America Great Again.’

- **Technological openness**: Trump demonstrates in his use of Twitter and Facebook how most large-scale connective mobilizations are based on a variety of technologies that make it possible to share inclusive themes.
What Trump gets wrong

- The political lifeworld is not composed of atomized individuals that awaits an exceptional leader to energize them and provide them with a collective identity.
- Nor is connective action in the democratic political lifeworld operating according to the binary of friends and foes.
- The political lifeworld is composed of networking, associated individuals that construct commonalization from personalization (and vice versa).
- The democratic political lifeworld connect self-governing laypeople to pursue common concerns on the basis of their reciprocal acceptance and recognition of difference.
‘A culture without thorns would be absorbed by mere needs for compensation…The trivial and everyday must be open to the shock of what is absolutely strange, cryptic, or uncanny. Though these no longer provide a cover for privileges, they refuse to be assimilated by pregiven categories’ (Habermas 1997, p. 499).

‘Voluntary associations represent the nodal points in a communication network that emerges from the intermeshing of autonomous public spheres. Such associations specialize in the generation of practical convictions. They specialize, that is, in discovering issues relevant for all of society, contributing possible solutions to problems, interpreting values, producing good reasons, and invalidating others. They can become effective only indirectly, namely, by altering the parameters of institutionalized will-formation by broadly transforming attitudes and values.’ (1997, p. 485)
• Habermas specifies the political democratic lifeworld as being about *self-governance*, relying on:
  • *problematization* as fast knowledge chronically questioning how issues and risks are handled by policy elites and professionals operating at multiple levels from the local to the global
• In contrast, he specifies civil society and the public sphere as concerning equal freedom, depending on:
  • *Politicization* as slow knowledge for identifying and resolving deep-seated interest and identity conflicts
• Democratic Politicization: How can people with conflicting interests and identities acquire free and equal access to and recognition in the political decision-making process and on its various arenas?

• Democratic Problematization: How can people with different values, competences, and resources be engaged in policy articulation, performance, delivery and evaluation in ways that improve their capacities to govern and take care of themselves?
Self-governance is not about morality and law

- ‘Moral commands should be obeyed out of respect for the underlying norm itself, without regard to the future compliance of other persons, whereas the citizen’s obedience to the law is conditional on the fact that the sanctioning power of the state ensures general compliance. Fulfilling an ethical obligation, by contrast, can *neither be enforced nor categorically required*. It depends instead on the predictability of reciprocal conduct – and on confidence in this reciprocity over time’ (Habermas 2013, p. 23)
Linking the lifeworld to connective action

• ‘What differentiates both ethical expectations and appeals to [political] solidarity from law and morality is the peculiar reference to ‘joint involvement’ in a network of social relations’ (Habermas 2013, p. 23)

• ‘Connective action networks are typically far more individualized and technologically organized sets of processes that result in action without the requirement of collective identity framing or the levels of organizationally resources necessary to respond effectively to opportunities’ (Bennett and Segerberg 2013, p. 32).

• ‘These emergent actions suggest how political renewal happens through personal discourses travelling over networks, providing reminders to larger publics and those in power that ordinary people still have voices in the public sphere’ (B&S, p. 115)
Bennett and Segerberg (2013) *The Logic of Connective Action*

**CONNECTIVE ACTION**

**Crowd-Enabled Networks**
- Little or no formal organizational coordination of action
- Large-scale personal access to multi-layered social technologies
- Communication content centers on emergent inclusive personal action frames
- Personal expression shared over social networks
- Crowd networks may shun involvement of existing formal organizations

**Organizationally Enabled Networks**
- Loose organizational coordination of action
- Organizations provide social technology outlays - both custom and commercial
- Communication content centers on organizationally generated inclusive personal action frames
- Some organizational moderation of personal expression through social networks
- Organizations in the background in loosely linked networks

**FIGURE 1.1.** Defining elements of connective and collective action networks.
• Connective action aimed at self-governance relies on another political authority than one that constructs, hierarchizes, commands and disciplines laypeople in the lifeworld for empowering himself and seizing hegemony:
• ‘Courage is not the absence of fear — it’s inspiring others to move beyond it.’
• ‘For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.’
• (Nelson Mandela)
• Self-governance presumes mutual acceptance and recognition of difference
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