

Populism as an Active and Effective form of Contemporary South
African Politics

By

De Villiers du Toit

Research Report Submitted in

Partial Fulfilment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts in Political Studies

Supervisor: Professor Sheila Meintjes

University of the Witwatersrand

March 2015

Declaration

A Research Report submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, Department of Political Studies, I declare that this is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the requirements of the Degree of Master of Arts by coursework in Political Studies, at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

.....

De Villiers du Toit

Student Number: 0712239w

Johannesburg, 27th March, 2015

Abstract

Recent 21st century political developments in South Africa have given rise to debate surrounding a threat to a functioning democracy. New radical political parties, turmoil in the labour sectors, and dysfunctional government policies and activities have made populist tendencies a central aspect of this debate. Populism is an entity oft evoked in a negative light and rhetoric in this debate. It is associated with demagogues and the 'uncontrollable' urges of the masses that would be let loose upon society given the chance, destroying democracy in the process. It is the aim of this paper to argue the opposite. By expanding and contributing to the theoretical literature on populism, and through the analysis of empirical evidence – the Western Cape farm worker's strikes and the Marikana strikes and subsequent massacre of 2012 –in South Africa this research report seeks to fill a gap in the conceptualisation and practical characterisation of populism in our political setting. Can populism be conceptually, theoretically, and empirically utilised to characterise and explain trends in contemporary South African politics and can it be utilised in providing a contextual underpinning for explaining recent events in South African society as a whole? Through the reliance on the theories of Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Zizek the aim will be to identify the underlying gaps in democratic politics that gives rise to populist movements and through this argument to build and utilise this conception of populism as a positive and effective analytical tool of contemporary South African politics.

Thanks and Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my gratitude to Honorary Professor Sheila Meintjes who not only supervised this project throughout its course but who also helped inspire and guide the shape that the thesis took from infancy into maturity in both idea and concept. She provided valuable access to information not known to myself at the time as well as providing a network of experts in the field of South African politics who provided valuable insights over the course of the work. Without her this research report would have been in danger of missing a great many nuances in contemporary leftist thought and political theory.

I would also like to thank the various individuals throughout South Africa who agreed to participate as interviewees in the empirical research portion of this research report, for not hesitating at lending their expertise and opinions on the complexities of populist thought in South Africa and on the issues with which they have a personal investment and sometimes, emotional, experience in.

Mention must also be made of the J.C. Carstens Foundation's financial contribution to my final Masters year of study.

Contents

Abstract

Acknowledgements

List of Abbreviations

Chapter 1: Introduction.....pg. 8

1.1. The Problem.....pg. 10

1.2. The Purpose.....pg. 12

1.3. The Methodology.....pg. 13

1.4. The Structure.....pg. 15

Chapter 2: Literature Review.....pg. 16

2.1. A Seemingly Vague Entity.....pg. 17

2.2. Where to Find Meaning.....pg. 19

2.2.1. Benjamin Arditi.....pg. 19

2.2.2. Jacques Ranciere.....pg. 22

2.3. A Meaningful Framework.....pg. 23

2.3.1. Ernesto Laclau.....pg. 24

2.3.1.1. *Hegemony*.....pg. 24

2.3.1.2. *Radical Democracy*.....pg. 26

2.3.1.3. *Populism*.....pg. 27

2.3.2. Slavoj Zizek.....pg. 29

2.3.2.1. *Antagonism*.....pg. 30

Chapter 3: Review of the South African Literature.....pg. 31

3.1. Introduction.....pg. 31

3.2. C.R.D. Halisi.....pg. 32

3.3. Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni.....pg. 34

3.4. Ralph Mathegka.....	pg. 35
3.5. Gillian Hart.....	pg. 37
3.6. Conclusion.....	pg. 39
Chapter 4: Case Studies:	pg. 39
4.1. Introduction.....	pg. 40
4.1.1. Hegemony and the Prevailing Social Order.....	pg. 40
4.2. Marikana Labour Crisis	pg. 43
4.2.1. Introduction.....	pg. 43
4.2.2. Employing the Theoretical Concepts.....	pg. 44
4.2.3. Dislocated Subjects.....	pg. 44
4.2.4. Conclusion of the Case Study.....	pg. 47
4.3. Western Cape Farm Worker’s Strikes	pg. 50
4.3.1. The Strikes Form.....	pg. 51
4.3.2. Employing the Theoretical Concepts.....	pg. 51
4.3.3. Dislocation and Hegemony.....	pg. 52
4.3.4 Historic Systemic Inequalities.....	pg. 52
4.3.5. Equivalence.....	pg. 54
4.3.6. Conclusion of the Case Study.....	pg. 56
Chapter 5: Conclusions.....	pg. 58
5.1 A Re-Cap.....	pg. 58
Bibliography.....	pg. 60

List of Abbreviations

ANC	(African National Congress)
ANCYL	(African National Congress Youth League)
AMCU	(Association of Mine-workers and Construction Union)
AmPlats	(Anglo American Platinum)
BAWASU	(The Bawsi Agricultural Workers Union of South Africa)
CONTRALESA	(Confederation of National Rural Leadership of South Africa)
COSATU	(Confederation of South African Trade Unions)
DA	(Democratic Alliance)
EFF	(Economic Freedom Fighters)
ImPlats	(Impala Platinum Holdings Limited)
NDR	(National Democratic Revolution)
NUM	(National Union of Mine Workers)
NUMSA	(National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa)
SACP	(South African Communist Party)
UDM	(United Democratic Movement)
UF	(United Front)

Chapter 1

Introduction

2012 arguably represents the most turbulent year in post-Apartheid South African labour history, while being the “most protest filled year in the political past of the “New” South Africa.¹ The latter months of that year exposed to South Africa, and the world, the underlying and (at face value) “hidden” antagonisms fostered and maintained by the systemic legacies of Apartheid. In August of 2012 unofficial strikes erupted at the Lonmin mine in Marikana amongst a backdrop of union clashes, intimidation, and violence between the National Union of Metal Workers (NUMSA) and the Association of Mine Workers and Construction Union (AMCU) and a long history of dissatisfaction with competitively low wages, poor housing conditions, and brutal working conditions. The strikes were met with union (NUMSA) intimidation, mass firing of workers by mine bosses, and a violent crackdown of the strikes by the police in the form of the Marikana Massacre. Seventeen days later on the other side of the country, in the farming town of De Doorns in the Western Cape, female farm workers initiated a wildcat strike that echoed Marikana as they demanded better pay, an end to abuse by farm owners, better housing conditions for seasonal workers, and an end to police intimidation. Three years later and the legacies of these strikes still remain fresh in the minds of South Africans. The cause, issues, and results of these strikes have remained largely unresolved and protests and strikes have continued throughout this time.

Until this “rupture of reality” in 2012, South African politics since 1994 has been popularly portrayed in our collective imaginations as a democratic success, a political compromise that prevented civil war and ushered in a period of reconciliation and non-racialism in this country’s history. But in reality while the latter two aspects of society progressed in the publican lexicon, the former has just as thoroughly been let down in the public imagination, and after 20 years of a new South Africa the African National Congress is still the governing party of South Africa, its internal politics (with its contradictions) very much shaping the national policy agenda and the larger political landscape. Since the turning of the millennium South Africans have had to come to a realisation that the change which was so brightly envisioned in the past would not come overnight and that the democratic process would not magically

¹ <http://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/2012/10/18/south-african-massacre-was-the-tip-of-an-iceberg/>

construct itself as a mature one. In short, South Africa has since 1994 experienced – what has been slowly realised in the global imagination of civil society – that deservingly or not, the hopeful and enthusiastic politics of the past, the politics which always appeared as rested on a solid ideological foundation seems to have evaporated.

We have played witness to increasing dissatisfaction by the working class and poverty stricken masses towards the economic and social values espoused by government. These antagonisms have been punctuated by ever increasing violent protests, historic strikes, and the formulation of a new political party which seeks to represent itself as a hero of the people through placing itself as a vanguard in the struggle and proclaiming its leader as “commander in chief”². Towards the end of 2014 the South African business magazine, *The Economist* published an article entitled ‘Up the Creek’ in which the author highlighted and warned against a curious “danger” within the political spirit of the African National Congress (ANC): stating simply that “President Jacob Zuma’s government is drifting between liberalism and populism”³. This reference to populism in juxtaposition to liberalism has become an increasingly common phenomenon within the media and popular consensus in recent years.

The nature of South African society since 1994 reinforces this constant barrage of criticism of politics – income inequality persists, poverty remains high, education is faltering and 1 Flinders, M. ‘In Defence of Politics: Fifty Years On’, pg. 640 4 industry is becoming more technologically advanced without an increasing skill intensive labour pool, service deliveries continue to not be met, unions clash with each other and conduct running battles in city centres, xenophobic attacks are not uncommon and have erupted into riots in the past, community justice is often not prevented, the police and private security companies are shown to hold contempt for the law and the rights of citizens (a la Mido Macia), corruption by is rife, the judicial system is being inundated with ruling party-affiliated cronies, – and on the anniversary a year since the Marikana massacres of mine workers by the coercive institution of the state in defence of capital South Africa sits on a precipice of a faltering faith in the democratic process and ideals of the post-Apartheid nation. In short the historical circumstance for a populist movement

² <http://effighters.org.za/structure/officials/>

³ ‘Up the Creek’ in *The Economist*, 2nd August, 2014

has existed for some time, and seems all the more relevant at this current stage of contemporary social development and politics.

The Problem

The key problem that this research report deals with is that of populism. The research seeks to identify the nature of populism and its manifestation in South Africa. The concern is to explore whether the rampant popular protests, strikes, civil disobedience of the last few years, are a manifestation of a new form of popular democracy, and what this might mean for our understanding and conceptualisation of democracy. We perceive of democracy in the public realm as maintaining or holding certain problems which are open to various interpretations and that allow for popular “eruptions” – that have been interpreted as a ‘populist’ attack on democracy itself. They are thus seen as blockages to the democratic process, rather than as popular manifestations of democracy. Namely these “deficiencies” fall within the frame of insufficient democratic institutional development that allows for individuals to pursue abuses of the system, either through corruption or consolidation of power. Democracy within this frame and popular narrative is therefore something that ought to always be expanded, consolidated, and protected lest such abuses continue: in short the individual is always to blame for the limits of the system and therefore “responsible” civil servants or “positive” democratic culture are needed to negate its openness to abuse. Backlashes, in the form of protests, rampant strikes, and civil disobedience are thusly the result of democracy not having been expanded, consolidated, and encouraged enough as well as not having matured into this supposed “end-point” of politics as encapsulated in the idea of liberal democracy.

The rise of social and political movements, political parties, and the increases in strikes and protests that address, as their main concerns, the very same abuses in the public narrative are viewed through the above lens as radical and often counter to the ideals of a democratic society. Populism is popularly conceptualised as *reactionary* politics and is intrinsically linked to the people and *popular* politics: in this conceptualisation it is abuse by and for the elites of society that is met with anger and resentment by those who are not the elite – i.e. the poor masses – and they act out this frustration in the form of strikes, protests, and general violent excess. It is this vehicle of violence (as disruption) that is

considered to be “populist” in the minds of the public. This categorisation is part and parcel of the theory of ‘twin-totalities’ of democracy: or the idea of the oligarchy versus the people. Labelling of the oppositional forces is therefore in broad strokes – as we see more often in the dichotomy of the global and local – as populist. We are thus faced with a situation in which such labelling is not only on the rise in popular terms but is also slowly but surely being incorporated into serious public discussion and academic thought on the political⁴. This trend is however negatively matched by the association of the pejorative nature of the term “populist” in these incorporations into public thought. At worst it is haphazardly applied by critics, “experts”, and political opponents to discredit counter movements and at best the term is left with a vague meaning. This has resulted in the term being more of a *tool* of the political instead of as an *understanding* of the political in our contemporary situation.

We thusly see “populism” being labelled as a threat to democracy, private property, race, or capitalism itself when it is “identified” with protests and strikes. Similarly, when “identified” with political parties and social movements that call for radical change the term is invoked with the label of “threats to constitutionalism” while the leaders of these parties and movements are quickly labelled as demagogues who do not want true radical change but are rather using “the people” as a means to their own ends of power (such as with the EFF at the time of its birth and AMCU in recent years). In essence the temptation of referral by the liberal left to fascistic tendencies in association with populist struggles of the Western political scene has become *modus operandi* in the local level in South Africa. In the realm of academia progress has been made in breaching and breaking this typological nature of the understanding of populism (much of which will be explored in the literature review) but has for the most part avoided a reconstitutive understanding and attempts fall largely within the trend explained above and faces much internal disagreements whenever discussion arises⁵. Furthermore, what we can call “positive” attempts at a reconstitutive and normative approach is relatively new and often evokes much controversy.

The Purpose

⁴ Corduwener, P. ‘The Relationship between Populism and Liberal Democracy: Three New Insights’, pg. 3

⁵ Corduwener, P. ‘The Relationship between Populism and Liberal Democracy: Three New Insights’, pg. 3

Having explored the “problem” associated with populism the purpose of the research report pertains to the following. We are primarily concerned with providing an understanding of populism that is theoretically, conceptually, and ultimately practically applicable in contemporary South African politics. This will be achieved through the prism of current uncertainties in global and local democratic politics. The key issues that we aim to understand are: First how populism will play out in the South African political landscape and what this might mean for the future. Secondly we seek to explain the behaviour of the “underprivileged classes” and the subsequent reactions by – and attitudes of – the state/or social order towards these actions. Tied to this second aim is thirdly to account for and explain the growing authoritarianism and constricting (ANC) hegemony of the state as a growing radicalism of the people appears; i.e. an emerging populism. The research report thus works towards this purpose by using the theoretical constructs of Laclau’s ideas around hegemony, radical democracy and populism alongside Žižek’s notion of antagonism. The research report aims to better articulate the methods in which dislocations of subjects in South Africa form as political, social, and economic struggles but also as particularities in reaction to ANC hegemonic practices occurs and thereby proposes the possibilities for their transformations into struggles in the realm of the universal that can contest the established social order. Through this theoretical proposition and analysis, it is hoped, that we can understand (in my view) a re-articulation of the Left in contemporary South Africa and the formation of what Mazibuko Jara identifies as a ‘call for a new Left’⁶ in the future South Africa.

The importance of populism as a conceptual entity in the realm of the political is for me underlined by an ever increasing understanding of populism as something inherently present in the process of politics itself. It is the underlying political *logic* that Ernesto Laclau identifies in the body communitarian as a whole: modern politics (especially democratic politics) and populism are intertwined. This is especially relevant, and in my opinion (and the aim of the research to show that it is), the case itself in South African politics. Through understanding populism from this perspective I believe that the understanding of South African politics can be furthered and improved upon, or at the very least help to explain political developments in political conflict, party politics, state institutional development and functionality, governmental legitimacy, citizenship, etc. By doing I hope to present an alternative conceptualisation of populism that can be both a positive and effective analytical tool of South African

⁶ Jara, M. ‘The Call for a New Left’, *Amandla! Media*.

politics in general and in regard to antagonisms from below and their expressions specifically. Furthermore I think there is a need to address the issue of the conceptualisation of the nation in relation to populism, as although it tends to be characterised as historically dichotomising society between exploiting elites and exploited majority, I argue that in the South African case the concept of racialism is imperfect in accounting for historical injustice and that non-racialism cannot account for the realities of contemporary society (i.e. racial trends in inequality): essentially populism in this regard is a positive unifying idea.

The Methodology

As the research report is concerned with an application of a theoretical construct of populism in the context of South African politics it uses a methodological approach that is comprised of a synthesis of theoretical, conceptual and empirical efforts.

Theoretical Framework and Method

A theoretical base was constructed from a review of the key literature on the concept of populism within western political theory. Populism was reconceptualised following this literature review that defines the characteristics of populism along Laclauian and Zizekian lines in the South African context and conceptually tests this theory in relation to the evidence and arguments of primary and secondary sources and its application in qualitative research of two specific case studies (mentioned below). Framing the conceptualisation of populism in South Africa required the study of the political landscape and its evolutionary trajectory in recent years. In order to do this the research looked at (where available in archives) party policy documents, party conference meeting minutes, and political statements to the press/media by key figures and spokespersons as an underpinning of shifting tides within the South African political landscape. In addition a critical review of the key South African literature on this topic was conducted which looked at academic, media, and expert writings in a dual-layered strategy of bringing the theory of populism 'home' as well as exploring critical reception and ideological narratives in the study.

Empirical Framework and Method

This was achieved by focusing on two case studies chosen from a wide array of recent social, economic, and political unrest in South Africa, specifically in the study of the Western Cape farm worker's strikes (2012 – 2013) and the Marikana crisis (2012). The cases were explored and analysed through the use primarily of sources that sought to explain the cause and complexities of each event. In conjunction with this the research gathered empirical data through the use of qualitative research methods – data collected in the field in the form of select interviews with key figures involved in these events and experts who reported and performed research on these cases.

Shortcoming/Restrictions and Gaps

While the research report attempts to make the case for extant South African populism and its characteristics as thoroughly as possible, the limitations of this study pertain to the scope of a singular analysis within a limited time frame as well as the limitations that a Master's research report imposes. A much larger research project would be required to be undertaken. This study is thus exploratory and comprises the delineation of a field of thought on the nature of South African populism. It hopes to provide a helpful theoretical construct for further research and analysis. Its limited scope means that it can but simply uncover the beginnings of an understanding of the complexities involved in such an attempt. This also takes into account that the theoretical framework/identity of populism the research report uses is not inherently conclusive as the topic is a fundamentally (relatively) new addition in critical political theory and is highly debated in the literature. Furthermore, and much more crucially, there is an ever-present danger inherent in the systematic analysis of hegemonic and universal struggles in this case: not to fall into the trap of providing 'formal co-ordinates of every ideologico-political protest' while similarly not merely 'elaborating the notional structure of today's (postmodern) specific political practice which is emerging after the retreat of the classical Left.'⁷

⁷ Zizek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*, pg. 106

In respect of the empirical research is the limited way in which cases can be explored in this research report. The reliance on two regional case studies – while their issues are linked in many respects and signify endemic problems in the broader field of South African politics – limits the report to case specific applications of theory. Thus the case for the theory is based on limited evidence and itself carries the problem of assumed knowledge.

The Structure

The research report addresses the above mentioned purpose in the following manner:

We initiate the aims of the research report by framing the general arguments about populism, and present a review of the manifold ways in which populism is understood. An attempt to explain the slippery nature of the term will be made.

Secondly we will focus on the topic of populism by examining the influential work of Benjamin Arditi, Jacques Ranciere, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Zizek who have written extensively on the issues surrounding this subject in recent years. By analysing these works the research report will attempt a synthesis of these theories into a functioning theoretical framework for the complex topic of populism on which we can expand. It is hoped that this synthesis will enable new theoretical insights to emerge through the empirical evidence we will present.

We will then, through secondary and primary sources, examine the two case studies we have selected from South Africa: namely, the Western Cape farm worker strikes of late 2012 and early 2013, and the issues and consequences of the Marikana labour strikes of late 2012. Through these case studies we will feed in the theoretical “hook” we established in the literature review, testing it against the evidence presented in the cases and thereby attempt to establish sufficient grounds for our conclusions.

Once having done this we will conclude the research report by briefly re-tracing our steps (covering the main arguments we have put forward) and providing a synthesis to the analysis of the the main research problem.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The literature surrounding the “question” of populism, its characteristics, definitions and incarnations within democratic societies is as diverse in its approach to the aforementioned facets as is the debate surrounding its impact in society and politics in general. Much has been written on the topic, from the characterisations of populism as an extra-democratic negative iteration of popular political action by the undercurrents of society swept up by demagogues seeking authoritarian power⁸, to the argument of populism as an integral part of democracy (and the political itself), a logic of political action which compliments democracy and reinforces the process of popular party/public politics.⁹ Whereas populism is popularly thought of in the former category it is of more use to explore the latter in relation to the political possibilities that could arise out of such political action/logic (by those such as Laclau and Mouffe). The literature review will first identify the contexts of the seemingly vague ideas associated with populism, it will then move on to explore the work of Benjamin Arditi and Jacques Ranciere as two examples of inroads made into establishing a theoretical framework and deeper conceptual understanding of populism in the contemporary era, and lastly we will turn to Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Zizek in order to construct a meaningful framework and conceptual thrust to employ in our analysis of South African populism.

A Seemingly “Vague” Entity

⁸ Zizek, S. ‘Against the Populist Temptation’, pg. 1

⁹ Corduwener, P. ‘The Relationship between Populism and Liberal Democracy: Three New Insights’, pg. 16

If we are to attempt an analysis of populist features it is important that a definition and theoretical structure of the term itself be established in order to further our analysis. By tracing the historical conceptual and literal meanings applied to the term “populist” we would discover an evolving typological characteristic as the term is and continues to be used in diverse geographical locations – each with their own distinct and unique economic, political and social environments. *However*, when we analyse the literature we perceive a rhetoric that elaborates either on the concept in general terms of class or on an even more limited notion of the general “will of the people”¹⁰. As we shall see examples that are often eluded to despite this preconception that we might assume of a populist definitional heterogeneity based on geographical differences, the reality of the term’s use appears to be one of a far more universal nature (in terms of generality), and more importantly appears – on the surface – to be a “vague” concept when attempting to define a political, social, or economic movement (or political action in general) as “populist”.

Two main historical class-based examples given as cases focus on the mass action of small-scale North American agrarian producers and conversely an intellectually-led ideological agrarian movement in Russia during the later years of the 19th century.¹¹ While in North America the drivers of “popular” resistance were the small-scale farmers who perceived a direct threat from large-scale business and government agencies, in Tsarist Russia the basic agrarian producers had no such general perception of class-division: they were primarily influenced and led by urban intellectuals who valued the “communitarian lifestyle” of the peasantry for ideological reasons. This is not to say that similarities did not exist between these diverse movements, as “both spoke of the ‘common man’, the small producer. Both saw monopoly, finance-capitalist industrialism and irresponsible government, as the chief obstacles to progress”, but these similarities did not ensure mutual success. In the United State the movement was successful, developing into a notion of a unified farmer-labour relation, while in Russia the intellectuals were largely unsuccessful in unifying the peasant classes into taking significant action and were forced back into the urban areas. Now apart from these examples explaining the concerns of a specific group of producers, concerned with their financial and market-economy security on the one hand and an ideological sentiment which wishes to change society as a whole by idolising and utilising

¹⁰ Worsley, P. ‘The Concept of Populism’ in *Populism: its Meanings and National Characteristics*, pg. 220

¹¹ Ibid.

the masses of the peasantry on the other, it does us no good in defining populism itself simply because both are described as being populist yet both were completely different, had different contexts, and yielded different results: in essence general similarities – apart from an agrarian-ness – were lacking. Populism is still indefinable for us at this point.

So we now reach a point where we can clearly identify a vague/constitutively diverse (lacking specificity) conceptualisation of populist terminology in the historical literature. Ernesto Laclau reached a similar conclusion; “a persistent feature of the literature on populism is its reluctance – or difficulty – in giving the concept any precise meaning¹²” and Peter Worsley in his seminal work from 1969 – although himself being to an extent conceptually vague about the concept of populism – identifies that “there has never been a Populist International... and [no] movements... have used any such label to identify themselves”¹³. What is perhaps most striking at this point of the analysis is that we reach a position of irony: if populism is obviously not being traditionally described as similar in political movement types, but is instead heterogeneous, then we should imply a *different meaning* to the term within different contexts. This is obviously not something which would be useful to us if we want to explain general populist characteristics and expressions simply because we want to find a *logic* to the idea of populism that can be expressed homogeneously.

Furthermore, aren't all forms of political expression driven by a type of logic – a way of perceiving common demands amongst a group of people and articulating this demand in an attempt to fulfil it? Therefore, if we were to follow from the aforementioned literature's understanding (or lack thereof) and attempt to apply it to South Africa's rich and diverse race, class and socio-economic relations, almost no ground would be made in identifying a populist identity and element in its socio-political landscape. Therefore I propose, as Laclau does, that we need to develop our theoretical understanding of populism further in order to achieve a theoretical and practical clarity that can be used as a framework for understanding empirical evidence in the South African context. But first let us attempt to identify general characteristics of manifested political movements through a critical analysis of Benjamin Arditi and Jacques Ranciere.

¹² Laclau, E. 'Populism: Ambiguities and Paradoxes' in *On Populist Reason*, pg. 3

¹³ Worsley, P. 'The Concept of Populism' in *Populism: its Meanings and National Characteristics*, pg. 218

Where to Find Meaning

Benjamin Arditì:

Arditì's attempt in *Populism, or, Politics at the Edge of Democracy* aims at characterising populism within democratic societies, and, although not an attempt *per se* at constructing a theoretical grounding for populism, his argument sheds light on the relationship between the state institutions of democracy, politics, and the imaginative conceptions brought about in the minds of individuals in society in general as they bear witness to this relationship. Through a comparative study of the intellectual attempts at populism since the last decades of the 20th century, namely those such as Laclau, Žižek, Canovan, Worsley, de Ipola, Manin, Rancier and others, Arditì sifts through and intertwines these ideas, postulating three kinds of populism extant in contemporary democratic politics: namely that of 'populism as a mode of political representation', 'populism as a symptom of democratic politics', and lastly 'populism as an underside of democracy'¹⁴.

In the first instance Arditì argues that populism as a response to a lack of representation (echoing Laclau in some ways) is a common *misconception*, and although a few historical examples exist of this¹⁵, this general characterisation of elites versus the people leaves us with a vague answer to the question of who the people are; we fall into the old trap of common misrecognition in 'audience democracy'¹⁶. Arditì writes:

Populism departs somewhat from this view [...] as a mode of representation it rests on a crossover between 'acting for others', the re-entry of authorization under the guise of a thrust for the leader, and a strong symbolic dimension that seeks to produce an effect of virtual

¹⁴ Arditì, B. 'Populism, or, politics at the edge of democracy', pgs. 20, 25, 27

¹⁵ Arditì, B. pg. 22

¹⁶ ibid., pg. 24

*immediacy, that is, an imaginary identification that suspends between the masses and authorities.*¹⁷

This form, Arditì argues, is that which is commonly associated with so-called demagogues. Political leaders or election campaign runners build their strategy around ‘populist modes of representation’¹⁸, signifying themselves as leaders of change and representatives of the people.

The second instance is identifiable as an entity that belongs at the same time to democracy – as a mode of representation – but also as a ‘paradoxical element’¹⁹ of internal disruption. This internal disruption is made manifest by the mobility offered by populism to political causes: its unification of the ‘the people’ and the rhetoric surrounding populism discourse places stress on the institutional functionality of representative democracy²⁰ as it encourages change through a bypassing of said order. In Arditì’s words:

*“Put differently, the populist challenge undermines the fullness of any democratic expression of the will of the people, including its own.”*²¹

This disruption goes further however in populism expressing itself as a ‘symptom of the gentrified’ (in the Zizekian sense) domain of democracy. Whilst those who live in the democratic order are made ignorant to the abuses of it or contradictions within it (hence being gentrified) populism ‘brings back the disruptive “noise” of the people’ which exposes the negativity of the political and announces the ‘contingency of all political arrangements’²². The outcome of this, according to Arditì’s interpretation of Canovan and Zizek, is that populism disrupts the gentrification of the normal and re-asserts the

Arditi, B. ‘Populism, or, politics at the edge of democracy’, pg. 23

¹⁸ *ibid.*, pg. 25

¹⁹ *ibid.*, pg. 26

²⁰ Arditì, B. ‘Populism, or, politics at the edge of democracy’, pg. 26

²¹ *ibid.*

²² Arditì, B. ‘Populism, or, politics at the edge of democracy’, pg. 27

importance of the people in the normal. As a side effect however, its own disconnection and self-consciousness of the gentrified allocates it to a position on the fringe of the normal – or democratic politics; and its characteristic definition is obfuscated by this position.

The third instance of populism: as not an “other” to democracy but rather is conceived as an underside, and furthermore, not to be argued as a danger to the democratic political as democracy itself is exposed to a multitude of harmful undersides – populist or not. It is the very functioning of democracy itself that exposes its underside to alternative political social movements. Building on Lefort, Arditì argues:

“This [exposure] arises when the exacerbation of conflicts cannot be resolved symbolically in the political sphere and a sense of social fragmentation pervades society. [It is here then, that] there is a Real possibility for the development of the ‘fantasy of the People-as-One, the beginnings of the quest for a substantial identity, for a social body that is welded to its head, for an embodying power, for a state free from division’.”²³

Arditi’s analysis of the characteristics of populism in democratic contemporary societies highlights important points which help to identify inroads made into conceptualising and framing populism. Firstly that populism is a productive positive force in representation and harnessing social movements that seek redress. Secondly, populism is itself a symptom of the political; democratic politics is always exposed to populist sentiment and ‘an inquiry into populism is an inquiry into democratic politics’²⁴ itself (this is highly relevant to what we shall do later). Lastly, whilst populism is capable of being ushered into a relatively negative political force (i.e. violent, dismissive of liberal ideas of justice, etc.) its identification and characteristics reflects a distinctive politics of *Lack* in the democratic domain. Therefore Arditì’s analyses can help us in using a practical framework of reflection (a mirror, if you will) through which to view the theoretical attempts by Laclau and Žižek, and could also possibly help us identify synonymous characteristics in contemporary South African politics.

²³ *ibid.*, pg. 28

²⁴ *ibid.*, pg. 29

Jacques Ranciere:

Ranciere's insights into the political centred on what he viewed to be a *dissensus*. In a given social order, one which is hierarchical in nature (be it democracy, fascism, etc.) an affective social movement of collective self-recognition is based on a self-realisation of equal status with those above them in the hierarchical order²⁵. As individuals recognise their shared position and therefore solidarity with one another (or equivalence in the Laclauian sense) the collective action of said group pre-supposes a conscious or subconscious equality with those they oppose. This process disrupts the social order and reveals its 'perceptual and epistemic underpinnings..., the obviousness and naturalness of the order'²⁶. In this conception of political logic Ranciere provides us with a construct of the collective *we*.

This construct is not merely progressive in providing a political platform for voice but instrumentally alters the prevailing social order or social whole itself. Ranciere went further into a discussion of the role populism plays within this conception: as a "voice" for the poor or the oppressed, a voice which is however denounced by the prevailing social order.

*"The term is not used to characterize any well-defined political force. It denotes neither an ideology nor even a coherent political style. It serves simply to draw the image of a certain people. For 'the people' as such does not exist. What exists are diverse and even antagonistic images of the people, figures constructed by privileging certain modes of assembly, certain distinctive features, certain capacities or incapacities. The notion of populism constructs a people characterized by the fearsome combination of a certain capacity – the raw power of a large number – and a certain incapacity – the ignorance ascribed to the same large number."*²⁷

²⁵ May, T. Review of *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, pg. 1

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 2

²⁷ Ranciere, J. (trans) Lemmey, H. 'The People are not a Brutal and Ignorant Mass', pg. 1

Thus while the ‘scandal of democracy’ is interrupted (or democracy prevented from being elitist) the “people” in the populist conception cannot be a part of the polis. The usefulness of this conception as a theoretical and conceptual linkage with Ardit, Laclau and Zizek cannot be understated; and its usefulness in identifying the characteristics and possible alterations of populism to the political order in South Africa is crucial as it yet again shows us an inherent link between populism and exclusions to a social order.

A Meaningful Framework

Now that we have established, through Ardit and Ranciere, a typological understanding of the various manifestations of populism in general terms we shall embark upon the construction of a theoretical framework that can be used in analysing South African manifestations of populism in specific case studies. In order to do so we shall rely on the theories of *Hegemony*, *Radical Democracy*, and *Populism* proposed by Ernesto Laclau, and *Antagonism* proposed by Slavoj Zizek. We shall use these conceptualisations not only in conjunction with each other – as they complement and critique each other to a degree – but also as a departure point in “filling the gap” so to speak and the eventual proposition of expanding these concepts.

Ernesto Laclau:

Laclau has devoted much time and effort at an understanding and re-formulation of populism and the supposed vagueness associated with it resulting in his most recent efforts being projected at the argumentation of populism as the underlying logic of the political *itself*.

...Is not the “vagueness” of populist discourses the consequence of social Reality itself being, in some situations, vague and undetermined? And in that case wouldn’t populism be, rather than a clumsy political and ideological operation, a performative act endowed with the

*rationality of its own – that is to say, in some situations, vagueness is a precondition to constructing relevant meanings?*²⁸

Three points within Laclau's work on populism are crucial for unpacking what is meant by this construct: Firstly, '*hegemony* as the process of (re)constituting the social order', secondly, a 'normative idea of *radical democracy*', and thirdly, '*populism* as the politics of radical democracy'²⁹.

Hegemony:

Informed by an earlier discussion with Butler and Žižek on Universality and Contingency as well as his previous work with Chantal Mouffe on Hegemony, Laclau conceptualises the *political* as being "composed of never complete orders... [or what] Laclau calls 'discourses'... [composed of] *both* material and ideational elements into the structuring of one particular order."³⁰ From this the political is considered to constitute the social, all social interaction being political in nature and expressed through hegemonic struggles: in other words the political's exertion on/determination of the social is a '*process*'³¹. The process itself is explained by Laclau through the conceptual entity of heterogeneity, or the process by which the empty/only-ever partially filled subject only-ever identifies her-self with undecidability. Complicated language aside, this means that a subject within the social order is *contingently* recognised by said order and therefore the identity of the subject (or you and I) never has a wholly positive understanding of the self within the social order. As Rasmus Neilsen identifies through a good example in his analysis of Laclau:

"A refugee or migrant [enters] the social order structured around a... notion of individuals as carriers of rights... [and while] her appearance is registered... her representation in the social order as being simultaneously who she appears to be in particular (from somewhere else),

²⁸ Laclau, E. 'Populism: Ambiguities and Paradoxes' in *On Populist Reason*, pg. 66

²⁹ Nielson, R.K. 'Hegemony, Radical Democracy, Populism', pg. 13

³⁰ *ibid.*, pg. 2

³¹ *ibid.*, pg. 5

[who] she appears to be in general (an individual), and what [this] is [held] to entail within the [social order], is denied at the level of being. She is an individual, but she is not what the order suggests being an individual normally entails. She therefore appears as a heterogeneous element that has no clear insertion in the social order."³²

Following from this the subject is *aware* of its own dislocation within the social order purely based upon this interaction with the order through the different identifications of *being* listed in the example above. The ontological nature of the subject is therefore defined and underpinned by its own heterogeneity within the social order and this in turn gives rise to the subjects dislocation of identity and thusly its own 'deficiency' and the 'deficiency' of the order itself.³³ In Zizekian terms, there is always a *Lack* with the social order and for Laclau the *Lack* is in fact *the* constitutive process of hegemony as sets of social demands arise as a result of this *Lack* (or the awareness of the subjects own dislocation). Specifically social demands arise *within* the order or *outside* the social order when chains of equivalence (recognition of self-dislocation and the dislocation of others and homogenising them) are made by heterogeneous subjects. Following from this a *social demand* is itself an ambiguity, pertaining to either a "request or a claim"³⁴, and thus contains a connotation of vagueness but it is the connotation of vagueness itself which carries with it the means to construct a "relevant meaning" that articulates social demands as '[those things] that cannot be satisfied through self-management'.³⁵ It is at this point that Laclau argues that the hegemonic 'operation' begins in actuality³⁶: at the point where social demands can produce a dichotometic effect with the social order and provide ground-work for change (positive, negative, or both) within the order.

³² Nielson, R.K. 'Hegemony, Radical Democracy, Populism', pg. 3 – 4

³³ *Ibid.*, pg. 5

³⁴ Laclau, E. 'Populism: Ambiguities and Paradoxes' in *On Populist Reason*, pg. 73

³⁵ Nielson, R.K. 'Hegemony, Radical Democracy, Populism', pg. 9

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 6

Radical Democracy:

Laclau's view on heterogeneity and hegemony (as explained above) lead him towards a theorisation of radical democracy as being the normative process through which the 'contingent'³⁷ relationship between hegemony and radical democracy can be identified. Or as Nielson explains:

*'The theory of the political means that the pursuit of radical democracies in the world will always entail hegemonic processes... [and] the normative theory tries to identify the traits that will allow one to identify hegemonic process in the world as having a radically democratic thrust.'*³⁸

As shown above in the discussion on hegemony, the theory of radical democracy does not by necessity need to entail specificity about the type of democratic society that should exist (it can be positive, negative, or both) but rather is underpinned by 'good political struggles' that are aware of contingency and hegemony of the social (i.e. the dislocation of the subject) and thusly constitute subjectivities themselves³⁹. Nielson however points out a problem of distinction between what constitutes 'constitutive subjectivities' within 'democratic and non-democratic' systems⁴⁰ and sifts through Laclau's considerable volume of writing in order to identify a solution to this issue, which I will borrow in our identification of radical democracy.

Nielson rectifies an insistence on labelling those relegated to the position of exclusion from the social order as 'underdogs' and thereby from falling into the habit of viewing these exclusions as existing within an oppressor-oppressed dichotomy. This is done by dismissing a link of generalisation in regards to oppression, as oppression is extant only as "*oppressions*"⁴¹ and this is precisely because 'patterns of inclusion/exclusion do not necessarily converge in homogenising

³⁷ Nielson, R.K. 'Hegemony, Radical Democracy, Populism', pg. 14

³⁸ *ibid.*, pg. 15

³⁹ *ibid.*, pg. 18

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ *ibid.*, pg. 22

patterns.⁴² The theory of hegemony itself has to reject assumptions about *inequality* being universally rectified into *equality*, a so called end-point of the democratic effort in which exclusions do not exist and all are included. In short, the interaction of particularities results in the universal⁴³ and is exemplified by crisis in capitalism in one point of an imperialist chain resulting in dislocations at many other points⁴⁴. *Radical* democracy – following from hegemony – is then the ‘one which permanently shows the contingency of its own foundations... [and is capable] of re-launching new emancipatory projects which are compatible with the complex multiplicities of differences shaping the fabric of present-day societies...’⁴⁵ This allows us then to see inclusions and exclusions based around dislocations instead of a reliance on the narratives of the purely historically oppressed and oppressing.

Populism:

We saw in the coverage of Ardit and Ranciere that populism takes a wide variety of different forms in classical conceptualisations of it and that we cannot therefore attribute it to any one specific instance of political method or ideology without struggling with vagueness in characterisation and any sort of normative behaviour. Laclau supports this understanding and uses his theory of hegemony and radical democracy to argue for populism as *the* form of politics not only extant, but as a vehicle for change in the latter when seen as a part of the chain in the *hegemony, radical democracy, populism* “dialectic”. Thusly populism functions as follows, we shall be using an example of a township to relate this in a practical sense. When services (such as let us say, electricity) are perceived by an individual to go unanswered within such an environment a demand is made upon the state (through whichever local councillor represents that individual) to provide whatever is lacking (the electricity to his/her home) but also as a demand in the more universal sense of what we described above (dislocation). In a society in which the state functions efficiently and has the necessary resources and infrastructure needed to supply the demand with an answer (providing the electricity) the demands do not go any further⁴⁶. These societies are structured for Laclau as a structure with many horizontal differences; each

⁴² Nielson, R.K. ‘Hegemony, Radical Democracy, Populism’, pg. 22

⁴³ Laclau, E. ‘Structure, History and the Political’ in *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*, pg. 207

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 203

⁴⁵ Laclau, E. ‘Identity and Hegemony’ in *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*, pg. 85 – 86

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 74

'alley/avenue' is a demand that is answered by the state horizontally: the Logic of difference has prevailed in these societies, fixing each difference 'alley/avenue' as they arise. However, if over time that demand goes increasingly unanswered by the state then that individual starts to recognise the same demand in relation to those around him: he/she becomes conscious of the demand existing outside of his/her own home.

The demands itself gains *equivalence* in the community by its shared persistence amongst many members of a group and the equivalence relationship stands a chance of being enhanced to the point of that group not identifying with the institution any more as long as the demands are not met systematically (or differentially) by the state⁴⁷. Giving the example of shantytowns means that the demand is not singular in nature, there can be (and often are) many such demands, which in turn precipitates an increase in equivalence and necessitates dissatisfaction. In a case such as South Africa these demands do not occur in isolation, within one shantytown alone; the "Logic of equivalence" grows and society as a whole becomes conscious of the unanswered demands (we shall test this in the case studies). This process results in what Laclau refers to as the internal dichotomy of society⁴⁸, in which it is constituted by two prevailing layers, these two layers represent those at the bottom and those at the top (in a *very general sense*). The appeal of populism is an appeal to those at the bottom (dislocated and equivelated) against those at the top (again, *very generally*): the former constituting populists (in their collective identification against the 'other') and the latter comprising the extant social order. Once this dichotomy comes into being, through whatever historical processes construct it, an eventual populist rupture will occur within society and this rupture can be represented by any form of political ideology; be it totalitarian, radical libertarian or even centrist. Populism therefore is an open subject in and of itself, it be represented by any political discourse that fills this subject within a certain set of outside articulations. It is in essence interpolated. This, the formulation of society as dichotomy, is the central process of political logic applied to society itself. Social identity itself is formulated by the distinction between *difference* and *equivalence* and can be moulded into any diverse forms and types of discourse that articulates to that specific (by its contextual nature) social identity. Thus populism can be left-wing, centrist, right-wing or radical. This "openness" is what makes populism such an important facet of what

⁴⁷ Laclau, E. 'Populism: Ambiguities and Paradoxes' in *On Populist Reason*, pg. 74

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Laclau perceives it to be: as a *vehicle* that self-constitutes according to heterogeneous links in a process of hegemony.

Slavoj Zizek

Although Zizek ultimately disagrees with Laclau on the end-point of the aforementioned process his analysis is strikingly relevant to conceptualising populism in contemporary South Africa. The dichotomic and the equivelential links in a social environ that experiences antagonism is highly relevant. Zizek's concern with populism initially ideologically rested upon similar foundations such as those expressed by Laclau and Mouffe in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* but eventually departed or diverged from Laclau in more recent years over the conception of the universal and therefore the end-point of populism mentioned before. For the purpose of this review I shall be focusing on Zizek's writings in *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (although he later disagrees with what he posited in this work) and his contribution to the debate in *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality* (with Laclau and Judith Butler) amongst others.

Building upon Lacanian psychoanalytical thought, in particular Lacan's conception of *enjoyment* (or *jouissance*⁴⁹) Zizek sets out in *The Sublime Object* an analysis of human nature in contemporary democracies; dealing with the conception of universality and the link this provides between 'universal democracy and democratic practice'⁵⁰. The result of this conceptual effort on Zizek's part is one in which we are left with a conclusion of democracy as something which is accompanied by the other (non-democracies). Democracy is imperfect, it is open to the abuses of individuals and leaves much to be desired, but it is when we attempt to rectify the institutional limitations that allow for these abuses – through legislative or executive means – that democracy itself (or what it claims to be) is lost⁵¹. The very action that seeks to heal, in turn, damages. Now while the point is not here to reject democracy as a legitimate form of government Zizek's analysis and position on universality does show similarities with

⁴⁹ Weber, B. 'Laclau and Zizek on Democracy and Populist Reason', pg. 7

⁵⁰ ibid.

⁵¹ ibid.

Arditi's conception of an underside of democracy and indeed reflects Laclau's leaning towards a concept or radical democracy as we explored earlier.

Building further from this Zizek's conception of democratic politics evolves in *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as Political Factor* into an analysis that takes the subject of *Lack* in the object of democracy. Its continual processes of functionality are always exposed by its own limitation as a common object (Lacan's influence); complicated philosophical conceptions aside:

*"... we can't have democracy without deficiency, no matter how hard we might try: democracy is not the petit objet a, an ultimate object of desire. It is rather an everyday object like any other."*⁵²

Antagonism:

Another important aspect that comes out of Zizek's thought, and could prove useful in a discussion of populist movements in South Africa, is that of political conflict being characterised as conflict between the ordered social whole and those outside of it; or a relational nature by virtue of this relation that is antagonistic. In this sense populism would always constitute an antagonistic and opposing force to the democratic. It's here ultimately that Zizek is in disagreement with Laclau's perception of the end-role and/or function of populism. Whilst both agree on the need of populism to construct or have a symbolic "enemy" in order to justify itself⁵³ Laclau sees populism as an underlying logic in the political itself (in *On Populist Reason* at least) and Zizek rather views it as an entity that cannot function nor realise its own existence without the utter destruction of the prevailing social order – i.e. democracy (albeit linked with capitalism). In other words, Laclau views populism as the revolutionary vehicle of social change and politics/the political while Zizek focused on the potential violent outcomes (in both the physical and symbolic sense) associated with populist politics. This does not mean we should not be able to intertwine the two to a degree, however, as I believe the disagreement on the end-point of Laclau's process does not deny a complimentary nature with *antagonism*.

⁵² Weber, B. 'Laclau and Zizek on Democracy and Populist Reason', pg. 9

⁵³ *ibid.*, pg. 10

Relegating populism into a position of antagonism says nothing (in my belief) more than what Laclau himself says: that its very existence is constituted by the dislocation of those subjects outside of the social order. Would these subjects not seek to deny (through change – violent or not) the very order which dislocated them? Are they not the constitutive *Lack* in the social order made *Real*? Žižek has a point to make when he argues that the social order itself is in danger of destruction by populism but it appears to be a stretch of imagination to argue that this is by necessity an end-point to be avoided. Laclau himself argues that as an open object/performative vehicle (re subject) populism is *always* open to *any* constitution of dislocation through equivalence and that the entire point of *radical* democracy is to identify which of these are “good” political struggles within whichever hegemonic process they arise out of. Žižek here seems to be avoiding an actual attempt at putting populism into practice. Despite this quibble the theory of *antagonism* is a good addition to the work of Laclau as we can (by avoiding an implication of an end-point of total destruction) use it to identify *disruption* of the social order. It is in this disruption that I believe the signifiers of the *Lack* in the social order exist and we hope to find identify this within the case study chapters of the research report. But first we shall move onto an analysis of the South African literature on our topic.

Chapter 3

Review of the South African Literature

Introduction

The Literature on populism in South African mimics that of the international trend (highlighted in the general literature review above) by the nature of its diverse meanings throughout the last three decades. The earliest mentions of the term (as far as we were able to find) appears in the works of Michael Neocosmos in 1982⁵⁴, Michael Vaughan in 1985⁵⁵, and William Beinart in 1987⁵⁶. By and large

⁵⁴ Neocosmos, M. *The Agrarian Question in Southern African and “Accumulation from Below”*, pg. 58

⁵⁵ Vaughan, M. *Literature and Populism in South Africa*

these appear at the beginning of the end of the era of the United Democratic Front(UDF) with its civic organisations and other popular political, social, economic, and rural movements that existed in the vacuum left by the banning of the ANC, SACP, and Pan African Congress (PAC) in the 1960s. Since then the term was increasingly used, transitioning from non-existent to rare and then becoming more common to explain the post-2006 era of President Jacob Zuma and the rise of the EFF. Since this research report is concerned with *contemporary* politics of South Africa we shall only briefly analyse the pre-1994 literature and shall rather focus on more recent usages of the term by Gillian Hart, Ralph Mathegka, C.R.D. Halisi, and Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni. Articulations of populism in the recent (post-1994) literature have tied in with specific cases of grievances experienced in the new South Africa, thereby allowing the authors to explore the concept in more depth as part of a relationship to dissatisfaction with ANC hegemony, failures of the idea of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR), and concerns with Nationalism. Due to the diverse applications of meaning behind the term, each author's use of the term will be explored in turn chronologically.

C.R.D. Halisi - 'Citizenship and Populism in the New South Africa'

C.R.D. Halisi focuses on populism in 'Citizenship and Populism in the New South Africa' (1998) along lines of popular expressions of "the people". Within this frame he identifies such expressions as 'unique national, cultural, class, ethnic, or racial identities'⁵⁷ thereby arguing that the sphere of influence within which populism functions as an entity is located 'between conceptions of popular and democratic government'.⁵⁸ Halisi's takes the argument of distinguishing between liberation ideals centred around race and class identities in juxtaposition to the construction of a democratic constitutional identity in post-Apartheid South Africa. It is from this point that Halisi argues that these 'polarities of thought'⁵⁹ continue to struggle in the public debate around non-racialism versus racial-consciousness. Halisi therefore perceives of populism as being inherently linked to the concept of popularity, whereby the political expression of the ideals of liberation (and in his argument, democratic constitutional citizenship) confront those of non-racialism via a radical voice. This confrontation is thusly violent, and

⁵⁶ Beinart, W. *Hidden Struggles in rural South Africa*, pg. 35

⁵⁷ Halisi, C.R.D. 'Citizenship and Populism in the New South Africa', pg. 424

⁵⁸ ibid.

⁵⁹ ibid., pg. 423

not entirely within the bounds of a debate: there is therefore a concern, for Halisi, in contemporary South Africa a danger in the modes of “populist” struggles:

*“...formerly disenfranchised people are often apt to regard the fight for citizenship rights, and by extension racial reconciliation, as co-opting designed to blunt the radical edge of social movement politics.”*⁶⁰

And this “stubborn” voice, fearful of “meaningful” change exists as place holder of alternative modes of expression that need to be developed (through the denial of populist “values”) in order for ‘time-honoured Western values’⁶¹ to assert themselves in constructing “positive” identities. This approach to populism is restrictive (as shown in the general literature review in Chapter 2) as it posits populism within anti-liberal democratic modes of political expression. This is made apparent as Halisi relegates what he identifies as populist movements within political movements and parties that take “radical” (rather than “logical”) approaches to economic, race, class and social positions, such as the Azanian People’s Organization (AZAPO), the PAC and the SACP. This limits these to oppositional positions in the “new” democratic South Africa, hence in opposition to the dominant democratic order. Halisi does however in the last section of the article suggest that populism is open in nature, a political vehicle that can incorporate various ideological concerns and political stances (left, right, or centre) according to different and diverse situations. This is an important insight that allows for a more open interpretation of populism as a form of politics. The outcomes can never be determined. However, it may also be restrictive, as it does not entail a non-reasonable approach because of this ability to touch on normative aspects of what we consider in this research report.

As an aside: Halisi’s argument is filled with many assumptions about what constitutes populist struggles and acts in this literature review as signifier of the pejorative employment of the term, not only internationally, but locally. This is not unique to Halisi’s article nor does it invalidate any arguments made by those who do employ the term in a negative manner. Rather it is useful to us in highlighting

⁶⁰ Halisi, C.R.D. ‘Citizenship and Populism in the New South Africa’, pg. 425

⁶¹ ibid., pg. 435

that what for one person is a mode of normative and positive methods of re-articulation in democratic ideology (tied to capitalism), is for another the antithesis to the protection of the individual from the excesses of the community. It is important to us to note this, as we cannot *de facto* declare what the interpretation of the term populist means, we can only theorise as to its constitutive nature and attempt to understand contemporary practices, trends, events and movements in the political through such a framework.⁶²

Sabelo J. Ndlovo-Gatsheni – ‘Black Republican Tradition, Nativism and Populist Politics in South Africa’

Sabelo Ndlovo-Gatsheni’s addresses the rise of the Native Club and the interpretations and criticisms of its nativist ideological outlook in ‘Black Republican Tradition, Nativism and Populist Politics in South Africa’ (2008). He argues that these perceptions of the Native Club have been limited in their framing of it as a ‘threat to the spirit of “Rainbowism”’⁶³ and to the larger question of the construction of citizenship identity in South Africa. To address this concern he works towards framing the Native Club within the larger conflicted political spaces of ‘the National question’, conceptualisations of nationhood and the nation, the ‘contested definitions of the teleology of the liberation struggle’, and ‘visions of citizenship and democracy’.⁶⁴ The end-point and theoretical link to populism in his argument is to frame the ‘logic and dangers’ of nativism alongside the rise, resurgence and crystallisation⁶⁵ of populist politics under Jacob Zuma’s administration.

Ndlovo-Gatsheni’s article is worth an investigation as it is one of the few that deals with Laclau’s formulation of populism (his specific formulation in *On Populist Reason*) in an analysis of South Africa. Noting the key aspect of Laclau’s theory as:

⁶² It is almost as if populism itself is the empty signifier, always-empty and always-filled. – thus open

⁶³ Ndlovo-Gatsheni, S. ‘Black Republican Tradition, Nativism and Populist Politics in South Africa’, pg. 53

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

'...involving constructions and reconstructions of popular identities based on the mobilisation of ensembles of strategies and making possible the emergence of 'the people' both as a collective actor and as an authentic democratic subject'⁶⁶

Ndlovo-Gatsheni unpacks the personal politics (shown by his use of *Mshini Wami*) of Jacob Zuma (before his election into the presidency) in order to show Zuma as a successful articulator of populist sentiments and ideals⁶⁷ and thereby give credence to his argument of the ANC as a body that is composed of, and incorporates, diverse ideological meanings and contradictions. This is specifically pointed out as highlighted in the Tripartite Alliance and its ever-apparent internal cleavages. However Ndlovo-Gatsheni's conceptualisation, although relying, rightly, on Laclau, tends to *conflate* populism with popular politics. Although he makes an interesting point in stating that the Zuma administration is 'representing a populist re-articulation of the NDR'⁶⁸ he is overtly stepping away from his use of Laclau by simplifying the relationship between "the people" and the established social order in the assumption of Zuma as representative of populism in South Africa. In his final point of the argument, Ndlovo-Gatsheni argues that the Native Club and nativism itself in South Africa is an internalisation and co-option of PAC values by the ANC, and links with the populist politics of the Zuma administration as an attempt to re-introduce black intellectual thought into articulating the NDR that had re-injected itself under the Mbeki administration as a result of the complex issues surrounding the question of "the nation" in the new South Africa.

Ralph Mathegka – 'The ANC 'Leadership Crisis' and the Age of Populism in Post-Apartheid South Africa'

Ralph Mathegka's chapter in *African Politics: Beyond the Third Wave of Democratization* (2009) focuses on how the ANC leadership has come to centre itself around the narratives of 'leader of the liberation movement and the transformation process in South Africa since 1994'⁶⁹ and how, following from this, concerning events around 2006 – 2008 were being reacted to by the ANC and consequently opening up

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* pg. 76

⁶⁷ Ndlovo-Gatsheni, S. 'Black Republican Tradition, Nativism and Populist Politics in South Africa', pg. 77

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Mathegka, R. 'The ANC 'Leadership Crisis' and the Age of Populism in Post-Apartheid South Africa', pg. 1

a space for a populist agenda in the space of a crisis of leadership under Thabo Mbeki.⁷⁰ Focusing on the internal political alignments under Mbeki, Mathegka shifts towards a search for internal location of an ideology within the ANC. Mathegka recognises a similar contradictory nature around policy formation that Gillian Hart points out in relation to ideology as a construct of policy through the NDR (GEAR in this instance) and an increasing shift away from, or even ignoring the Tripartite-Alliance relations. This, Mathegka argues caused an eventual weakening of the Party (and the subsequent leadership crisis). This was furthermore aggravated by economic concerns through rapid market reforms that disproportionately increased economic inequality and hampered transformation policies, creating the space for what Mathegka conceives as the rise of populism.

For Mathegka populism appears to be a symptom of a disease that plagues, and creates the veritable sickling that “is” a democratic system – a system which has fallen prey to ‘over-bureaucratization’.⁷¹ He argues that populism is the result of inefficiency in a democratic system, inefficiency brought about by the erosion of institutional and legal practices supported by the state and presided over by technocrats. When these weaken through over-bloated-ness, Mathegka argues, the citizenry is slowly removed from participation in the democratic process and populism rises in an effort to re-introduce them. The people in this reactive sense are then a re-injection of the “sovereign will of the people”⁷². In this respect it is fair to say that populism for Mathegka is not an entirely positive phenomenon but rather a negative process through an inevitable logic of reaction against failing/failed democracy. Here he mimics an understanding of populism as a dangerous undercurrent in democratic society, which arises only in times of democratic deficiency or failures. Furthermore, Mathegka does not give any real explanation about how populism supposedly operates outside of the dichotomy shown above and instead simply states that it is an ‘interpellation on democracy’.⁷³ This forces his reliance on an understanding of populism (although he explores Cannovan) as a political tool of those seeking redress in the vacuum of democratic failures. Nevertheless, Mathegka’s analysis of the ANC, its internal ideological contradistinctions and contradictions – stressed by adoptions of neo-liberal policies that clashed with the values of meaningful economic, social, and political transformation espoused in the early NDR – as

⁷⁰ ibid.

⁷¹ Mathegka, R. ‘The ANC ‘Leadership Crisis’ and the Age of Populism in Post-Apartheid South Africa’, pg. 146

⁷² ibid., pg. 147

⁷³ ibid., pg. 148

well as its crisis around leadership battles during the mid-2000s provides an interesting analysis of ANC strategy and action in the early 21st century.

Gillian Hart – Rethinking the South African Crisis

Gillian Hart's recent (2014) exploration of the South African "question" in *Rethinking the South African Crisis: Nationalism, Populism, Hegemony* is perhaps the most concise and relevant – as well as being the most recent –book available on the topic of populism at the local level. Hart approaches the South African "crisis" through a predominantly Gramscian analysis of *hegemony, praxis* and *passive revolution* while adding her own take on Fanon's conceptualisation of Nationalism in constructing her theoretical framework of de-nationalisation and re-nationalisation. This is done in order to deconstruct ANC hegemonic practices 'and its contradictions'⁷⁴ within the last 20 years and to give sense to movements that have arisen in opposition to ANC hegemony and its contradictions.

As stated above the key part of Hart's argument essentially rests on her employment of the concepts of denationalisation and renationalisation. The former concept is held to entail the process by which capital re-constituted itself within a neo-liberal paradigm in synthesis with the global market system in the transition and immediate post-Apartheid years. The incorporation of capital into the negotiated end of Apartheid heralded a shift in the NDR project towards a project of Nationalism that fed into the ideological threads of liberation: nationalism, liberal democracy, and socialist paradigms. The latter concept, as informed by the theory of *passive revolution*, looks at understanding and framing how *the* post-apartheid *nation* was produced out of the effort of denationalisation. By this process renationalisation also addresses the importance of on-going articulations of the *nation* in the hegemonic project of the ANC.

⁷⁴ Hart, G. 'Contours of South Africa' in *Rethinking the South African Crisis*, pg. 23

Using Gramsci's theory of hegemony as expressed in a 'dialectal integration of hegemony with domination, of consent with coercion, united in their distinction'⁷⁵ Hart moves into a discussion of populism in South Africa. Hart writes:

*... [The] articulations of the nation, liberation and the NDR are central to the ANC's hegemonic project. Far from just a matter of false consciousness or manipulations from above, these articulations tap into and draw upon popular understandings, memories and meanings of racial oppression, racialised dispossession and struggles for freedom.*⁷⁶

While she relies on Laclau's earlier interpretations of populism Hart takes issue with "populism as logic of the political" that he later developed in *On Populist Reason*. Accusing him of 're-inventing the manipulated mindless masses model'⁷⁷ Hart instead focuses her understanding on Laclau's concept of socialist and bourgeois populism in his earlier work in 'Towards a Theory of Populism'⁷⁸ as it is more relevant to trying to understand the relationship between Nationalism and Class. By doing this Hart is able to incorporate Laclau's early theory on populism into her denationalisation and renationalisation thesis thereby weaving these paradigms through the changing South African political scene under Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma, through to the rise of Julius Malema and the post-Marikana context in order to underpin a populist "response" to ANC hegemony. This application implies that Mbeki sought to neutralise the revolutionary potential of popular antagonisms, while Zuma sought to develop them but contain them within certain limits, and Malema sought to capture and amplify the revolutionary potential of popular antagonisms – generating a dynamic that the SACP maintains 'has tended towards fascism'.⁷⁹ This last point is highly relevant for this research in giving sense to the site of the capturing of dislocated subject and chains of equivalence and thereby attempts to conceptualise forms that may well capture or perhaps create universal vehicles of radical democratic struggles.

⁷⁵ Hart, G. 'The Unravelling of ANC Hegemony' in *Rethinking the South African Crisis*, pg. 192

⁷⁶ Hart, G. 'The Unravelling of ANC Hegemony' in *Rethinking the South African Crisis*, pg. 189

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pg. 194

⁷⁸ In *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, 1977

⁷⁹ Hart, G. 'The Unravelling of ANC Hegemony' in *Rethinking the South African Crisis*, pg. 197

Conclusion

Having analysed the main approaches in the literature on populism in post-Apartheid South Africa we have encountered a diverse approach to the topic in relation to specific experiences in the unique South African political and historical environment. The literature has furthermore shown to embody an evolutionary characteristic in the approach taken towards a framing of the role of populism within South African politics (as was argued in the introduction). We have seen that this evolution started off with the framing of populism as a mode of an “open” (susceptible to capture by ideology) representation in relation to the question of the nation and citizenship (Halisi) but one that tended to be expressed as a danger to democratic liberal politics. The stance then moved on to an application of the concept to the characterisation of leader politics within the ANC itself (Ndlovo-Gatsheni), periodising the leadership and its mobilisation of strategies that evoked reconstitutions of “the people” in the evolving language of the NDR. Thought on South African populism in the next instance (merely a year later in Mathegka) highlights the duality of applied substance to the concept of populism itself: in that it argued for its arising in the political as purely the result of failed/failing democracies.

While this is not incorrect in placing populism in the “underside” of democracy it tends to frame populist moments as “eruptions”, which carry with them dangerous tendencies or consequences. However, this does adequately illustrate the argument made in the introduction of this research report on the diverse connotations attached to the concept we are exploring. In the most recent instance of academic thought on the topic (Hart), we witnessed the conjoining of populism to the complex debates and analyses of the linkages between economics and politics and the hegemonic processes that guided and managed these since 1994. Therefore the concept of populism has become a political concept that is increasingly sought out as a topic of analysis and debate within South African politics, society, and economics (and their interrelations) and is not only used as a identifier of “dangerous” social action (through rejection) of established political systems (or dominant social order). In the practical application of the theory into the context of our South African case studies we are provided with an extension of our original literature review into our contemporary setting, allowing us a better understanding and “fleshing out” of the complexities involved with the concept of populism in South Africa. The research report shall now move on to engage with the case studies.

Chapter 4

Case Studies

Introduction

In order to justify the main premise of the research report – that populism is both active and effective in South African politics – we now turn to an examination of two spheres of political and social unrest that have appeared as concerns on the national level in recent South African history. The initial effort of the case studies will focus on the perspective of labour in South Africa and the social, economic, and political aspects surrounding it as expressed through ANC hegemony. First and foremost we shall look towards Marikana and the crisis of labour and unions that violently entered the political and public scene in 2012 with a massacre of workers by police on August 16th, 2012. Secondly we shall turn towards a parallel examination of the Western Cape farm worker strikes of the same year which expressed solidarity with mine workers and expressed similar, and in some instances, more serious historical grievances. Examining these dislocations will therefore be viewed through our theoretical lens of hegemony, radical democracy, populism, and antagonism in order to make our case. In order to better be able to frame our examination of the empirical evidence for our theoretical push we shall begin with a note on the role of the economic in the prevailing social order, followed by an analysis of the hegemonic process and processes involved in its maintenance of its relation with ANC and government.

Hegemony and the Prevailing Social Order

Vishwas Satgar also point out the importance of noting that claims of the contemporary South African state as being developmental through attempts at state interventions in the economy tend to ‘ignore the fact that a great deal of state intervention focuses on creating conditions for externalised dynamics of accumulation’.⁸⁰ The old attempts at state-led industrialisation, and therefore job creation and growth through the state, as embodied in concepts such as Import Substitution Industrialisation (ISI) do simply not exist in the current global neo-liberal world. When claims are made by government towards state interventions actual policy assumes roles that do not negate or threaten the market economy, and

⁸⁰ Satgar, V., pg. 38

in the global South, specifically sub-Saharan Africa and South Africa in this case, the reliance on foreign investment in both the private sector industries and as welfare ensures language masks actions that fall far from real state-led interventions framed within radical democratic approaches of participation in local government and capital. As an example, while capitalist profits in South Africa had “increased from 40% to 45% between the end of Apartheid and 2009”⁸¹ employment security had steadily decreased during the same time, resulting in general cost increases for workers.⁸²

Here it is therefore important to be reminded that we cannot distance the notion of the political from that of Capital: for this entity affects the spheres of the socio-political as a hegemonic construct informs our interpretations of, and relations to, both our democratic system and populism⁸³. The latter are contingent on the hegemony of the former, being limited in their ideological narratives and implementations by their attitude towards capital; in short they are allowed to exist as long as they do not threaten the existence of capital. In this sense can frame what we claim to be populist in South African spaces (comprised of structures) themselves when manifested in the form of political parties/movements. For example, the EFF is opposed to private property and is pro-nationalisation of industry, yet does not have any narrative of active deconstructions of capital itself, beyond “putting capital in its place”⁸⁴ Furthermore, it is not only the system of Capital itself that cannot be removed from the political but *economy* that is in actuality ‘always-already political’⁸⁵. This is crucial in understanding the viewpoint of the extant forces within our “postmodern” political system that reject attempts by populist struggles to ‘repoliticise’ capitalism⁸⁶, to bring the realm of the economic back into the ideological battlefield of old. Therefore popular contemporary struggles are relegated in the public imagination to the *depoliticisation* of economy: mining labour strikes are an issue of corporate pay-structures and excessive bonuses rather than a history of capital industry formations that abuse “cheap or unskilled” labour supplied by migrant labour, farm labour strikes is an issue of relaxed government regulation of commercial farm labour practices in an age of increased competition on the global market.

⁸¹ Alexander, P. ‘Marikana, turning point in South African history’, pg. 612

⁸² ibid.

⁸³ Weber, B. ‘Laclau and Zizek on Democracy and Populist Reason’, pg. 15

⁸⁴ Interview with Tukelo Nhlapo

⁸⁵ Zizek, S. ‘Class Struggle or Postmodernism?’ in *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*, pg. 98

⁸⁶ ibid.

So although the vehicle of revolutionary spirit had experienced a change from socialist origins towards capitalist productivity the hegemonic discourse maintained its own subjugation under the spirit of the Big Other (in Zizekian terms). The “inevitable realisation of the truth of historical materialism” fell away to the ideals of “social democracy through capitalist accumulation”⁸⁷ and the negotiated acquirement of the South African state the abandonment of the ideological narrative of revolution could not be achieved. The revolution was not abandoned but was to be acquired through different means. Thusly the ANC’s discourse of its own position still revolves around narratives of “serving the people” as the one true harbinger of change, and the vehicle “should not be questioned as it is in the best interests of the people”⁸⁸.

Following from the above analysis we have an assumed situation based on the following assertions:

1. The shift from 1994 towards neo-liberal economic policy has limited socio-economic redistribution and relegated the significance of it into the realm of good governance and the developmental state.
2. The ANC has reconstituted itself around such policy and houses several internal contradictions in its hegemonic process and ideological narrative as a result by maintaining the language of the classical NDR while acting through policy that supports capital and is thus in contradiction towards (the classical framing of) it. This has caused divisions within the Tripartite Alliance and in the political scene in the South African Left in general.
3. The contradictory expression named above manifests as ideological narrative that maintains the language of revolutionary (and therefore radical) change for the South African subject of historical oppression yet through the hegemonic dominance of the ANC runs counter to the narrative itself. In essence it masks itself.

⁸⁷ Own quotations added for emphasis.

⁸⁸ Own quotations added for emphasis.

Having set the scene in South Africa and having explored the contemporary post-Apartheid socio-economic and political atmosphere we can move on to a study of two case studies which we shall follow by moving (and framing the case study analyses) directly into the concluding question of radical democracy and populism.

Case Study: Marikana Labour Crisis

Introduction

The 16th of August 2012 heralded a jarring shift – whether they wanted it or not – to the South African post-Apartheid dream of a “new” South Africa as the country witnessed 34 protesting and striking Lonmin mine workers gunned down by police on live television. A week earlier Marikana had played witness to a “sudden” wildcat strike organised by worker committees without consent from unions and led by rock-drill operators demanding a 200⁸⁹ to 300 per cent increase in their monthly wages from +- R4000 to R12 500⁹⁰. The strikes had arisen in the context and backdrop of NUM and AMCU conflict surrounding worker representation within NUM and its problematic links to mining companies. Furthermore, COSATU and the ANC were urged on by talks of strikes in the neighbouring Amplats⁹¹ platinum mine in Rustenburg in the preceding months. The Marikana strikes, and the subsequent massacre, ensured a wave of solidarity strikes in the latter months of 2012 and the early months of 2013 throughout mining as well as other industries (such as the farm workers of the Western Cape). While aspects of the media and public response to the strikes can be criticised, there exists a kernel of truth in the common claim that Marikana represents an upheaval in the South African labour sectors that has not been witnessed on such a scale since Apartheid. The massacre of workers by the police reflects violence against citizens (and importantly, African labour) not seen since Sharpeville. As we shall see in the following analysis, Marikana represents a rupture in South African ‘subjects’ who are open to the conditions of virtually unchanged Apartheid labour practices in the new South Africa: it is in essence a point from which there is no return to the idealistic (but ultimately false) conceptualisation of a non-racial and equal South Africa.

⁸⁹ Chinguno, C. ‘Marikana Massacre and Strike Violence: Post-Apartheid’, pg. 1

⁹⁰ Alexander, P. ‘Marikana, turning point in South African history’, pg. 607

⁹¹ Which would in October of that same year fire over ten thousand miners

Employing the Theoretical Concepts

Employing the concepts of dislocation within that of the dominant social order and the process of hegemony, which includes and excludes the subject within it, in this case study, as in the other, can lead to a reconstitution of the social order (this latter aspect is addressed more thoroughly in the concluding chapter). The analysis will proceed through the prism of the events and the position of workers, particularly the leadership of the rock drill operators at Marikana throughout the period of the strikes and the reactions of the National Union of Mmineworkers (NUM) and AMCU union representation, thereby positioning the re-articulations of those dislocated subjects – and their reactions to and within the social order – within the larger question of positive radical mobilisations and their consequent populist characteristics.

Dislocated Subjects

Marikana and the Lonmin mine are located in the Rustenburg area, which is part of South Africa's substantial "platinum belt", a series of mines stretching across from Rustenburg to the Pilanesberg for almost 100km in North West Province. Since the end of Apartheid this sector has become an increasingly important source of raw material that has richer reserves than gold and has become South Africa's most valuable export⁹² – a fact driven by the massive increase in the value of platinum since the early 1990s and the inevitable drying up of gold deposits.⁹³ The miners, and especially the rock-drill operators (RDO), of Marikana have been aware of their substantial role in maintaining this export and the riches that come with it⁹⁴. At the same time, this work is highly dangerous and risky. Yet the RDOs have been remunerated within the traditional framework of migrant labour, with low wages and have been classified as unskilled labourers. The strikes were the outcome of a two-fold process in the run up to the events of August 2012. Firstly, the miners were aware of their historical position as cheap and

⁹² United States Geological Survey, *2005 Minerals Year Book*, pgs. 31 - 34

⁹³ *The Economist*, 'Nationalisation in South Africa: A debate that will persist', December, 2011
<http://www.economist.com/node/21541040>

⁹⁴ Breckenridge, K. Breckenridge, K. 'Revenge of the Commons: The Crisis in the South African Mining Industry', pg.

replaceable labour, but they had also on many occasions demonstrated their anger and dissatisfaction with working conditions by waging strikes in previous years⁹⁵. Secondly, 2012 had seen rifts forming between the major mining trade unions, NUM and AMCU, and the workers.⁹⁶

As Peter Alexander points out, a crucial aspect of the Lonmin strikes was encapsulated in the unofficial nature, by which they were organised, in that they were not officially represented by any union when mine workers first withdrew their labour on the 9th of August, 2012⁹⁷. Although the main talking points in the weeks and months after the massacre on August 16th revolved to a considerable extent around the nature of union politics⁹⁸ and NUM and AMCU disagreements, the initial strike had been organised by an independent strike committee⁹⁹. While the lack of union leadership in the strike was a unique occurrence in South African strike history it is both significant in the scale of the strikes of 2012¹⁰⁰ and in the deeper endemic representation of what this entails in the processes of the dislocation experienced by the Lonmin mine workers and their direct and indirect dependants in both rural and informal settlement settings. The main concerns expressed by miners at Lonmin comprised a multitude of issues that had been plaguing labour and the communities of the local informal settlements in the Marikana area for many years prior to the “rupture” in August of 2012, issues that were themselves systemic legacies of Apartheid.¹⁰¹ Almost half of labour working in Marikana were relegated – as migrant labourers – to informal settlements, with housing built out of corrugated iron sheets, lacking connections to electricity, connections to the local water supply, and poor (if any) service delivery.¹⁰² Conditions in the mines did not help alleviate the plight of workers: ‘miners at Marikana... with both

⁹⁵ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/09/26/us-safrica-mines-idUSBRE88P0NV20120926>

⁹⁶ Alexander, P. ‘Marikana, turning point in South African history’, pg. 608

⁹⁷ Alexander, P. ‘Marikana, turning point in South African history’, pg. 608

⁹⁸ Duncan, J. ‘South African Journalism and the Marikana Massacre: A Case Study of an Editorial Failure’, pgs. 11 – 12

⁹⁹ ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Alexander, P. ‘Marikana, turning point in South African history’, pg. 615

¹⁰¹ Breckenridge, K. ‘Marikana and the Limits of BioPolitics: Themes in the Recent Scholarship of South African Mining’, pg. 1

¹⁰² <http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2012-09-27-unsafe-house-unsafe-job-the-foul-truth-about-living-conditions-at-marikana/#.VRT3rfyUd2A>

opencast and underground operations were... exposed to a variety of safety hazards: falling rocks, exposure to dust, intensive noise, fumes and high temperatures, among others.”¹⁰³

These factors contributed directly to the form of, and function within which, the strikes manifested. As an example, much focus has been put on the RDOs at Marikana as being the vanguard of the strike action of 2012. Their official classification by the mining companies was as unskilled labour and thus their pay structure was relatively low compared to equivalent miners in other parts of the world, where the position of rock driller is skilled and includes danger pay.¹⁰⁴ Instead, as labourers and migrant labour at that, their position was unchanged since the end of Apartheid. They were therefore unable to attain the official position of a skilled miner, along with the benefits that would have arisen from such a position.¹⁰⁵ The RDOs position is thus theoretically that of the heterogeneous subject, or the subject (individual) who is always approaching a state of undecidability within the extant social order. RDOs are identified by the social order (through the above description on skill-based payments) in a multitude of ways: they are essential labour in their function (drilling seams of deposits and preparing them for blasting) while similarly being exceptional in their responsibilities (the work is very dangerous and not everyone would, or could, do it), yet they are also held to be unskilled because of their rural origins, age (many had functioned in this capacity for 30 years or more¹⁰⁶) and replaceability through the large and cheap migrant labour pool. Crucially it was not only capital that posited this identification of these subjects but the hegemonic social order as encapsulated and enforced by the ANC. This is reflected in the economic policies that allowed capital to function and thrive on the systemic artefacts of Apartheid, while the NDR holds the subject, i.e. the revolutionary class, in this state perpetually. They (the RDO subject) are not whole in the sense of having a static articulation of their own position; they are always on the cusp of instability, of losing their positions in the mines and returning to a stagnant existence of being poor, illiterate, and jobless. Yet it was this very unstable ‘dislocated subject’ that led the strike. Thus it was RDOs who downed their tools and took up the strike action without waiting for the consent of a union which might discourage them or outright deny their attempts at expressing grievances and seeking change.

¹⁰³ http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_187783/lang--en/index.htm

¹⁰⁴ Breckenridge, K. ‘Revenge of the Commons: The Crisis in the South African Mining Industry’, pg. 3

¹⁰⁵ Alexander, P. ‘Marikana, turning point in South African history’, pg. 615

¹⁰⁶ Breckenridge, K. ‘Revenge of the Commons: The Crisis in the South African Mining Industry’, pg. 4

In this sense, the RDOs sought to re-articulate their position within the social order by self-organising the strikes and were joined by (non-RDO) African mine labourers who recognised their own dislocation and equivalence with the RDOs. As the strikes progressed they were problematically countered by their own representatives in NUM, who “mobilised scabs to break the action”¹⁰⁷ at the outset of the strikes and further harassed the strikers in the following days. Although the police fired upon them, the Unions, and one would include NUM and the white dominated unions, were complicit by their absence. Following the massacre on the 16th of August the miners sought to re-articulate themselves and move away from their dislocation by seeking alternative ideological representation in the form of AMCU as a rejection of and counter to NUM (and its alliances with the social order) despite AMCU positioning itself as apolitical. Many had felt betrayed by NUM through its actions during the Marikana strikes¹⁰⁸, with accusations that suggested that NUM was directly opposed to the interests of the striking miners. Although NUM had historically maintained the largest membership of the mine workers, workers almost *en masse* migrated towards AMCU in the months following Marikana as it became the mining union power-house in 2013, representing “the three largest gold mines”¹⁰⁹ in South Africa.

Conclusions of the Case Study

Despite the passion of the protests and strikes, the workers, i.e. the subjects, of the South African platinum fields have not been able, through their actions, to fill their own undecidability (or position of *lack* within the social order) nor does it seem they will be able to. AMCU, while not being in the position of NUM in its relation to COSATU and the ANC – and therefore being (at least not popularly) associated with the interests of capital and the current NDR – is, as Alexander points out, open to the “dangers of bureaucratisation”. This was one of the complaints of the workers that NUM had ‘sold out’ to capital. AMCU finds itself being seduced by the same pressures and therefore having its senior stewards included on company pay rolls¹¹⁰ relatively negating the effectiveness of its ability to represent workers in the future. If (but most likely *when*) this occurs and AMCU (as it defines itself as apolitical) becomes

¹⁰⁷ Alexander, P. ‘Marikana, turning point in South African history’, pg.608

¹⁰⁸ Alexander, P. ‘Marikana, turning point in South African history’, pg. 610

¹⁰⁹ ibid.

¹¹⁰ ibid., pg. 615

just another “betrayal” in the eyes of the miners they will once again be open (although they are constantly in this position) to capture by another union or party. This is not to say that this cycle cannot be broken, for as the events and results of Marikana have shown, for many miners their historical dislocation as miners attached to a system of exploitation and historically abusive practices went beyond the realm of change of the prevailing social order promised by the ANC and NDR. Instead, the workers became disillusioned and chose to break from it. Many chose to break with the unions and opted instead to support the EFF which had successfully launched itself as a political party in the background and on the stage of Marikana: partly explained by its emergence within the Left as “...the EFF was itself a reflection of a particular restructuring within the Left, despite its many problems and limits...” and was welcomed by frustrated workers.¹¹¹ Although the EFF was unable to insert itself as a mediating power, the workers hoped in this attachment that the contestation of the prevailing social order would put into practice their own articulated desires for change, which included nationalisation of the mines.¹¹²

While the Marikana Massacre was widely portrayed as a sudden materialisation of recent grievances, this characterisation misses the dissatisfaction of workers with a social order that remained in the apartheid mould and hegemonic structures that held them hostage to a future that would never come. The portrayal of Marikana as a sudden and unexpected event tends to support a perspective that sees the mining industry battling under threat in the context of global capital shifts towards post-industrial services. In this sense, workers are framed as reactionary, rather than as a revolutionary force, seeking transformation of the system. Conceptualising the labour strikes as a function of rejecting the “old” understandings of systemic racial and economic identifications that were by and large abandoned (at least in the sense of being able to fulfil the classical NDR) following the end of Apartheid is one way of understanding them. To see the strike and the killings in atavistic terms harking back to ethnic conflict of the early 1990s and the hostel killings means that there was no need to interrogate the current grievances. Instead, the grievances would have been better treated as a direct function of the mining industry’s historical relationship to migrant labour (and its associated systems) under different political, economic and social conditions.¹¹³ The form of exploitation had not changed significantly. Analysis

¹¹¹ Interview with Mazibuko Jara (January 27th, 2015)

¹¹² *ibid.*, pg. 616

¹¹³ *ibid.*, pg. 157

should have been focused on the impact of government policy towards labour, capital, unions and their respective relationships to each other.

When considering Marikana in this manner it comes as no surprise that the shock-value of the event is almost ubiquitously evoked as a harkening back to the past of Apartheid violence towards black protests and strikes¹¹⁴. However, in the former cases black workers weren't recognised as employees until 1979¹¹⁵, whilst today the legal framework that ensures their recognition gives them some standing as workers. Yet it also ensures the nature of their exploitation in relation to Capital. To put it simply, the critical narratives that highlighted the path being taken towards rupture and explosions of violence in the mining industry were well-veiled and far removed from the public eye since 1994, having the effect of "no-one seeing it coming". This lack of recognition of the cleavages and antagonisms, and thus the dislocations, in South African labour and its relation to the dominant social order have been shown through the events at Marikana to be issues that cannot be solved by traditional liberal (as well as non-racial) approaches towards redress. The Farlam Commission, set up to investigate the Marikana Massacre, has established the criminality of the actions and reactions to the events in the *results* of the tensions but so far, has done little towards answering the *causes*. Part of the reason is a conceptual and theoretical lack in the process itself, for it is only in dealing with the overarching hegemonic power and authority of the relationship between the state and capital, and understanding hegemony, dislocation and equivalence –that can provide at the very least a pragmatic understanding of why and how things happened. It requires a much stronger attempt towards mobilisation of those who are chiefly dislocated and bringing their concerns into the public realm through radical action that any change will take place (or so we hope to see in the conclusion of this research report). We shall now shift our analysis towards a space of contestation which occurred in the wake of Marikana, namely the Western Cape farm worker's strikes of 2012.

Case Study: Western Cape Farm Worker Protests and Strikes

¹¹⁴ <http://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/2012/10/18/south-african-massacre-was-the-tip-of-an-iceberg/>

¹¹⁵ Alexander, P. 'Marikana, turning point in South African history', pg. 615

Introduction

Late August of 2012 saw the beginnings of a large farmworker strike in the Western Cape in which workers downed tools and refused to return to work if their grievances were not met. The strikes were quickly followed by protests in neighbouring townships and farms of the region in the following weeks, spreading further and lasting into early 2013, symbolic of workers dissatisfaction with living and working conditions throughout the region¹¹⁶. Although relatively overshadowed by the Marikana miner's strikes of mid-August 2012, the Western Cape strikes and protests reflected – in a similar vein – systemic and historic legacies that have continued to plague the country since pre-1994 as well as the added historic moment of it being the first time in South African history that Western Cape farmworkers rose up in anger at their conditions¹¹⁷. Despite this historic moment the farming sector of the Western Cape has not been unfamiliar to protest in recent history and should not be seen in the public paradigm (just as with Marikana) as a sudden occurrence out of an untroubled background. Service delivery strikes have occurred on numerous occasions since in the beginning of the 21st century, with De Doorns itself experiencing large service delivery protests in 2003, 2007 and 2011 alongside xenophobic backlashes against migrant Zimbabweans in 2009¹¹⁸, a testament to the ever increasing antagonisms that have been developing out of South Africa's largely unresolved past.

The strikes form

Initially starting on the farms in De Doorns (colloquially known as the “grape capital of South Africa”) on the 27th of August 2012 in the wake of Marikana, mostly female farm workers downed their tools spontaneously without official sanction and organisation from unions or political parties¹¹⁹. Again, just like in Marikana, protests in De Doorns were not confined to the place in which workers laboured but also took place in the local informal settlement (Stofland, and later on other settlements in the region) in which they and their dependants lived. Grievances were thus not isolated to low pay and working conditions (although these were highly problematic and at the forefront from the outset) but also

¹¹⁶ Hattingh, S. 'Reaping what you sow: reflections on the Western Cape Farm workers Strike', pg. 1

¹¹⁷ Andrews, M. 'Sleeping Giant is Stirring: Farmworkers in South Africa', pg. 1

¹¹⁸ Wilderman, J. 'Farm Worker Uprising in the Western Cape: A Case Study of Protest, Organising, and Collective Action', pg. 21

¹¹⁹ Hattingh, S. 'Reaping what you sow: Reflections on the Western Cape Farm Workers Strikes', pg. 2

addressed the terrible living conditions of both local and migrant labour – living in corrugated iron shacks, with limited access to sanitation, water, and electricity (if any). Isolating the town by cutting off roads and the local railway, the workers brought attention to their plight and soon they were being joined by strikes in no less than fourteen¹²⁰ other farming towns in the southern Western Cape all predominantly demanding better pay (a meagre daily increase of almost a R100), better living conditions, paid maternity leave, the ridding of labour brokerages, and an end to rented homes¹²¹. While the demands raised varied according to their locations and contained many more concerns than listed above, these were overall the main talking points throughout the region in the months of late 2012 and early 2013. The strikes were to occur in three phases as they were halted, postponed, and eventually dismantled within a political battle between COSATU (and its affiliate FAWU) and BAWUSA: thus the original protests and strikes came to an end in mid-November, were taken up again into December, and finally made a last push in January of 2013 before stalling. How can we understand the Western Cape strikes and protests, and their subsequent dismantling? Perhaps the most useful is to understand relationships through the prism of the theoretical concepts dislocation and exclusion of farm workers within the dominant social order.

Employing the Theoretical Concepts

Employing the concept of dislocation within this case study requires the framing of dislocation within that of the dominant social order and the process of hegemony which includes and excludes the subject within it. The dominant social order within which the farm workers of the Western Cape found and find themselves is defined and expressed by ANC policy towards worker and owner relations as well as within the larger frame of the NDR and the historic development of the farming sector within South Africa's entrance into a neo-liberal globalised world economy (see the Introduction to the Case Studies). We shall now underpin the historic post-Apartheid situation of farm workers in terms of this framework.

¹²⁰ Pointer, R. 'Foreclosing New Identities', pg. 1

¹²¹ ibid.

Dislocation and Hegemony

Historic Systemic Inequalities:

Farm labour in South Africa has historically retained a relatively unmechanised nature due to both the large presence of labour within the sector (both permanent and migrant) as well as the increased commercialisation of farming in order to compete with overseas production markets.¹²² In the early years of the new South Africa, state-controlled marketing boards were dismantled by the ANC government and farm owners found themselves in the position of “price takers rather than price setters”¹²³, relying on the whims of the international markets in order to acquire a profit and continued existence. In the Western Cape this trend was the hardest felt in terms of the nature of produce which could be exported and the shift towards a largely citrus and spirits-based agricultural sector was set in stone; as they represented on the one hand (in the case of the former), a steady produce which could be constantly provided on a seasonal basis – guaranteed by migrant labour – and on the other hand (in the case of the latter) provide a commodity that relies on value set by international markets and requires the same labour production as the former. As a result this sector has ways been one of South Africa’s most labour intensive (alongside mining) and has required over time the solidification of an abundant pool of labour in order to meet its production needs. Labour has as a result also had to contend with stagnation in wage increases as farm owners continually argued that evolving international standards (alongside ever increasing production needs) required cost-cutting.¹²⁴

This was furthermore exacerbated by the increasing reliance by farm owners on seasonal (African as opposed to coloured) labourers from other parts of the country as well as migrant labourers from neighbouring countries such as Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Lesotho secured through labour brokerages (shown earlier). Wilderman crucially shows that this was a very conscious move on the part of farm owners as part of the cost-cutting (and therefore increase in profit) they could acquire by such a

¹²² Wilderman, J. ‘Farm Worker Uprising in the Western Cape: A Case Study of Protest, Organising, and Collective Action’, pg. 15

¹²³ *ibid.*, pg. 17

¹²⁴ Wilderman, J. ‘Farm Worker Uprising in the Western Cape: A Case Study of Protest, Organising, and Collective Action’, pg. 18

shift in labour reliance¹²⁵. Wages have therefore remained shockingly low, hovering below those of domestic workers in a sector that is heavily reliant on manual labour. Furthermore, the increased influx of migrant labourers into the Western Cape meant the almost ubiquitous establishment of informal settlements and shanty towns surrounding the farm lands. Migrant seasonal labour often displaced permanent workers and required housing for themselves and their dependants. Housing had historically been negotiable with farm owners on the basis of rent but was now firmly the responsibility of the majority of workers, forcing the construction of corrugated shack dwellings with limited service supplies throughout the region.

As was stated earlier the strike action in the Western Cape was the first moment in which farm workers had openly revolted through 'overt, confrontational, and adversarial approach[es]'¹²⁶ in the history of a labour sector that had always been fearful of challenging powerful farm owners and had opted for quiet mediation through 'consensual appeals and individual approaches'¹²⁷ in the resolution of conflicts, whether wage disputes, working condition complaints, or general complaints of abuse. In light of the above framing of the situation of farm worker's it is clear that they saw their own position within the social order as tenuous at best. Thus farm workers, both permanent and seasonal, are defined by their heterogeneity as subjects of the demands of capitalist production as well as the promises of change fostered by the language of the NDR. Worker identity is dislocated in a double sense, that they are placed in a classic position as exploited workers, with nothing but their labour to sell, and in that sense, unable even to reproduce themselves being underpaid, abused, and relegated to poor housing and services, while at the same time their role as the revolutionary class in the NDR placed them in the position of supporting political and social change that never appeared. The social demands of the workers during the strikes therefore addressed concerns which reflected their position of dislocation, but which they were unable to alter. These were therefore from the outset not protests but *strikes*, simple and effective downing of tools until their (social) demands were met through either capitulation by individual farm owners or bargaining via the government. The hegemonic operation of populism (as shown in our analysis of Laclau) had thus begun within this case: at the point where farm workers had

¹²⁵ *ibid.*, pg. 21

¹²⁶ *ibid.*, pg. 2

¹²⁷ Wilderman, J. 'Farm Worker Uprising in the Western Cape: A Case Study of Protest, Organising, and Collective Action', pg. 1

drawn a line or antagonistic stances against the social order which enforced their dislocation. However, *how* and *where* this antagonism is utilised, as positive, negative, or both when dislocation is open to interpretation (and interpolation) by ideological narratives and constructs shall be addressed later on.

Equivalence:

Moving on from hegemony and dislocation we need to address what Laclau referred to as “chain of equivalence”. Although we have not specifically singled out (but have mentioned) this notion in our theoretical framework it is an important notion in relation to the Western Cape farm worker’s strikes and those in Marikana as it helps to explain *why* solidarity between these two diverse locations and their workers was formed (if more often in a one-way manner). Chains of equivalence are the “logical next step” in the process of dislocation and the shared consciousness of subjects to their plight as they realise their dislocation within the social order (and therefore their antagonism to it). Because of this “logical next step” it is easy to assume that equivalence between subjects is determined by an equal experience of dislocation. During the strikes and protests of De Doorns, and subsequently other farms and areas in the Western Cape, there was a two-fold relation to the experiences of workers in Marikana at that same time.¹²⁸ On the one hand the very fact that these “historic” strikes had occurred so soon (barely a week) after those in Marikana resulted in quick referrals to a link between both within the media as they struggled to make sense of the upheavals.¹²⁹ As the strikes and protests increased so too did police responses to them, often leading to violent clashes and accusations of police brutality by workers and residents on the farm lands and in informal settlements while farm owners and some of the media condemned the violent nature of the strikes and protests. This relation was therefore also often implied by the media to mean a mimicking of the events (specifically the massacre of workers by police) of Marikana in the Western Cape.¹³⁰

On the other hand the relation was espoused by many of the farm workers, organising committees and unions (official or not) themselves as the strikes drove on in the wake of Marikana. The ideological

¹²⁸ Pointer, R. ‘Foreclosing New Identities’, pg. 6

¹²⁹ *ibid.*, pg. 1

¹³⁰ *ibid.*, pg. 4

narratives for the relation were diverse as some referred to the shared experience of violence at the hands of police while others claimed their solidarity with those who had also been victims of historic oppression. However, there is a quite different sort of chain of equivalence in these different events. Equivalential chains in this instance should therefore not be blatantly labelled as symptomatic of direct relations between the grievances of Marikana and the Western Cape, that is to say that we should not be too quick to immediately forge a link between the two in an emotional appeal of abuses suffered in diverse regions as being homogenous. Whilst it could (and should) be argued that the historic and systemic artefacts of Apartheid have a very real impact on the state of labour and the “ignored members” of South African society (and thus their legacies remain) in the case of the Western Cape farm worker organisations, the links to Marikana during the strikes were themselves very consciously forged as a political *tool*. As Wilderman argues:

“...At the outbreak of the strike... the media routinely mentioned Marikana... in conjunction with their coverage of the farm protests... [and] there is some reason to believe that workers who mentioned Marikana were reflecting the incident as it had been interpreted and used as a tool of mobilisation during the strike, rather than as a deep source of organic [or spontaneous] inspiration.”¹³¹

Wilderman goes further in citing Margaret Visser’s study on media coverage of the strikes and protests in which she revealed through many interviews with strike participants the concerted effort on the part of the organisers to “band together” in light of the Marikana strikes.¹³² In this respect then equivalence between the dislocated subjects in the form of farm workers in the Western Cape and those dislocated subjects elsewhere, but especially in Marikana, appears on face-value to have no semblance of substance. However, when we consider the theoretical conceptualisation that we are employing in regard to our earlier exploration of hegemony, dislocation, and radical democracy, we need remind ourselves that dislocated subjects are *open* to ideological penetration. Equivalence by its very nature cannot therefore be relegated to the position of *shared* identities of dislocation between workers in the Western Cape and workers in Marikana. From this then we also must realise that the effort towards

¹³¹ Pointer, R. ‘Foreclosing New Identities’, pg. 34

¹³² ibid.

identification of *positive* reconstituted subjectivities within *particular* struggles in South Africa need not rely on homogenous subjectivities *per se*; or equivalence as *equal*. In short, the very effort on the part of farm workers to organise and mobilise around the loosely shared experiences of Marikana workers at that time was itself the reconstitution of subjectivity on their part. While they do not view themselves as being dislocated in the same way as those in Gauteng are dislocated, they recognised their shared position as those outside the social order and sought to foster within their peers positive action on the basis of shared positions of dislocations.

Conclusion of Case Study

An end to the strikes did not entail *real* progress for workers in the sense of material gains. Despite the increase to R105 day, not all farm owners adopted the new pay scheme while many had dismissed workers during the strikes in an effort to curtail the effectiveness of the strikes and (in their view) keep production going. Also it should be noted that those workers who were members of the committees that formed, shaped, and urged on the strikes were often blacklisted by their employers and other farm owners throughout the region, preventing them from returning to work. In the greater political battlefield of South Africa, the Western Cape farm worker strikes represented disillusionment with the policies of the DA in representing the interests of farm labour while similarly many workers felt betrayed by the ANC in its not pursuing the objectives of the NDR. In essence many of the dislocated workers were now open to being captured by political representation that rejected both ideological stances of the above parties. The alternative presented itself in the form of the EFF and helps to explain the sudden interest by COSATU and BAWUSA on the one hand and EFF concerns on the other with the farmworker strikes during their final months.

Shawn Hattingh highlights an important point in a citation of the Human Rights Watch study on the Agrarian sector in the Western Cape. He shows that that union representation in the farming sector of South Africa has historically been limited, with 'only about three percent of workers being officially represented'.¹³³ In light of this it is curious that COSATU and BAWUSA intervened in the strikes so

¹³³ Pointer, R. 'Foreclosing New Identities', pg. 6

vigorously towards the end of 2012. The interventions were not only instrumental in the initial dismantling of the strikes, but sowed divisions and caused conflict not only between the two union groupings, but also between the unions and workers, and between the workers themselves. In theoretical terms, the argument is that the workers, the dislocated subjects, were caught in an ideological struggle over hegemony, where different forms of representative political authority were struggling to capture them for their own political ends. Farm Workers themselves expressed concerns about the blanket disregard of political parties for radical change within their sector: they concluded that not only the DA, but also the ANC were on the side of capital, having “shares in the farms”. At the same time, they were not captured wholesale by the EFF whom they saw only as representing their concerns to a degree. The outcome was that many sided with the newly formed United Front (supported by NUMSA) and their anti-capitalist manifesto. It is in these formulations around the capturing of the “open dislocated subjects” of the Western Cape that we are faced with the difficult question of how meaningful and radical change can be produced.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

A Re-Cap

To recap, the research report firstly defined and (in Chapter 1) stipulated the main “problem” associated with the conceptualisation of populism, specifically in relation to the vagueness associated with it, and the uncertainty relegated to its position within the political, both globally and locally. We chose to address this vagueness by showing in the “purpose” the theoretical approach we chose towards reconstituting the nature and functioning of populism: namely the work of Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek. Chapter 1 defined and demonstrated the method through which we sought to address the uncertainty around the populist political challenge by stipulating an empirical framework consisting of two case studies. Having defined the scope of the research report in Chapter 1, Chapter 2, or the Literature Review, thus concerned itself with exploring the dominant literature which approached populism from a normative and positive stance and defined the choice of conceptual and theoretical

notions to construct a working framework for our analysis. Having done so, and selecting Laclau's notions of *hegemony*, *radical democracy*, *populism* and Zizek's concept of *antagonism*, Chapter 3, or the South African Literature Review, explored key texts in the local (recent, or, post-Apartheid) literature on the topic of populism in order to bring the theory "home", thereby grounding our theoretical stance within the specific local sights of hegemonic, radically democratic, populist, and antagonistic struggles. The local literature we looked at was comprised of Gillian Hart, Ralph Mathegka, C.R.D. Halisi, and Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni.

Having sufficiently (as much as a research report allows for) placed the theory within the context of South African particularities, Chapter 4, or the Case Studies, concerned itself with an analysis of the Marikana miner's strikes and massacre by police of 2012, and the Western Cape farm worker's strikes of the same year, continuing into 2013. This effort sought to explain, by looking at the specific concerns and evolutionary movement of the events, instances of subject dislocations within the established social order of hegemonic ANC rule and neo-liberal economic policies in South Africa. The dislocations were analysed further in their equivalency with other dislocations, which helped to explain the spreading and momentum in popular shifts within the strikes themselves. In this manner a link was constructed (although critically examined) between the particular spaces of struggle (Marikana and the Western Cape) on the level of the universal. Finally we now arrive at the point in which we may take the analysis and argument further by addressing the overall conclusion of this research report: namely, what the role of populism is within South Africa and what possibilities it holds for the political.

A part of what we are witnessing in the manner in which alliances have been splitting post-Marikana is arguably a re-opening and re-interpretation of the ideological battlefields that prominently existed pre-1994/6. These voices are becoming more influential and although never entirely silenced, have for the last two decades largely remained hushed within the official political spaces of parties, unions, and socio-political movements and the larger Left in general. The question for South African contemporary (and future) politics is then 'How do we mobilise re-articulations of the Left in ways that are radically pragmatic yet positive?' The research report has made an attempt at providing an analysis that can hopefully provide an inroad into understanding and framing the possible answers towards this question. Radical democracy (and its programmes of action) should be understood within the realm of the

political subject and his/her dislocation within the bounds of the extant liberal democratic, but crucially *non-racial*, hegemonic social order that is dominated by the ANC, Capital, and the language of the NDR. Populism is thusly not a *mode* of political mobilisation or action, but rather the mode of the *constitution* of those who fall outside the bounds of democracy (as represented by this dominant order) – its interpolation of its own subjects as deficient in democratic terms (or lacking fullness). When these subjects *recognise* their lack, or when workers in South Africa strike without official (union) representation, and band with others who share their position they enable the populist expression to recognise the limits of the social order in addressing (filling) their emptiness. This moment itself, the recognition of the lack in democracy, begins the radical democratic project towards addressing (filling) it, but the substance (ideological narrative) that fills the vacuum can be altered at any given moment. Therefore, South Africa's current moment in the Left as related to the dominant ANC position, is well-explained by Mazibuko Jara who pertinently expresses the point

“...but so far there has not been a real break within the ruling elite... and the only place where you can see a break is in the form of the [Marikana] mineworkers and the motives of the EFF... as having begun to challenge the ANC and the hegemony of the ruling elite... but the ANC is still popular, even amongst the sections of society which has shown its unhappiness... [and furthermore] when it comes to the situation of the Left it is not yet in a position where it can fully restructure itself and shape politics in a more direct and systematic way [than it currently is(n't)]”¹³⁴

In conclusion, populism has been shown within the scope of the research report to function as a useful conceptual and theoretical tool in understanding political developments and popular movement mobilisations in the contemporary South African scene. It is further quite useful in using the resulting understandings (when utilised as described) as a gauge for democratic society and the interpolations of democratic subjects within it – their participation and identification with democracy and finally as an understanding of the manner in which the social whole conceives of the subject's identity. Future

¹³⁴ Interview with Mazibuko Jara

research on South Africa's complex political, social, and economic history (and current situation) could benefit from more in-depth analysis of this interesting and relevant entity known as Populism.

Bibliography

Books

Alexander, P., Sinwell, L., Lekgowa, t., Mmope, B. & Xezwi, B. *Marikana: A View from the Mountain and a Case to Answer*, Jacana Media, Johannesburg, 2013, pp. 6 – 157

Beinart, W. *Hidden Struggles in rural South Africa: Politics & Popular Movements in the Transkei & Eastern Cape, 1890 – 1930*, University of California Press, Las Angeles, 1987, pp. 1 – 227

Du Preez, M. & Rossou, M. *The World According to Julius Malema*, Kwela Books, Cape Town, 2009, pp. 1 – 125

Deranty, J.P. (ed), *Jacques Ranciere: Key Concepts*, Acumen Publishing Limited, MPG Books Group (Printer), 2010, pp. 1 – 203

Forde, F. *An Inconvenient Youth: Julius Malema and the 'New' ANC*, Pan Macmillan, Johannesburg, 2011, pp. 1 – 261

Glaser, D. (ed.), *Mbeki and After: Reflections on the Legacy of Thabo Mbeki*, Wits University Press, Johannesburg, 2010, pp. 1 – 294

Gramsci, A. *The Prison Notebooks* (edited & translated by Buttigeig, J.), Columbia University Press, 2010, pp. 1 – 2019

Gumede, W. *Thabo Mbeki and the Battle for the Soul of the ANC*, Zebra Press., Cape Town, 2005, pp. 1 – 343

Laclau, E. *On Populist Reason*, Verso (New Left Books), London, 2005, pp. 1 – 269

Laclau, E. & Mouffe, C. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Verso, London, 1985, pp. 1 – 197

Mangcu, X. *The Democratic Moment: South Africa's Prospects under Jacob Zuma*, CTP Book Printers, Johannesburg, 2009, pp. 1 – 193

Mathekga, R. 'The ANC Leadership Crisis and the Age of Populism in Post-Apartheid South Africa' in Pretorius, J. (ed) *African Politics: Beyond the Third Wave of Democratisation*, Juta and Co., Cape Town, 2008, pp. 1 – 215

Neocosmos, M. *The Agrarian Question in Southern African and "Accumulation from Below"*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1982, pp. 1 – 204

Neocosmos, M. 'From Protest to Challenge. Aspects of National Liberation in South Africa' in Adebayo, O. Olukoshi (ed) *The Politics of Opposition in Contemporary Africa*, Uppsala, Nordic Africa Institute, 1998, pp. 1 – 330

Panizza, F. (ed) *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, Verso (New Left Books), London, 2005, pp. 1 – 343

Rancier, J. (ed) Corcoran, S. *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, Continuum International Publishing Group, London, United Kingdom, 2010, pp. 1 – 227

Southall, R. *Democracy in Africa: Moving Beyond a Difficult Legacy*, Human Sciences Research Council Press, Cape Town, South Africa, 2003, pp. 1 – 63

Vaughan, M. 'Literature and Populism in South Africa: Reflections on the Ideology of Staffrider' in *Marxism and African Literature*, James Currey, London, 1985, pp. 195 – 220

Worsley, P. 'The Concept of Populism' in Ionescu, G. & Gellner, E. (eds.), *Populism: its Meanings and National Characteristics*, The Macmillan Company, London, 1969, pp. 212 – 250

Worsley, P. *The Third World*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1964, pp. 1 – 309

Zizek, S. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, Verso, London, Great Britain, 1989, pp. 1 – 235

Journal Articles

Alexander, P. 'Marikana, turning point in South African History' in *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 40, No. 138, 2013, pp. 605 – 619

Bond, P. & Mottiar, S. 'Movements, Protests and a Massacre in South Africa' in *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 2, 2013, pp. 283 – 302

Breckenridge, K. 'Marikana and the Limits of BioPolitics: Themes in the Recent Scholarship of South African Mining' in *Africa*, Vol. 84, No. 1, 2014, pp. 151 – 161

Chinguno, C. 'Marikana Massacre and Strike Violence Post-Apartheid' in *Global Labour Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 2013/5, pp. 160 – 166

Dornbusch, R. & Edwards, S. 'The Macroeconomics of Populism', National Bureau of Economic Research, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, United States, 1990, pp. 7 – 13

Duncan, J. 'South African Journalism and the Marikana Massacre: A Case Study of an Editorial Failure' in *The Political Economy of Communication*, vol. 1, no. 2., pp. 65 – 88

Flinders, M. 'In Defence of Politics: Fifty Years On', *The Political Quarterly*, Vol. 83, No. 4, 2012, pp. 640 – 644

Glaser, D. 'South Africa: Towards Authoritarian Populism?' in the Johannesburg Workshop in Theory and Criticism (JWTTC), Vol. 1, pp. 1 – 3

Halisi, C.R.D. 'Citizenship and Populism in the New South Africa' in *Africa Today*, Vol. 45, No. 3 – 4, 1998, pp. 423 – 438

Harvey, R. 'Marikana as a Tipping Point? The Political Economy of Labour Tensions in South Africa's Mining Industry and How Best to Resolve Them', *Governance of Africa's Resources Programme*, Occasional Paper No. 164, 2013, pp. 5 – 33

Sarakinsky, I. 'Political Party Finance in South Africa: Disclosure versus Secrecy' in *Democratization*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 2007, pp. 111 – 128

Satgar, V. 'Beyond Marikana: The Post-Apartheid South African State' in *African Spectrum*, Vol. 47, No. 2 – 3, 2012, pp. 33 – 62

Weber, B. 'Laclau and Zizek on Democracy and Populist Reason' in *International Journal of Zizek Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 1 – 19

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. 'Black Republican Tradition, Nativism and Populist Politics in South Africa' in *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa*, no. 68, 2008, pp. 52 – 86

Reviews

May, T. Review of Ranciere, J. *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, Clemson University, 2010
<http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/24403-dissensus-on-politics-and-aesthetics/>,

(Accessed 16th August, 2013)

Satgar, V. Review of Hart, G. *Rethinking the South African Crisis: Nationalism, Populism, Hegemony*, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, Durban, 2013, pp. 1 - 8

Online Articles

Ranciere, J. (trans) Lemmey, H. (Jan 30th, 2013) 'The People are not a Brutal and Ignorant Mass',
<http://www.versobooks.com/blogs/1226-the-people-are-not-a-brutal-and-ignorant-mass-jacques-ranciere-on-populism>

In (translated)

<http://www.liberation.fr/politiques/01012311198-non-le-peuple-n-est-pas-une-masse-brutale-et-ignorante>

(Accessed 13th August, 2013)

Bloom, K. (Sep 3, 2010) 'When Democracy becomes populist: Palin, Malema and the rise of the unread', pp. 1 – 4 <http://dailymaverick.co.za/article/2010-09-03-when-democracy-becomes-populism-palin-malema-and-the-rise-of-the-unread>

(Accessed 7th November, 2013)

Breckenridge, K. (Nov 5, 2012) 'Revenge of the Common: The Crisis in the South African Mining Industry'
<http://www.historyworkshop.org.uk/revenge-of-the-commons-the-crisis-in-the-south-african-mining-industry/>

(Accessed 7th November, 2013)

De Waal, M. (Sep 27, 2012) 'Unsafe House, Unsafe Job? The foul truth about living conditions at Marikana' <http://dailymaverick.co.za/article/2012-09-27-unsafe-house-unsafe-job-the-foul-truth-about-living-conditions-at-marikana>

(Accessed 24th October, 2014)

Grootes, S. (June 21, 2012) 'ANC's inertia puts a populist weapon in its future arsenal', <http://www.bdlive.co.za/articles/2012/06/21/stephen-grootes-anc-s-inertia-puts-a-populist-weapon-in-its-future-arsenal>

(Accessed 24th October, 2014)

Hlongwane, S. (Oct 10, 2012) 'Cosatu Congress: Allies talk about Marikana and the enemies of the struggle', pp. 1 – 3 <http://dailymaverick.co.za/article/2012-09-18-cosatu-congress-allies-talk-about-marikana-and-the-enemies-of-the-struggle>

(Accessed 13th March, 2014)

Munusamy, M. (Sep 28, 2012) 'The Manguang battle cry: Economic Freedom in our Lifetime' <http://dailymaverick.co.za/article/2012-09-28-the-mangaung-battle-cry-economic-freedom-in-our-lifetime>

(Accessed 13th March, 2014)

Satgar, V. (Sep 07, 2012) 'Marikana marks rift in ANC ideology' <http://mg.co.za/article/2012-09-07-00-marikana-marks-rift-in-anc-ideology>

(Accessed 2nd August, 2014)

Hattingh, S. (Feb 19, 2013) 'Reaping what you sow: reflections on the Western Cape Farm workers Strike' <http://zabalaza.net/2013/02/09/reaping-what-you-sow-reflections-on-the-western-cape-farm-workers-strike/>

(Accessed 16th June, 2014)

Zizek, S. 'Against the Populist Temptation' <http://www.lacan.com/zizpopulism.htm>

(Accessed 17th February, 2014)

Other Sources

Corduwener, P. 'The Relationship between Populism and Liberal Democracy: Three New Insights' (Conference Paper), The Academic Association of Contemporary European Studies (UACES) 42nd Conference, September, 2012, pp. 1 – 23

Du Toit, D. *Is South Africa Experiencing a Populist Resurgence?* Honours Research Project, University of the Witwatersrand, 2012

The Daily Maverick

The Mail and Guardian

The Sunday Times

The Star

The Citizen

Party Documents: <http://effighters.org.za/election-manifesto/>

<http://www.cosatu.org.za/show.php?ID=6530>

Policy Documents: <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=2356>