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"The Populist Catharsis: On the Revival of the Political"

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The upsurge of populist movements and the entry of populist parties into parliaments and governments over the last decade has been condemned as being the cause of the sorry state of democratic politics in western societies. As populism erodes the liberal political culture of consensus-building through deliberation that achieves inclusive diversity, the verdict goes, it undercuts the very foundation of liberal democracies. Taking my distance from this diagnosis of our current predicament, I will argue that *populism is not the cause of the erosion of diversity capital, it is its outcome.* I will examine the hypothesis that populism is the symptom of a pathological state of the political in contemporary democracies. Focusing on the process of politicization of social grievances, I will offer a diagnosis of the state of the political in the early twenty-first century, in order to discern populism's capacity to reboot democratic politics.

1. The political in all its states

The recent populist upsurge that propelled to power a Donald Trump in the US or an Alexis Tsipras in Greece, has been celebrated or bemoaned, depending on the model of the political from the perspective of which the anti-establishment protest is being viewed. I draw on Claude Lefort's conceptualisation of the political as a sphere of society's symbolic representation of its unity to itself, a symbolic order of society's togetherness from which authority is sourced. [1] In modern society, Lefort observes, this order is destabilized and pluralized, which leads him to assert that modern democracy is being constituted by an empty space. While endorsing Lefort's conceptualization of the political, I take some distance from his particular diagnosis of the democratic form of the political as an empty space. In what follows, I will elaborate on some of the key features of the democratic state of the political which will serve as a matrix for a critique of the recent populist insurgency.

[1] I find James Ingram's rendition of Lefort's notion of the political to be particularly apt: "the political constitutes society's unity by projecting it onto a point of power, which he [Lefort] understands as a symbolic location" (Ingram, 2006:36).

Let us proceed from the observation that, in the context of modernity, the political is no longer given or inherited from the past, but actively generated. According to the accounts authors offer of the dynamics of this on-going production of the political, two broad schools of thought have taken shape. I will call them 'the orthodox' and 'the radical' perspectives.

Within the orthodox one, spanning from Plato through the social contract and the natural law traditions and emanating in the familiar academic interpretations and appropriations of John Rawls' work, authority is sourced from shared principles (such as human rights, or constitutional essentials) to be protected from politics. In Rawls' account, the locus of the political is a shared political conception of justice which is not derived from any particular worldviews (what he calls 'comprehensive doctrines' of the good life), nor is it a compromise among them. It is, instead, freestanding -- its content is set out independently of the comprehensive doctrines that citizens hold, and is sourced from the shared fundamental ideas implicit in the public political culture of society. Significantly, the shared political conception of justice is not generated through contestations and conflicts among the particular and particularistic worldviews. This conception can gain citizens' free and reasoned endorsement in judgment (Rawls 1993, 100–101), because they share the capacity of being reasonable. David Rasmussen reminds us, in discussing Rawls's account of the political, that public reason as the voice of the political "almost has its own claim to truth in the sense that if the comprehensive doctrines cannot abide by it they are labeled as unreasonable" (2012:461). Within the 'orthodox' perspective, the political is produced via dynamics of cooperation on these core principles and is ruled by the voice of the reasonable. The state is a seat of political intelligence, and politics is reduced "to a set of supposedly technical moves and neutral procedures" (Mouffe 2005, 34).

From this perspective on the political, the current populist mobilizations are an onslaught on the normative consensus underpinning the liberal constitutional order and with that – on the political itself. Members of these movements and their leaders are derided as lacking the intelligence to enact, nay, to know, the basic rules of reasonable political behavior – they are thus a 'basket of deplorables', as the aspiring leader of the free world put it during the 2016 U.S. presidential race.[2] Populism is feared for the enmity it brings; populists are denied validity as political actors because they are triggering divisiveness and resentment, tearing society apart.

The alternative, 'radical view' of the political is present in the writings of Niccolò Machiavelli, Karl Marx and Carl Schmitt and has found contemporary resurgence in the work of Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, and Slavoj Žižek. The political is the realm not of what is placed beyond disagreement, but exactly the opposite – it is the realm of that which is

[2] Democratic Party nominee Hillary Clinton used the phrase in a 2016 presidential election campaign fundraising event on 9 September 2016, referring to some supporters of her opponent, Republican Party nominee Donald Trump. Reported on BBC news on 10 Sept. 2016 (http://www.bbc.com/news/av/election-us-2016-37329812/clinton-half-of-trump-supporters-basket-of-deplorables; accessed on 11 Dec. 2017)

contested.[3] The adversarial nature of the production of the political, the clash of political identities, is its key feature. Conflict, not cooperation is its constitutive dynamic. This view celebrates at least some forms of populism as it sees them as a valuable catalyst in the resurrection of the political. As Ernesto Laclau has put it, "Populism is, quite simply, a way of constructing the political (2005: xi). Moreover, these insurrectory moments of conflict perpetuate the endless logic of challenge that keeps democracy alive. As Chantal Mouffe notes, "[a] pluralist liberal democratic society does not deny the existence of conflicts, but provides the institutions allowing them to be expressed in an adversarial form" (2005:30). It is noteworthy that even the most derided forms of recent populist mobilizations (those by the anti-immigrant far right) have used successfully the channels of electoral politics, which has allowed them to affect not only specific policies, but to influence the whole policy agenda in western democracies. Fear from losing the electoral competition to populist parties has effectively forced many center-left and center-right parties to absorb, and thereby mainstream, the anti-foreigner sentiment mobilized by right-wing populism. Anti-austerity protests across Europe are replacing the firm policy consensus on the inevitability of austerity politics for financial stabilization by a debate on the social costs and economic effectiveness of these policies. Thus, hosted by the institutional framework of liberal democracies, the radical voice of populism is having a real political purchase; it is effectively regenerating the dynamics of democratic politics.

Both the orthodox and the radical verdicts are in some ways right, but are also deficient in helping us understand the peculiarities of the recent populist insurrection. The radical democratic celebration of populism on grounds of its reviving the adversarial dynamics of the political obscures the illiberal, even totalitarian, instincts of the populist upsurge; the orthodox model overlooks that its own elitism is one of the triggers of populism.

We need a notion of the political that allows us to discern the emancipatory from the harmful features of the latest eruption of populism. In seeking to articulate such a notion, I propose we go back to the drawing board, and define the phenomenon we now label 'populism' via the peculiarity of its historical context – the capitalist democracies of the early twenty-first century.

2. Our century's uncommon populism

Three features mark the new populism – (1) its rise in the affluent last decade of the twentieth century, (2) the economic nature of its xenophobic bias, (3) its criticism of free and open markets and related calls for social protection; (4) the appeals it formulates for responsible and accountable rule. Let me address these four features in turn.

[3] Mouffe (2005:9) writes," [B]y 'the political' I mean the dimension of antagonism which I take to be constitutive of human societies, while by 'politics' I mean the set of practices and institutions through which an order is created, organizing human coexistence in the context of conflictuality provided by the political".

While the rise of populism is usually a consequence of economic malaise and political turmoil (as in Nazi Germany of the 1930s), the current wave of anti-immigrant and anti-establishment sentiment emerged in the 'roaring 1990s', in conditions of robust growth (except for Germany), rising living standards and low unemployment. It was particularly spread in affluent and egalitarian societies such as France, the Netherlands, Austria, Finland, and Switzerland. Thus, a first notable peculiarity is that anti-establishment attitudes were not triggered by the economic crises, *they preceded it*.

A second peculiarity of this new populism is that anti-immigrant attitudes, even if they were verbalized as hostility to 'other' (predominantly Muslim) *cultures*, were not driven exclusively by the political chauvinism and cultural arrogance that defined the post-WWII extreme right. In the standard version of xenophobia propagated by far-right parties in the course of the 20th century, hostility to foreigners was cast as a matter of protection of cultural and political sovereignty (national chauvinism). In contrast, the new xenophobia has a strongly economic component related to perceived threats to socio-economic wellbeing (job loss and pressures on the redistributive resources of the state) brought about by open borders. We might recall the protestations against the danger of the 'Polish Plumber' (a symbol of cheap labour coming from Central Europe) during the 2005 EU Constitutional referendum in France – a position voiced by political forces across the left-right divide in their opposition to further EU integration.

This brings us to the third characteristic of the new populism: even when expressed by nominally far-right formations, it contains a call for social protection. Telling in this regard is that well-established parties of the far right, such as the French *Front National*, and the Dutch *Partij voor de Vrijheid*, have abandoned their original endorsement of free markets and are now embracing social protectionism as well as trade protectionism – typically policies of the Left. This hostile stance to free and open markets is new for the far right and has been recorded only since the late 1990s.

These attitudes were sharpened by the 2007-2009 economic crisis, but were not generated by it. They emerged in the affluent 1990s – a decade of rapid liberalization of domestic markets and opening them to free trade. Governments across the left-right ideological spectrum pursued these policies as part of the neoliberal policy consensus that predicates economic prosperity on competitiveness in the global economy.[4] This coincided with the proliferation of corruption and mismanagement scandals allowing populist leaders (from Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands, to Jörg Haider in Austria and Jean-Marie Le Pen in France) to mobilize unprecedented support by alleging that the establishment was reaping the benefits of the growing prosperity yet leaving society in ruins. A common denominator of populist mobilisations in Europe is their anti-EU attitude, expressed in criticism of EU's

[4] The neoliberal policy package consists in deregulation of product and labour markets, privatisation of public assets and industries, and opening of domestic markets for trade and foreign investment, usually justified as a means to ensure the competitiveness of national economies, rather than, as in the paradigm of the Welfare State consensus – to enable economic growth and redistribution.

bureaucratic, unaccountable rule. Thus, the fourth feature of new populism comes into view – calls for accountable and democratic rule.

The anti-austerity protests that erupted at the aftermath of the 2007-2009 financial meltdown are indicative of the peculiar link, in the formation of new public attitudes, between popular anger against impoverishment, on one hand, and the rebuke of the political establishment, on the other. These were not protests of disappointed consumers, venting their frustration at elites sheltered from the public malaise. Surveys have registered that the indignation has to do not with austerity itself but rather with the *manner* in which it was imposed – not as a result of a cyclical economic crisis necessitating belt-tightening, but as a result of governments' bailing out of banks, while cutting down public spending (EU citizens' bore the cost of 4,3 trillion euro between 2008 and 2011 for the bank bailout). In this sense, the real grievance behind the anti-austerity protests is therefore not impoverishment, but unfairness in the distribution of economic and social benefits and losses in dealing with the economic crisis. This was a reaction not simply against the economic privileges of elites, but against a pattern of socially irresponsible rule (Azmanova 2013: 24-25), that is, rule in pursuit of sound economic objectives (i.e. stabilisation of public finances) without regard for the societal consequences of these economic policies.

Thus, since the close of the twentieth century, a wide-spread anxiety in affluent western societies emerged, based on perceptions that policies of open borders have brought in physical insecurity, political disorder, cultural estrangement, and employment insecurity due to employment flexibilization, job outsourcing, or loss of jobs to immigrants. These became the four ingredients of a new order-and-security public agenda that has dramatically reshaped the ideological landscape of liberal democracies. What has been mislabelled as 'populism' are in fact mobilisations around this new public agenda of social concerns. In this sense, the use of the term 'populism' is erroneous.

Let me offer further validation to this claim examining the anti-establishment mobilisations against core features of populism. Ernesto Laclau has noted the 'inanity of the whole exercise of trying to identify the universal contents of populism (2005:15); rather than a commitment to a set of values, ideological positions, and demands for policies, populism is a political logic of drawing an antagonistic frontier in the construction of a political subject. Thus, a distinctive feature of populism is its 'negative politics' (Max Weber) of hostile confrontation without a coherent programmatic stance and with no credible ambition to govern.[5] By all evidence, this is not the case with the far-right and radical-left formations of our times, which are expressing a distinct set of public demands related to the

[5] This purely reactive stance of populism is noted by most of (Judis 2016, Müller 2016). Weber (1994) uses the term to describe the limited functions of the pre-WWI Reichstag, noting it had adopted a reactive behaviour as it had powers only to block the government, rather than sharing in its work and in the control of the administration, thereby being "excluded from participating positively in political leadership", only "engaged in 'negative politics,' confronting the leaders of the administration like some hostile power" (ibid, at 165).

order-and-security agenda (from restrictive immigration policy to reforming trade agreements), and are persistently making their way into parliaments and governments. Rather than simply endorsing the negative politics of protest and confrontation with political elites, the new populism is a structured and enduring mobilisation of social forces against two features of the established order: (1) the style of policy-making-- technocratic rule bereft of political leadership and (2) its content – neoliberal global economic competition without regard for the social consequences of economic policy (what I described as 'socially irresponsible rule'). They typically formulate a policy agenda for accountable and democratic policy making (e.g. calls for restraining the power of corporations and the political establishment), revising trade agreements in view of protection of the national labour market, as well as curbing immigration (this last being a distinctive feature of right-wing populism). One does not need to endorse all of these policy positions to admit that they form a proper policy platform, surpassing the 'negative politics' of classical populism.

Although I find the term 'populism' misleading in describing these political mobilisations, this term has gained so much currency in identifying them as a collective object of analysis, that I find myself compelled to continue using it, with a slight alteration. Henceforth, I will refer to the phenomenon as 'new populism'.

3. New populism as a pathology of the political

I will proceed to investigate some peculiarities of new populism in order to distinguish between its emancipatory and its reactionary potentials. I noted that in the course of the last two decades, a new agenda of social sensibilities and public demands took shape. It might be useful to recall that electoral politics is a mechanism for meeting *public demands* for policy action addressed to the government, with *political supply* of policies offered by parties. At least this is how electoral politics in democracies is supposed to work – it allows publics to have input into policy, as well as policy-makers to inform and shape public attitudes. I will claim that this mechanism of meeting public demand with political supply has malfunctioned, initiating the original crisis of democracy to which new populism now gives but expression. From this perspective, I will argue, populism is a phenomenon of disarticulation of dynamics taking place on the level of social structure into the political field.[6] Let me address this in some detail.

As a result of the new public demands regarding the social effect of the neoliberal policy agenda, the ideological landscape of western democracies has changed. Throughout the twentieth century, the ideological map of capitalist democracies was configured along the left-right divide, itself determined by the clustering of preferences along a cultural and

[6] I am grateful to James Ingram for suggesting to me this formulation of my hypothesis during a meeting of the Radical Critical Theory Circle in Nisyros (Greece), in the summer of 2017

an economic axes. The economic one spanned from regulated economy to free market economy; the cultural -- from liberal to conservative values. Since the turn of the new century, a novel configuration has emerged. As ruling elites across the ideological spectrum came to embrace free markets, the relevant economic divide concerns market *openness* and spans from open to closed domestic markets, rather than from free to regulated economies. The cultural axis of ideological divisions has also changed – it pits cosmopolitanism against sovereigntism/patriotism, which obliterates the liberal-vs- conservative divide along which the culture wars of the preceding two centuries took place. Consequently, the left-right cleavage that had structured the ideological landscape of modern societies since the French revolution is being replaced by a new one: public preferences for cosmopolitanism and international economic integration are clustering around a new pole (which I have named an Opportunity pole), pitted against preferences for cultural and economic protection (a Risk pole). These new clustering of public preferences along an opportunity-risk divide determined by attitudes to the new economy of open borders and technological innovation began to take shape already at the close of the last century (Azmanova 2004, 2010, 2011).

How has political supply responded to the new set of public demands? In the period spanning the last two decades of the twentieth century to this day, the decisional power has been held by the Opportunity pole – an alliance of forces (center-left and center-right political elites and opinion-makers) that enforced the neoliberal policy consensus, united around the infamous TINA policy logic.[7] Since this policy was deemed to be without alternative and therefore not a matter of ideological contestation, it could be enforced through purportedly apolitical technocratic measures, and by a political class of professional administrators trained in elite schools. This was meant to be a meritocracy – the best educated and capable govern, equipped by a science of politics – an unchallengeable governing know-how. However, this rule came to be experienced as an elitist method of population management without political leadership – rule that has lost touch with citizens' interests and demands. Michael Young, the British sociologist who coined the term meritocracy in a 1958 satirical novel, described the meritocratic society as a world of arrogant winners and desperate losers (Young 1958).[8]

These dynamics have had a peculiar impact on the political. Under the TINA policy regime, the space of the political was not filled with the symbolism of magnanimous political engineering of a bright future, as was the case under the bureaucratic 'socialism' of East and Central Europe after WWII. Neither did the *technê* of expert rule, untainted by left-right ideological battles, suffocate the political, as the 'post-politics' hypothesis postulates. As Nancy Fraser (2017a) has reminded us, the neoliberal era of the past three decades was marked by the rise of new social movements (feminism, anti-racism, multiculturalism and

[7] 'TINA' is an acronym for There Is No Alternative – a policy stance Margaret Thatcher launched in the 1980, meaning that there could not be a challenge to the combination of free and open markets – a formula which launched globalisation on the policy terms of neoliberal capitalism.

[8] Significantly, Tony Blair, former British Labour Prime Minister, proudly endorsed the term, without having read the book, one should hope.

LGBTQ rights), which allows Fraser to speak of 'progressive neoliberalism'. These mobilisations were far from insignificant in their scope and in their policy impact.

However, I contend that the *space* of political contestation has shrunk, as experiences of suffering resulting from the economic policy consensus were depoliticised. Since economic liberalisation and market integration were deemed to be without alternative, the social fallout from these policies could not become an object of politics and therefore became politically unthinkable. In other words, grievances of suffered injustice from policies of global market competition had no place in the sphere of concerns that could be addressed in the political public sphere, that is, via a set of policies. As the social consequences of neoliberal economic policy could not be a valid object of political contestation, the sphere of the political as a realm of politically significant shared concerns contracted.

Moreover, social critique and progressive politics in the neoliberal era became complicit in this shrinking of the space of the political. Political contestation took place almost exclusively in terms of demands for *access* to the system of democratic capitalism (e.g. labour market entry for women and ethnic minorities, political inclusion and activation of the poor, opening the marriage contract to non-heterosexual couples) and *equality* within that system (e.g. closing the gender gap in remuneration, granting proper recognition to ethnic, racial and other minorities). In a word – the grand cause of the Left under neoliberalism was that of doing away with the unequal distribution of power in society, what I have elsewhere described as 'relational' injustice (resulting from the domination of one group over another by force of the former having greater material or symbolic resources in comparison to the latter (Azmanova 2012: 48, 144). Missing, in this prevailing perspective of progressive politics, is critique and criticism of the operational dynamics of capitalism – the competitive production of profit that became unfettered and further intensified in the neoliberal era. These dynamics of capitalism produced systemic forms of injustice and domination such as the increasing precariousness of livelihoods across the class divide. These injustices, however, dropped out of the remit of intellectual notice.[9] Both in terms of political mobilization and intellectual critique, the Left struggled for equality and inclusion within the system of social relations, but failed to question and challenge the system into which entry was requested and within which equality was sought. From a different perspective, Nancy Fraser (2017a; 2017b) has observed the formation of a neoliberal ideological hegemony on the basis of a broad-based consent (in Gramscian terms) on a liberal, cosmopolitan ethos, in turn effecting a shift from concerns with equality to concerns with meritocracy.

[9] I first discussed these two forms of injustice within the dichotomy relational-vs-structural forms of domination (Azmanova 2012); upon Nancy Fraser's suggestion, I later relabelled 'structural' as 'systemic' (Azmanova, 2014), and have more recently adopted a triad of concepts: 'relational, structural and systemic' forms of injustice and domination (Azmanova 2016).

As a result of this, it became impossible to politicize those grievances of the Risk pole that were related to the social impact of neoliberal economic policy (i.e. the dynamics of competitive profit production). These people became effectively disenfranchised: they did not have a voice, even as they did have a vote –this vote could not be cast against something that was not on the political agenda set by center-left and center-right incumbents. Moreover, the ruling elites denied the forces mobilizing around the Risk pole validity as political actors – they were dismissed as 'populists', their demands were deemed implausible, their leaders were disparaged as ignorant and uncivilised. The hubris of the liberal elite, and the hostile posture it has taken against its nemesis (the forces of the Risk pole), is well illustrated by the gesture of center-left parties in Europe to claim for themselves the label 'progressive forces', implying that their political rival is the regressive and retrograde force (note that neither the left-right divide, nor the radicalism-conservatism one attributes to the adversary such a denigrating connotation).

This indicates that peculiar dynamics of political animosity are currently at play. Throughout the history of populism, politics of rejection and blocking ('negative politics' in Weber's terms) has been initiated by the diverse masses united in their anger against political elites, usually in times of economic crisis. In our times of 'new populism', it is the diverse elites that have united in their disdain for those voters who seem to be impervious to the political common sense of neoliberal politics – an attitude that emerged at least a decade before the great recession of 2007-2009 set it. Per Jan-Werner Müller's (2016) widely used analysis, populism is marked by three features: it is critical of elites, it is anti-pluralist and has a moral claim of representation (that is, to represent 'the people').[10] However, in the neoliberal context these characteristics are also shared by the ruling class: it is critical of the masses (e.g. Trump voters, as well as those who supported Brexit, are usually described as either ignorant or gullible), it is anti-pluralist (center-right and center-left elites share similar upbringing, worldviews and positions on economic policy), and has a moral claim of representing all society's representable sections (that is, all except the populists).[11] These elites' derogative use of the notion 'populism' is a summary illustration of the reverse logics of negative politics that marks our century.

In clarifying this point, it might be helpful to recall that the notion 'populism' in the current usage of the term has the nature of what Reinhart Koselleck has called an 'asymmetrical counter-concept' (or 'unequally antithetical'): a concept that expresses an inequality in the distribution of power, a social asymmetry: e.g. Hellenes' vs. 'Barbarians', 'Christians' vs. 'Pagans', the enlightened publics vs. the basket of deplorables. The most important characteristic of asymmetrical counter-concepts is that "one's own position is

[10] In an significant derogation from this definition, the supporters of Donald Trump in the US are not critical of elites, but of the establishment (i.e. ruling elites); they are infatuated by Trump exactly as a figure of the business elite. I am grateful to Angelina Ilieva for prompting me to make this important clarification.

[11] Symptomatic of this is the refusal of center-left and center-right parties in Europe to form coalitions with far-right and radical-left formations, which contrasts with the willingness for left-right co-habitation in governments ever since the rise of 'grand coalitions' after WWII.

readily defined by criteria which make it possible for the resulting counter-position to be only negated" (Koselleck 2004: 159). Indeed, with the negative label 'populism', the self-defined 'progressive' forces uniting around the Opportunity pole effectively deny those mobilizing around the Risk pole the reciprocity of mutual recognition. This means that the diversity capital of liberal democracies was dramatically diminished much before the recent upsurge of populist mobilizations; it was eroded in the course of the three decades of trans-ideological consensus in pursuit of global competitiveness.

When breaking the silence on the negative social effect of neoliberal politics, the recent populist eruption enlarges the sphere of the 'politically thinkable'. Thus, the populist gesture is above all an invocation of the Right to Politics – the right to matter politically, to have one's experience of social injustice count as a public concern and therefore to merit policy action.[12] In this gesture, the populist upheaval, be it inadvertently, is pulling democracy out of its state of crisis by striking at the hubris of policy-making as political *technê*. This is a moment of catharsis, of a release of supressed grievances; eventually, this enlarging of the scope of the political and its re-energising through novel ideological conflicts could trigger a democratic revival – under specific conditions which I address a bit later. Before I turn to the conditions enabling such a revival (that is, of a shift from catharsis to constructive transformation), let me revisit the issue of the democratic state of the political.

My narrative on the mobilization of the Risk pole of the new ideological divide already deploys a third model of the political – one that is alternative to both the 'orthodox' one based on consensus shielded from politics, as well as the radical one based on adversarial combat. Within this third model, the political emerges as a sphere of shared concerns with injustice (rather than a shared conception of justice) that is permanently generated via a *contestation* of the existing binding rules and norms. From the radical take on the political I retain the idea of contestation, but propose to direct the practice of contestation against *rules* generating and sustaining injustice, rather than against social or political *actors* (individuals, parties, foreign peoples and states). This is a *contestatory*, but

[12] I derive the notion of the 'right to politics' from engagement with Seyla Benhabib's concept of 'right to democracy', in order to stress the importance for grievances, voiced in the course of social mobilisation and political participation, to have a political purchase, to matter politically (Azmanova 2016). This take on the right to politics is different from Etienne Balibar's understanding of it, developed in *Equaliberty*. He derives it from Arendt's 'right to have rights' in order to highlight the need for inclusion in a political community as an active subject of politics. While the two understandings of the notion have many affinities (regarding the concern with agency), my stress is on the conditions for effective politicisation of social grievances, once a person (a group) is provided access to and inclusion within a community. The 'right to politics' is a conceptual devise to counteract the *technê* of policy-making.

not an *adversarial* state of the political. In the process of on-going contestation of the established normative order, a shared societal understanding emerges of what *counts* as a valid concern with injustice, even if no positive idea of justice is attained. This allows for experiences of social injustice (e.g. related to job outsourcing and robotization) to be recognized not simply as having moral validity, but also to acquire urgent political saliency – to compel not just compassion, but also policy action.

How does the current populist upsurge look from the perspective of this understanding of the proper democratic state of the political? As I noted, the grievances articulated around the Risk pole of ideological alignment, grievances related to the social consequences of neoliberal economic policy (impoverishment and precariousness), had been for some time politically silenced – they had been refused saliency as proper political concerns. Because the TINA policy consensus does not admit of an alternative economic policy, it renders the social outcomes of this policy politically irrelevant, even if they have intense validity in terms of personal experiences of suffered harm. In other words the state of the political under the reign of TINA did not allow for morally valid grievances to be politicized into an object of policy action. This means that what has been labelled 'populism' is a result of the disarticulation of that which happens on the level of social structure into the political field.

From this perspective, the populist eruption is a call for adjustment, for proper articulation of social experiences of suffered injustice into politically valid claims to justice. The outcries of the new populism surely create a crisis of the established system; by demanding an alternative to the TINA logic, they reveal the contingent nature of the neoliberal consensus. These outcries do even more: they enlarge the realm of the political by validating a new set of grievance – ones related to neoliberal globalisation -- as politically relevant. In this sense, the populist eruption serves as a catalyst for the democratization of the political.

The adjustment (political articulation) for which populism calls can take place along two trajectories. These trajectories are shaped by the manner in which political supply reacts to public demand, or put differently – the way the political leadership frames both the reasons for the grievances and the range of policy solutions. One trajectory is a radical change in the nature of economic policy away from the neoliberal consensus of privatization of public assets and deregulation of product- and labor- markets (as in the policy platforms advanced by Bernie Sanders in the U.S., Jeremy Corbyn in the U.K. and Jean-Luc Mélenchon in France. This would effectively address the structural sources of the populist discontent. The alternative trajectory is that of short-term crisis management such as curbing immigration and hampering globalization. This, however, is the road of political mis-articulation of the grievances into policy answers which do not provide effective solutions to the structural causes of the grievances of the Risk pole. However, these solutions sounds more plausible (and thus recruit more easily popular support) because they do not necessitate a radical break with the neoliberal order. As significantly altering the course of economic policy continues to be considered politically unthinkable, claims to policy action take the shape of demands for a feasible alternative: territorial closure enacted via

economic, social and cultural nationalism: “We will follow two simple rules: buy American and hire Americans”, “British jobs for British workers”.[13] This criticism of the *global turn* of capitalism detracts from the injustices produced by the very systemic dynamics of capitalism.

In this scenario, the crisis is perpetuated into a ‘crisis of crisis’ – the leading political actors institutionalize the crisis by means of short term fixes of the system – e.g. shutting out asylum seekers, or building a Globalisation Fund, as the EU has done, which provides short-term financial respite to workers who have lost their jobs to global markets. The positive potential of the populist challenge is thus wasted; the catharsis does not ensue democratic reconstruction.

In this situation, the political seems to be brought back to life, as the technocratic political peace has given way to new ideological conflicts. However, these very conflicts are an expression of the pathological state of the political. “Ni Patrie Ni patron, on vaut miex que ca” (“Neither the Fatherland, nor the Boss, we deserve better than that”), proclaimed the French high school students in their protests during the second round of the French presidential elections in 2017 that pitted the nationalist Marie Le Pen against the economically liberal globalist Emanuel Macron. We should hear them. Technocratic policy-making is being indeed challenged by the revival of political conflict. Yet the return of adversarial combat is neither a guarantee that democracy has recovered its health nor that TINA is dead. The warfare between histrionic patriotism and cool neoliberalism now unfolding on the political stage of western democracies is not a resurrection of the political into a democratic condition; these new ideological conflicts do not take place on a plane of shared concerns with injustice to which rival ideologies offer solutions competing for public endorsement. The Risk and Opportunity poles might demarcate the space of national politics, yet their supporters do not inhabit the same social space. They have therefore nothing to say to each other.

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