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RESEARCH ARTICLE

SETTING THE SCENE: FILLING THE GAPS IN POPULISM STUDIES

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ABSTRACT: This article introduces the conceptual and analytical framework for the special issue, which explores the cultural side of populism: the relationships between politics, emotions, music, and subcultures in populist contexts. We highlight the role that cultural and symbolic 'products' (such as music, emotions, narratives, and visual symbols) play in the emergence and spread of populism. First, we explore the opportunities afforded by understanding the concept of populism from a cultural/symbolic point of view, reaching beyond the traditional party politics literature to which it is usually confined. Second, we suggest different ways in which populism has been articulated in various European countries (e.g. popular cultures, subcultures) since the economic crisis of 2008, emphasizing music, narratives, visuals, and emotions as means of the populist symbolic construction of the political and social reality. Third, from a social movement perspective, we reflect on the mechanisms (cognitive, emotional, normative) that may help understanding the current populist 'momentum', as well as on the methods to empirically grasp them.

KEYWORDS: Varieties of populism, socio-cultural approach to populism, cultural and symbolic construction of populism, emotions and populism, music and populism

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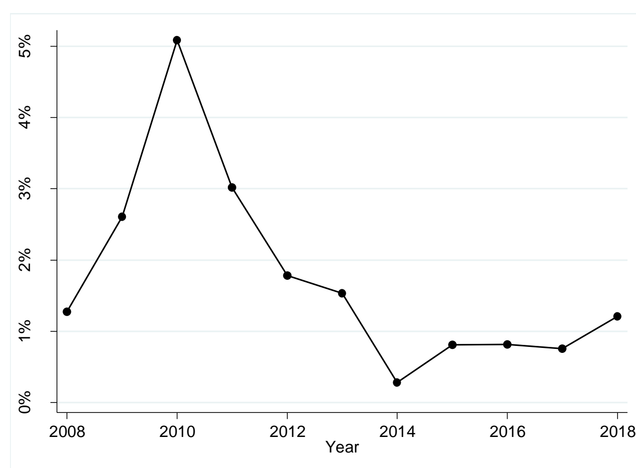
1. Introduction

This article introduces the conceptual and analytical framework for this special issue on the cultural side of populism, or the links between politics, emotions, cultural repertoires (including music and visuals) and subcultures in populist times. We highlight the roles that cultural and symbolic elements, including a socio-cultural conceptualization of populism, play in the emergence and diffusion of populist appeal. Europe has witnessed an explosion of populist movements and parties especially since the economic crisis of 2008 (Zulianello 2020). Furthermore, their electoral success has increased the relevance of the topic, illustrated by a renewal of intense scholarly attention (Rooduijn 2019) (see Fig.1).

Figure 1 - Percentage of academic books or articles on "populism" and "culture" as a percentage of the total number of publications on populism (2008-2018).



Source: our elaboration based on Google Scholar.

Currently, 66 populist parties across the political spectrum exist in 30 European countries, challenging mainstream parties and changing the usual shape of many European party systems (Caiani and Graziano 2019) (Table 1). Beyond Europe, the current 'populist family' includes Trump in the US, Bolsonaro in Brazil, Kast in Chile, the current Argentine presidential ticket Fernández-Fernández, the Mexican president López Obrador, as well as Modi in India, and the former Thai prime minister Shinawatra, among others.

Table 1 – Populist parties in Europe by year of foundation

	Left-wing Populisms	*Right-wing Populisms*	*Total*
Before 1994	1	22	23
1995-2008	3	26	29
2008-2017	6	7	13
All parties	10	55	65

Source: Caiani and Graziano 2019 (30 countries: All EU countries, plus the United Kingdom, Norway and Switzerland).

Two decades ago populism was considered a marginal force, attracting the votes of only 7% of Europeans; currently (i.e. in the last national elections) about 25% of European citizens voted for populist parties or leaders. Populist parties have more than tripled their support in Europe since the end of the 1990s, securing sufficient votes to put their leaders into governmental positions in nine countries. In January 2019, populist parties were in government on their own or as part of coalition governments in Austria, Finland, Italy, Greece, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Poland, and provided external support to the government in Spain.

Populism has also become an increasingly diversified phenomenon in Europe with the emergence and consolidation of left-wing populist parties (traditionally a Latin American characteristic) –Syriza, Podemos, La France Insoumise, and Zivi Zid, for example –in addition to their right-wing counterparts (more typical for the continent).

The 2014 (and 2019, to an extent) European elections clearly displayed the advance of the populist radical right across Europe: about 6.8% of Europeans voted for radical right populist parties, awarding Eurosceptic populist forces 51 members of Parliament (Mudde 2016) in the context of low voter turnout, an East-West divide, and a challenging economic situation.

Therefore, the explosion in populism studies is justified, but most scholarly work has concentrated thus far on how structural, political, immigration-related, or economic factors explain the success of the phenomenon, neglecting relevant cultural dimensions (Dunkel et al. 2018)[1]. The economic and financial crisis of 2008, coupled with the 2015

[1] This special issue is related to a broader comparative project, including Italy, Austria, Hungary, Sweden and Germany, led by Professor Mario Dunkel, at the University of Oldenburg, on “Popular Music and the Rise of Populism in Europe” (Volkswagenstiftung n. of project Ref.: 94 754-1, PI University of Oldenburg, School of Linguistics and Cultural Studies, Institute for Music). The partners are: the University of Oldenburg (Mario Dunkel and Anna Schwenck); the University of Music and Performing Arts at Graz (André Doehring and Kai Ginkel); the University of Groningen (Melanie Schiller); the Scuola Normale Superiore (Manuela Caiani and Enrico Padoan); the Budapest University of Technology and Economics (Emília Barna and Ágnes Patakfalvi-Czirják).

refugee crisis, certainly provided a specific 'window of opportunity' for the emergence (or re-emergence) of populist political actors in Europe, who capitalized on citizens' discontent (Kriesi and Pappas 2015). Furthermore, these two crises acted as catalysts of a more profound political crisis of legitimacy that had earlier origins. Underlying political turmoil, such as increasing distrust of political institutions and parties and the redefinition of Western political and party systems offered fertile ground for the consolidation of many European populist parties (Mair 2013; Hernández and Kriesi 2015). Without denying the importance of these political, economic, and migration factors (Inglehart and Norris 2016) to understanding the phenomenon (for an overview, see Caiani and Graziano 2019), we argue that 'popular cultures' play a role in the formation, reproduction, and increasing diffusion of populist messages (Dunkel et al. 2018). Popular cultures, including "soap operas, pop music, and comics", can be understood as "distinctive way of life", "signifying practices" (Storey 2006, 2). Therefore, cultural and symbolic aspects (such as narratives, emotions, visual elements, and music) should be considered to better understand the emergence, success, and developments of various populisms in European democracies and beyond. The function that *music*, in particular, can play in the increasing success of populist movements appears a matter worth exploring, since music is everywhere in daily life (DeNora 2000) and is one of the most important European cultural 'products' (Dunkel et al. 2018).

This special issue aims to understand the concept of populism from a cultural/symbolic standpoint and reflect on its conceptual 'usability' beyond the traditional political parties and party politics literature to which it is usually related. This is particularly relevant since 'old and new political parties have been labelled as populist, but may be perceived very differently in terms of both their electoral appeal and political trajectories' (Caiani and Graziano 2019, 1142). Although research on populism has mainly focused on (predominantly radical right) political parties -- and often on the most successful ones, 'leaving aside highly important developments within non-party organizations and subcultures' (Mudde 2007, 5) -- *empirically*, this special issue includes, instead, non-party organizations and fringe radical groups, from both the right and the left.

This introduction aims to theoretically clarify different ways in which populism has been articulated in various European countries (and beyond) since the economic crisis. To be sure, the crises have acted as external shocks to many party systems, either giving birth to new political parties or consolidating pre-existing ones; however, we start from the assumption that these changes can only be supported by a culturally/symbolically favourable milieu that is constructed, communicated, and reproduced. Music, narratives, emotions, subcultures and visual elements are interpreted here as the means of this reproduction and symbolic construction (i.e. a situation of crisis, Moffitt, 2015) of

the political and social reality, which can help the populist message spread widely (Dunkel et al. 2018). In general we argue that to understand the reasons behind the electoral success of populist parties, it is essential to understand which 'mechanisms' led voters to increasingly reward these parties (Graziano 2018, 15).

Finally, from a social movement perspective, we investigate the connections between populism and the political and cultural specificities of national contexts, which may determine the development, trajectories, and fortunes of different populisms. In this sense, we emphasize the agency of populist actors and the importance of their symbolic construction of social and political reality. Indeed, populism's and populists' successes are often produced and reproduced though symbolic constructs by organizational leadership, which provides the necessary background within which individual activists can locate their actions (Gamson 1988; Snow and Benford 1988). As is the case for any collective actor, populist organizations have to mobilise individuals, providing members and potential followers with rationales for participation and support. In order to convince individuals to act, 'frames' and cognitive schemes must generalize a certain problem, showing the connections with other events or with the condition of other social groups; and also demonstrate the relevance of a given problem to individual life experiences. Along with the critique of dominant representations of order and of social patterns, interpretative frames and (emergent) symbols must therefore produce new definitions of the foundations of collective solidarity, to transform actors' identity in a way which favours action (see also Caiani and della Porta 2011). In doing so, cultural products, such as music, may allow for the definition of the self and the opponents (Tilly 2003), addressing what are usually considered the non-rational aspects of politics. This is what this introduction and the special issue explore.

2. Populism/populisms: causes, definition, and the cultural dimension

The Causes

The recent rise of populism in Europe has been associated with political (e.g. Mair 2013), economic (e.g. Roberts 2017) and migration (e.g. Inglehart and Norris 2016) crises. These explanations have stressed the negative consequences of economic globalization, in terms of the mobilization of the 'losers', as well as ethnic competition (Rydgren, 2005), political discontent toward liberal democracies that have emphasized constitutional counterweights over electoral accountability (Mény and Surel 2002), and also a mix of modernization crisis, insecurity and authoritarian legacy (Mudde 2007).

While grievances can, of course, bolster populism, in this special issue we place more emphasis on the capacity of collective actors, such as populist organizations, to adapt and 'to take advantage of the available opportunities' (Rydgren 2003, 49), namely contextual resources (as well as constraints) – constructing, modifying and reproducing them.

In fact, the empirical link between the objective 'critical' situations of a country (such as poverty or immigration waves) and the success of populism has found only partial and selective confirmation. For example, some studies have found that voters' preferences for populist parties have little to do with their objective economic situation (Mols and Jetten 2016). Similarly, Vadlammanati and Kelly (2017, 30) use panel data from 27 OECD countries from 1990 to 2014 and find "no direct effect of refugee flows in explaining electoral support for populist-right parties". While the relationship between a crisis of political legitimacy and the rise of populism is stronger and more widely accepted in academic debates (see Graziano 2018), the causal mechanisms for transforming political disaffection into votes for populist parties nevertheless remains less clear. The literature on party-voter linkages, for example, suffers from a 'programmatic bias' (i.e., a tendency to look at concrete party programmatic proposals as the main drivers of voting choices), thereby neglecting other possible linkages and vehicles, including *cultural, symbolic, emotional* and even *ludic/musical* forms of creation and reproduction of affective bonds with voters.

We can categorize the abundant literature on populism into those studies focusing on the *definition* of populism and those looking at the *causes* explaining its rise, diffusion, and consolidation. In the next sections, we will briefly discuss why, in our view, disregarding emotions and culture, including music, in either the definition or the causes of populism may obscure the phenomenon.

Definition

There is still no agreed-upon definition of 'populism', though some common features include people-centrism, anti-elitism, and charismatic leadership (Stavrakakis 2017). Populism has been variously defined as: a "thin ideology" (Mudde 2004; Stanley 2008) that pits "'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite' and which argues that politics should be an expression of general will of the people" (Mudde 2004); a political discourse using a specific rhetoric (e,g., Hawkins 2009; Aslanidis 2016); a political strategy based on a form of organization characterized by strong and personalistic leadership (e.g., Weyland 2001); or, finally, a political logic articulating various demands through "empty signifiers" in order to create antagonism between "the People", embodied by a leader,

and "institutions" (Laclau 2005). These definitions have been the basis for the empirical delimitation of the phenomenon and consequently research in recent decades, influencing measures, indicators, and approaches (Caiani 2020).

None of these definitions refers explicitly to any kind of emotional or cultural constitutive features of populism, although many authors do deal indirectly with them in their work. Betz (1994, 4), by defining populism as a political "rhetoric" marked by the "unscrupulous use and instrumentalization of diffuse public sentiments of anxiety and disenchantment", suggests at least two connections between populism and emotion: First, populism is about the politicization of "diffuse public sentiments", and populist leaders exploit and fuel such sentiments. Second, the normativity of this definition may inspire negative emotions in the reader (and betrays the author's negative orientation toward populist phenomena). Populism is almost equated to demagoguery: populist leaders are "unscrupulous" because they are calculated and irresponsible regarding the consequences of their "instrumentalization". Populism tends to trigger reactive and counter-reactive emotions, including within the academic community that studies it, as illustrated by the normatively loaded definitions and perspectives (populism as 'bad' or 'good' for democracy). For instance, Ostiguy (2019) argues that Laclau's approach (2005) tends to equate *populism* with *politics* and to portray the latter in a normatively positive light, in contrast to scholars who follow the 'ideological' approach to populist phenomena (e.g., Mudde 2004; Stanley 2008), or those who focus on the (detrimental) consequences of the latter for liberal democratic institutions (e.g., Weyland 2001; Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018). Other perspectives, such as seminal Latin American works on the rise of populisms during the 1950s (Germani 1965; Cardoso and Faletto 1969), or scholars who define populism as a "political style" (Moffitt 2016; Ostiguy 2018), probably offer more balanced normative evaluations.

As Ostiguy (2018, 75) defines it in his 'socio-cultural approach', populism is an "affectual narrative […], it is the antagonistic appropriation for political, mobilizational purposes of an 'unpresentable Other', itself historically created in the process of a specific 'proper' civilizational project". Populist leaders thus establish an emotional connection with their 'People' through the politicization of social-cultural markers like those emphasized by Bourdieu. Populist leaders claim to represent an *authentic* People. This authenticity however is socially and politically constructed, albeit relying on concrete raw materials, and it include ways of interpreting the social reality, such as the Gramscian *folklore*, but also tastes, aesthetics, and even cultural production. A socio-cultural approach to populism may therefore highlight some mechanisms which link the leaders' message to the peoples' (i.e. voters') support: i Populist leaders exalt and exploit folkloristic aspects in order to appear reliabile and trustworthy to their People. The latter feel

"reassured" because their leader is someone who really understands and cares for them, because he is like them.

According to Gramsci, folklore is a "conception of the whole world and of the life", which is "implicit within certain social strata, in contraposition (again, implicitly, even mechanically) to the official *Weltanschauung*" (Gramsci 1975, 2311). Gramsci also sometimes uses *folklore* to refer to the concept of *popular culture*, although "culture" in Gramscian terms must be understood neither in anthropological sense (as a "whole and distinctive way of life": e.g. Williams 1981; Barker 2001), nor (exclusively) in terms of cultural representations and productions, including music. Folklore or popular culture, like all "cultures" in the Gramscian sense, are not "distinctive", but rather in constant transformation (Crehan 2011). Crucially, they are not systematic, particularly in their "popular" form, because "by definition, the people (the sum total of the instrumental and subaltern classes of every form of society that has so far existed) cannot possess conceptions which are elaborated, systematic and politically organized" (Gramsci 1985, 189). Gramsci, as an intellectual and political activist and leader, does not advocate any "populist" project, stressing instead the contradictory characteristics of folklore, which may include both progressive and reactionary aspects.[2]

Two further points are germane to the current debate on populism: First, folklore, popular culture, and those raw materials exploited by populist entrepreneurs for political purposes, are not coherent because they are *ad hoc* and unsystematic – even naive – reactions to the official culture imposed by the hegemonic classes. They are thus a space of instinctive resistance against the forms in which social domination expresses itself. In this, folklore, popular culture, or 'raw material' seem to stand one step causally before the emergence of "unsatisfied demands", which, in Laclau's thinking (2005), populist logic articulates to challenge dominant institutions. Second, in order for Gramsci's intellectuals to transform popular incoherence into a coherent project, they must *feel* the "raw oppression" of the subordinated:

> [I]f the relationship between intellectuals and people-nation, between the leaders and the led, the rulers and the ruled, is provided by an organic cohesion in which feeling-passion becomes understanding and thence knowledge (not mechanically but in a way that is alive), then and only then is the relationship one of representation
> (quoted from Crehan 2011, 276).

[2] In fact, Gramsci often stressed the "folkloristic" aspects of fascism.

On the one hand, the *cognitive effects of emotions* are stressed ("passion becomes understanding and thence knowledge") (see Section 3). On the other hand, this sentence reinforces the position of authors (e.g. Ostiguy 2018) who consider the "passionate" relationship between 'the People' and a 'leader' to be a *constitutive*, *definitional* feature of populism.

"Ideological" and "minimal" definitions of populism (e.g. Mudde 2007) have some virtues, mostly related to their operationalization of the concept for empirical research. However, they run the risk of equating populism with an instrumental manipulation of the masses. This is quite a common normative view on populism amongst scholars (Stavrakakis 2018), although it can be applied to many projects that seek electoral consensus in representative democracies. Furthermore, "minimal" definitions, because they rely on very broad minimum requisites, may lead to the inclusion of "misleading positives" (i.e, to consider "populist" someone who is evidently very far from being it: Ostiguy 2018, 91). Instead, socio-culturally oriented approaches to populist phenomena contribute to "filling out" the meaning of the concept and avoiding conceptual stretching.

Varieties of Populism

An emerging academic debate recognizes the importance of 'varieties of populism' for understanding different causes behind the phenomenon and effects on citizens' political behaviour and values (Caiani 2019; Ivaldi, Lanzone and Woods, 2017; Mudde 2016; Pappas 2016). Differentiation occurs along the ideological components of these parties (i.e. left wing or right wing) attached to the 'thin' populist ideology. Whereas left-wing populisms identify the 'people' in socio-economic terms, such as the working class exploited by the bourgeois elite, right-wing populisms refer to the ethnic nation. Right-wing populist parties tend to mobilise along ethno-nationalistic issues, while left-wing populist parties generally mobilise along the economic/inequality cleavage (Rodrik 2018).

More recently, comparative studies have drawn a distinction between inclusionary and exclusionary populism (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2013), which partly overlaps with the more traditional categorization based on the three dimensions of material, political, and symbolic. A populist group is inclusionary or exclusionary based on the distribution of resources among social groups, the appeal to forms of political mobilisation that go beyond representative democratic channels, and the boundaries of the notion of 'people'(Font et al. 2019). However, the boundaries between these two types of populisms (i.e. left wing and right wing) are rarely clear in reality (Rooduijn and Akkerman 2017), and 'hybrid types' of populism and difficulties in conceptualization abound

(Zulianello 2020). Populism is thus a "chameleonic" category (Taggart 2000), since it appears in different ideological forms.

From a socio-cultural perspective, the differences between left-wing and right-wing populisms would derive instead from the kind of "pieces of popular culture" that are selected and 'owned' by populist projects, suggesting a key to understanding the phenomenon at stake. "Popular culture" or *folklore* is often the basis of the populist discursive toolbox, as well as "pieces of knowledge" that influence cognitive processes for developing political opinions; however, the components may be (both collectively and individually) internally contradictory. Populism is intrinsically ambiguous because the populist leader, instead of attaching populism to thicker ideologies (Mudde 2004), picks up unsystematic and contradictory sets of conceptions. Thus, instead of integrating elements within folklore into systematic and coherent discourses and policy proposals (i.e., an "ideology", like Gramsci's Marxist intellectuals), populist leaders merely select single "pieces of the popular culture" and juxtapose and then add them to their anti-establishment discourse.

Thus, each populist phenomenon, taken individually, may be "chameleonic" and depends upon timing and the leader's inflection. We also argue that the stronger the emotional bond between the leader and her People, the greater the leader's the room of manoeuvre for increasing and maintaining deeper contradictions within her political discourse; the emotional investment of the People is higher. Indeed, what is the concept of "party identification" or "party loyalty" other than "affective orientation to an important group object" (Barbalet 2006, 37)? Populist leaders, then, act in perennial equilibrium between two opposing tendencies: they must avoid excessive contradictions (see Laclau 2005), and thus exclude from their discursive practices some pieces of popular culture, often by dismissing them as covert pieces of the official culture. At the same time, an excessive coherence would lead them to act as Gramscian intellectuals. In this latter situation, populist leaders would develop their own ideology. Populism cannot be read as an "ideology"; instead, it is the *negation of ideological politics*. Caruso (this volume) points precisely at the transition of Podemos from a populist party to a leftist party, something that is clearly visible in its cultural references.

3. Populism and emotions

Most of the academic research on the determinants of populism's success deals with the concept of "crisis". Research emphasizing the so-called GAL-TAN dimension (Hausermann and Kriesi 2015), focuses mainly on the refugee crisis as facilitating the rise of right-

wing populist parties; other research tends to reflect on the causes of the phenomenon in terms of “demand-side” and “supply-side” explanations (e.g. Van der Brug and Fennema 2007; Muis and Immerzel 2017). “Populist demand” comes from voters, as indicated by political attitudes or socio-structural factors (Akkerman et al. 2014; Rooduijn 2017); external or interna” factors can supply populism, ranging from party system dynamics like programmatic de-polarization, the institutional framework, the “tabloidization” of mass media, to the platforms of populist parties, their programmatic proposals, and their organizational resources (Heinisch and Mazzoleni 2016; della Porta, Andretta, Fernandes, O’Connor, Romanos, Vogiatzoglou 2017).

Attending to the role of emotions (in politics and populism, see Marcus 2000; Arian-Maldonado 2017) and culture (symbolic, discursive, musical) would enrich the understanding of the determinants and mechanisms of populist success. Moffitt (2015) posits, “populist actors actively perform and perpetuate a sense of crisis, rather than simply reacting to external crisis” (Moffitt 2016, 7). While one impulse is to argue that crisis conditions encourage “emotional” responses, , it would reproduce the false dichotomy between “emotions” and “reason”: an epistemic filter that has inspired many political scientists and sociologists attracted by the paradigm of the hard sciences (Calhoun 2001).

In political science and sociology, emotions have long been treated as a ‘black box’ (Stets and Turner 2006) or ‘noise’ –irrational factors intervening in social and political actions, which are difficult to measure (e.g. in classical studies on collective action, Le Bon 2004; Hoffer 2002). However, these epistemological assumptions have been thoroughly and convincingly criticized: emotions have *cognitive*, *evaluative, motivational,* and *sensitive* functions (Ben-Ze’ev 2000) in political behaviour. According to Maíz (2011, 46), emotions play a central role in the cognitive process because they act as shortcuts for processing large amounts of information, allowing a person to act more efficiently (and thus rationally). Our own reasoning relies on emotions, either directly, because emotions or moods influence our priorities (often through unconscious processes, Marcus 2000; Franks 2006) and the selection of information, or indirectly, because our reasoning depends on memory, which is, again, strongly shaped by emotions (Richard and Gross 2000). Furthermore, emotions are intertwined with judgements (i.e., values and beliefs), in the sense that the former emerge once an object or event has been appraised in a particular situation. Furthermore, values and beliefs, as socio-cultural products, determine our emotional reactions to events, even imposing which kind of emotions are considered legitimate (Peterson 2006). Emotions, as social movement scholars suggest, also play strong mobilizing or demobilizing motivational functions (della Porta and Diani

2006). Separating "mind" and "body" is widely considered erroneous by scholars in political psychology (see also Bonansinga in this special issue).

Nevertheless, this dichotomy has persisted: treating the "crowd" as irrational and dangerous led scholars sympathetic to progressive social movements in the 1960s to focus on "rational" collective actors using resource mobilization strategies and political opportunities (Goodwin et al. 2001). On the other hand, rational-choice theorists focused on (strictly defined) individual interests as the only factors with which to deal with the paradox of collective action (Olson 1965). Even scholars following framing/constructivist perspectives (and who therefore attribute a value to narratives and discourses) tended to initially understand "frames" as purely cognitive (i.e., rational) tools and to rely on interested-related conceptualizations and explanations (Goodwin et al. 2001). More generally, emotions have been treated as "pathologies" that can endanger political stability (e.g. Habermas 1996; Pellizzoni 2001) in the form of populism.

However, politics (and theories) devoid of emotion risk neglecting the "dissensus and conflict as inherent to politics" (Maíz 2011, 61), irreducible dimensions that Mouffe (2000) counts as constitutive of democracy. Aslanidis and Rovira (2016) fully capture how 'avoiding populism' may be conducive to restrictions in terms of democratic decisions (emphasis ours):

> *'Soft' constraints* [to populist governments], *such as membership in a liberal political union, do not necessarily protect citizens against* [illiberal] *developments. On the contrary,* [restricting] *the policy discretion of a given country* […] *can function as 'hard'* and efficient deterrents of populist radicalism.

Although the sociology of emotions as a research field has been growing since the late 1970s (Stets and Turner 2006), scholars have only recently brought emotions back into the analysis of social and political movements, power relations, and institutions (Goodwin et al. 2001; Holmes 2004; Ost 2004; Marcus 2000; Berezin 2002; Kemper 2001). This turn is particularly fruitful for the study of populism, since it is precisely on 'mobilizing' emotions that populist actors and leaders concentrate.

Populism has been repeatedly and convincingly linked to emotions like hope, anger, and resentment (e.g., Wagner 2014; Rico et al. 2017; Wirz 2018; Salmela and Von Scheve 2018). However, there have been few empirical studies that systematically explore this nexus to date[3]. Salmela and Von Scheve (2018, 449) try to identify the different emotions which lead to right- and left-wing populism: repressed shame, resentment, anger and

[3] One innovative project at the University of Amsterdam, *HotPoliticsLab* (www.hotpolitics.eu) uses qualitative and quantitative data to explore the role of emotions, personality, and languages in politics.

hate at generic others in the case of the former; acknowledged shame, indignation, but also joy and pride for the latter. More generally, 'anger' has been demonstrated to be a strong mobilizing feeling (e.g., Stein 2001; Valentino et al. 2011; Searles and Ridout 2011). Salmela and Von Scheve (2018) elaborated the concept of "emotional opportunity structure" (EOS), which refers to the consideration of how structural factors interact with (individual and collective) emotions to set the terrain for populist entrepreneurs, who, in turn, exploit such "opportunities of the context" – or how populist leaders and parties draw on cultural aspects and shape them to assure their electoral success. An EOS can be understood as "macrosocial eliciting conditions for certain emotions and [hindering] the generation of other emotions" (Salmela and Von Scheve 2018, 438). This analytical lens is extremely helpful for responding to the call for an emotional sociology: namely "a sociology that recognizes the ubiquity of emotions, moods, and affect in social life and which treats emotions as potential causal mechanisms, or components of such mechanisms, and not simply as epiphenomena or dependent variables" (Goodwin and Pfaff 2001, 283).

Contextual emotional opportunities are therefore exploited in different ways by different varieties of populism. Indeed, 'conditions' refers not solely to structural factors because they are also "constituted and maintained by social and cultural processes that render (certain) emotions more visible, desirable, and acceptable than others" (2018, 439; see also Peterson 2006). Being aware of the variation in the "acceptability" of certain emotions, depending on cultural contexts, is a useful starting point for a complex evaluation of the factors that make populist "waves" either likely or unlikely because it integrates different explanatory factors while considering social and cultural specificities. In addition, this paradigm allows us not only to understand the opportunities for the emergence of populist parties, but also the demarcation between populist and extremist projects. The latter tend to cultivate invisible, undesirable and unacceptable emotions, and to reproduce them through identifying (and often self-isolating) subcultures (but see Bulli's and Adami's papers in this special issue which explore attempts to "achieve[...] social acceptability" by right-wing extremist groups[4]). Populism instead seems to focus on assigning visibility and acceptability to certain negative emotions that are both mounting due to exogenous shocks and reproduced endogenously by the populist discourse itself. "You are not racist, you are just enraged, and for good reasons" is a well-known League appeal in Italy. This slogan differs from that of Casapound (an

[4]See also Teitelbaum (2017), who shows how right-wing extremism in Sweden gradually abandoned Nazi rock music subculture to present itself as "rational". Similarly, McAllister (2001) argues that some American animalist movements present themselves as "rational" rather than "paternalistic" or "compassionate".

Italian far-right organization) during the last Italian national elections ("If you don't love us, now you can choose not to vote for us").

An understanding of emotions as components of causal mechanisms shaping social and political processes, by either assuring stability or pushing for changes within the polity, can contribute to a better understanding of populist emergence[5].

4. Populism, music and popular culture and subcultures

The cognitive and motivational roles of emotions in politics dovetail with the relationship between populism and cultural production (in particular popular culture and music). As Street (2014, 892) posits, music has a "well-documented communicative capacity to generate a sense of community, articulate ideas, and communicate emotional insights", all elements important to any emergent social movement.

Although not heretofore investigated in the context of political participation, music has been shown to play different functions in politics and political participation. Social movement scholars have underlined that music disseminates and reinforces a shared ideology and becomes an impetus for political mobilization (Della Porta and Diani 2006), and cultural rituals (including music) are effective in reinforcing collective identities and social bonds (Summers-Effler 2006). Music with explicit political content (music as "protest", "propaganda", or "resistance", Street 2014, 886) is the most self-evident connection between politics and music. There are multiple angles through which to explore this connection. Music as "protest" has been linked to collective action and contentious social movements (Rosenthal and Flacks 2012; Way 2016; Bianchi 2018). Music can serve several different purposes within protest (Danaher 2010): it can reinforce collective identity among participants by eliciting shared emotions and helping the elaboration and diffusion of a common political message; it can be used to recruit new activists, as it offers an attractive and less ideologically based form of political identification and participation (see also Bulli's contribution in this special issue); finally, it can contribute to

[5] For instance, it helps to understand the apparent contradiction between some accounts that link right-wing populism and fear/anxiety (the former is the instrumental exploitation of the latter, Betz 1994) and others that highlight how populism is more likely to elicit "anger" than "fear" (Rico et al. 2017; Wirz 2018). Fear is linked to uncertainty (Albertson and Gadarian 2015): it favours conformism (Skitka et al. 2004) and increases risk-aversion (Lerner and Keltner 2001), conservativism and utilitarianism. It has been identified as a major driver for increasing consensus in political communication studies, particularly when an actor is perceived to "own" the issue and have a credible answer for it through "law and order" appeals (Albertson and Gadarian 2015).

defining the 'social movement culture', even in an exclusionary way, as it does within specific "subcultures" (della Porta and Diani 2006). In this latter case, the prefix "sub" has to be considered both as "subterranean" and "subaltern" compared to 'hegemonic culture'; or, as in our post-modern times, as a "style which marks not the politicization of youth but the aestheticization of politics […]. Style is on the surface, subcultures are mainstream, high culture is a subculture and fashion is retro" (Barker, 2001: 194). Youth movements and several oppositional countercultures provide examples of how individual lifestyles may take on an antagonistic character. The emergence of punk at the end of the 1970s had elements that could be reduced to fashion, but it also possessed a powerful symbolic antagonism toward the consolidated canons of decorum and good taste. In other cases, collective action in lifestyles has been concerned with the defence of values and traditions (ibid, della Porta and Diani 2006: 50).

Musicological studies (e.g., Way 2016) and sociology (e.g., Duncombe and Bleiker 2015) agree that music has the potential to shape political identities and the narratives that sustain them. With regard to populism, Dunkel et al. stress that music, understood as a cultural practice, can influence the "the construction of ethnicity, nationality, (collective) identity, self-expression, spatial belonging, and authenticity", therefore influencing a specific understanding of "the people" and their antagonists (2018, 1). In fact, music can also, sometimes decisively, contribute to the dissemination of knowledge produced by a movement (della Porta and Pavan, 2017), and it is often a substantial part of such knowledge. For instance, it has been argued that folk songs associated with the American Civil Rights movement not only accompanied it and spread its message, but also became *the* movement, particularly to the eyes and ears of engaged foreign citizens (Eyerman and Jamison, 1998). Furthermore, music can be a "resistance to power" (Street, 2014) – power in authoritarian contexts, as well as traditional mainstream power.

Therefore, paying attention on whether and how in different countries populist movements and leaders rely on "the affective power of popular culture, and particularly music" (Dunkel et al. 2018), can be a crucial facto to be explored. In the case of populist appeal, unlike protest and propaganda music, which is usually composed and played with deliberate political purposes, music changes its political meaning depending on the manner and the context of its playing, singing, and listening (music and its meaning-making is a relational phenomenon, according to the most recent musicological strain, Doehring et al. 2016). This is particularly relevant with regards to populism and populist movements which can appropriate non-political songs for political purposes, or appropriate political songs and use them for different political purposes; take, for instance,

the use of Giuseppe Verdi's "*Va' Pensiero*"[6] by the Northern League as the national anthem of "Padania", which identified the Northern Italian geographically and ethnically distinct from the rest of Italy. In these cases, a complex mediation and re-signification of music (and musicians/artists) by political actors and by "those who sing or hear them" (Street 2014, 888) is undertaken for political purposes (Street 2014).

In this sense, popular culture – and popular music in particular –plays an important role in the fight for cultural hegemony, as they are "site(s) where [the] struggle for and against a culture of the powerful is engaged […] it is the arena of consent and resistance" (Hall 1981, 239). Popular music is "at the heart of people's most profound social occasions and experiences" (Dunkel et al. 2018) and is therefore particularly efficient as an arena of 'consent', since it appears 'authentic' while it is shaped by a cultural industry (Wall 2003). Popular songs can easily be re-signified in almost any political direction, as illustrated by the popular Pete Seeger folk song "If I had a hammer", which was translated, reproduced, and popularized in different contexts in the 1960s, either as an innocent hit by the Italian teen-idol Rita Pavone (*"Datemi un Martello*"[7], Liperi 2011), or as a militant protest song by the Chilean songwriter Victor Jara (*"El martillo*"[8]).

In the words of Kooijman (2013, 184), "the value of popular culture, whatever its textual qualities, is in what audiences *do* with it". Popular culture and music offer an invaluable source of messages, references, and knowledge that can affirm political identities and disseminate political goals, values, and worldviews of actors both from above and from below. Music, and in particular popular music, is said to "create companionship", triggering processes of "collective identification" and has "a unique affective power" that can "stimulate a sense of community-belonging" (Frith 2007, cit. in Dunkel et al 2018).

As Pierre Bourdieu observes, "each society, at each moment, elaborates a body of social problems taken to be legitimate, worthy of being debated, of being made public and sometimes officialized and, in a sense, guaranteed by the state" (1992, 236; cited in della Porta and Diani 2006). For example, typically, on the issue of unemployment, to mention just one topic related to the recent economic crisis often emphasized by populists, mobilization efforts are thwarted by the widespread feeling among the unemployed that their economic difficulties derive from individual failures. A precondition for protest is the shift to a conception of unemployment as a societal problem that requires the public authorities to intervene (della Porta and Diani 2006, 50). Music could play a role in that. In this sense, paying attention to music and popular culture in studying

[6] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NwQ7wUhCSGA&app=desktop
[7] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l_oBxbYaoYk&app=desktop
[8] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VRZre6FQ-EM&app=desktop

populism suggest different ways of linking macro, micro and organizational levels (Bourdieu 1977).

4.1 Which methods?

An approach that takes the cultural side of populism into account has methodological consequences and poses methodological challenges. Several works included in this special issue (see Adami's and Klein's contributions) opted to look at the link between right-wing radicalism (and populism) and its cultural productions by relying on visual and discourse analysis. Visual analysis is still poorly employed in social sciences (Mattoni and Teune 2014) and consists of "the developing concepts and methods used to analyze physical, representational, and public visibility elements that exist" in social movements and other kinds of collective actors (Doerr and Millman 2017). Visual productions such as photos, posters, leaflets and memes tend to communicate by a logic of symbolic association, while texts communicate by a logic of rational argumentation (Müller and Özcan 2007). However, even texts can produce 'images' in the minds of their readers and thus stimulate reasoning through associations and metaphors (Polletta 2006). Analysing visuals means uncovering the relationships between emotions and cognitive aspects of a political phenomenon. In this sense, visual communication is efficacious (e.g. for populist actors to reproduce their message) and its widespread use could encourage specific emotions conducive to the spread of populism.

Visual analysis is often combined with discourse and frame analysis, since discourse analysis contributes to uncovering how particular texts either reproduce or challenge established definitions and understandings of social reality and considers the social context of reception/consumption of the text, while frame analysis investigates how cultural productions, such as texts, music and images, elicit emotions and provide motivations for individual or collective action (Lindekilde 2014). More specifically, discourse analysis is concerned with the examination of meaning and context, so speeches and texts – populist or otherwise – are interpreted not as 'neutral' tools for communication, but as able to shape and reproduce social meanings and forms of knowledge. The social science literature on frames (and narratives) has taken two different approaches (Johnston and Noakes 2005). With a focus on individual cognitive processes, some authors have analysed the ways in which people try to make sense of what happens by framing events into familiar categories (Gamson 1988). Other scholars have investigated the meso-organizational level, considering the instrumental dimension of the symbolic construction of reality by collective entrepreneurs (Snow and Benford 1988). Both traditions can be useful in the understanding of varieties of populism in Europe. In this special issue, different contributions focus on the organizational level and empirically address the

question of the conceptualization of populism in different types of organizations by investigating the frames produced in their discourses. By talking about frames and narratives rather than ideology, we may address broad discursive variations among different populist groups in different European countries and link ideas, actions, and events (Snow and Byrd 2007; see also Aslanidis in this issue).

5. The special issue

This special issue addresses all the cultural and symbolic elements of politics and populism mentioned above, including music, emotions, narratives, discourses and frames, and visual symbols repertoires from popular culture, bringing together contributions that explore their empirical manifestations in several European countries and beyond (see Dessì's contribution).

Each contribution is a stand-alone article in which the author has selected one or more key elements of the analytical framework and applied it to their selected countries and populist political actors. This special issue aims to combine an analytical perspective with an empirical focus on current populism(s) in Europe and their cultural aspects. It consists of twelve contributions and a research note.

Ostiguy's article introduces what he terms a socio-cultural approach to populism, emphasizing how it can elucidate key features of the phenomenon, such as the 'passionate' dynamics of the relationship between the leader and the People, by highlighting performative aspects that have to do with contextual cultural repertoires. Aslanidis's theoretical contribution advocates for studying grassroots social movements as the primary location where culture interacts with populist mobilization, thus understanding populism as a discursive mode of political identification. Bonansinga's article, also theoretical in focus, stresses the inaccuracy of the dichotomy between emotions and reason (in populism) and discusses how structural processes have created particular affective states of grievances that are sympathetic to populist appeals. Similarly, by adopting a Laclauian framework, Eklundh finds that normative biases that are implicit in the contrast between the emotions and reason "more often than not [serve] to sediment exclusionary practices against newcomers and challengers of the status quo".

Other authors engaged in empirical research. Magaudda's contribution uses the lens of narratives and frames to discuss empirically the role of digital media in modifying the ways populism and music are linked together, by focusing on the Italy's traditional annual pop music event, the San Remo Festival. Caruso's article focusing on Spain and Podemos shows how the use and appropriation of different music genres by the political

party is linked to the institutional transformation of the party from emergence to success and consolidation in power.

Bulli's and Klein's articles (as well as Adami's research note) pay attention to specific subcultures or cultural features of right-wing extremism. Bulli, focusing on a comparative case study of Italy and Germany, demonstrates how the cultural-musical production of Italian and German far-right groups and subcultures gradually moved from "hyper-ideologized" products (accessible to few) to "populist" messages that downplay the division between left and right and the most explicitly radical contents. In addition, Bulli highlights the role of music and concerts as a primary resource for membership recruitment. Adami focuses on different types of radical right organizations in Italy (political parties versus political movements) and relies on a visual analysis of posters of various events organized by different radical right actors at the local level. She shows how right-wing extremism uses a populist communicative camouflage to spread radical messages in populist times by presenting themselves as respectable actors in the public sphere. Klein instead focuses on the case of the British National Party and explores how common factual, funny, fallacious, or fabricated information is shared on the Facebook page of the BNP and what kind of reactions and emotions different information tends to elicit among followers and commentators.

Dessì's contribution relies on fieldwork in revolutionary Egypt to show how music was an essential part of the collective identity-building of social movements during the Tahrir Square protests. She shows how the evolution of a musical repertoire played a key role in the different phases of the protests by fostering mobilization.

Westheuser's theoretical article reconstructs populist cultural practices as instances of *symbolic class struggle*, a mode of contention in which cultural objects act as metaphors for social positions. He shows how the demarcations and classifications deployed in the populist symbolic class struggle appropriate repertoires of 'the popular' which originate outside the political field (e.g. in pop music); elements of these repertoires of 'the popular' can also be appropriated for political mobilization because of homologies between the symbolic sphere ('culture'), the field of cultural production, and the political field.

Feo and Lundstedt's article mixes qualitative and quantitative data and provides a comparative analysis of the extent to which feminist messages have been mainstreamed by popular music. Their article draws on the literature on the cultural consequences of social movements to explore if and how the new wave of grassroot feminist activism influenced feminist themes in top-charting mainstream popular music in Denmark and Sweden.

In conclusion, this special issue provides an important contribution to the analysis of contemporary variants of populism (left wing vs. right wing; parties vs. movements; radical-subcultures vs. moderate/mainstream) within the European context and beyond. Furthermore, we highlight the importance of multi-causal analytical frameworks that pay proper attention to the production and re-production of contextual opportunities and organizational resources through symbolic elements such as music.

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