RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE POPULIST RE-POLITICIZATION
Some Lessons from South America and Southern Europe

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ABSTRACT: This article proposes an alternative categorization of the populist phenomena, by elaborating the distinction between *electoral-delegative* and *participative-mobilising* populisms. All the populist phenomena share some common traits, such as a polarising and antagonist discourse dividing the society into a "People" and some "elites" or privileged sectors, their reliance on a strong leadership, a pretension to be majoritarian and to achieve the power at the national level in order to restore the sovereignty of the People. Nonetheless, the strategies for achieving these goals vary according to the specific diagnoses that would correct the perceived deficiencies of the representative democracies in terms of *accountability* of the representatives. The populisms closer to the electoral-delegative pole stress the *symbolic* dimension of the concept of representation, thus relying on a strong leader able to "truly interpret" the *general will* of the People. Those closer to the participative-mobilising pole call for an active involvement of the People in the decision-making process in order to effectively control the public institutions, stressing the *descriptive* dimension of the concept of representation and sometimes questioning the theoretical bases sustaining the representative democracy. I provide a brief discussion on four participative-mobilising populist experiences, i.e. the MAS-IPSP, the Kirchnerism, the M5S and Podemos, focusing on their internal organizations and relying on an extensive fieldwork (consisting in one hundred in-depth interviews with country experts and party's representatives at regional and national levels) that I conducted for a broader research project.
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1. Introduction[1]

This article proposes an alternative categorization of the populist phenomena, by elaborating the distinction between *electoral-delegative* and *participative-mobilising* populisms. All the populist phenomena share some common traits, such as a polarising and antagonist discourse dividing the society into a "People" and some "elites" or privileged sectors, their reliance on a strong leadership, a pretension to be majoritarian and to achieve the power at the national level in order to restore the sovereignty of the People. Nonetheless, the strategies for achieving these goals vary according to the specific diagnoses that would correct the perceived deficiencies of the representative democracies in terms of *accountability* of the representatives. The populisms closer to the electoral-delegative pole stress the *symbolic* dimension of the concept of representation, thus relying on a strong leader able to "truly interpret" the *general will* of the People. Those closer to the participative-mobilising pole call for an active involvement of the People in the decision-making process in order to effectively control the public institutions, stressing the *descriptive* dimension of the concept of representation and sometimes questioning the theoretical bases sustaining the representative democracy.

The article is divided into six sections. In the first section I show how the different theoretical approaches on populism tend to be skewed towards one of the two poles I mentioned above. In the second section, I discuss the populist understandings of the concept of representation, arguing that populisms are even more interested in the *input* than in the *output* side of representative democracy. In the third and the fourth sections, I sketch the different characteristics of the electoral-delegative and participative-mobilising populisms. Then I provide a brief discussion on four participative-mobilising populist experiences, i.e. the Bolivian MAS-IPSP, Argentine Kirchnerism, the M5S and Podemos, focusing on their internal organizations and relying on an extensive fieldwork (consisting in one hundred in-depth interviews with country experts and party's representatives at regional and national levels) that I conducted for a broader research project. In the concluding section, I briefly discuss both how the two populist forms pursue different re-politicising projects and the different understandings of the concept of People in the Latin American and Southern European experiences described in the fifth section.

2. Looking at different concepts? A review of Populism Theories

Populism is an essentially contested concept that has attracted a vast and growing theoretical and empirical research. In a valuable literature review of the theoretical debate on this concept, Gidrow and Bonikowski (2013) identified three different approaches, i.e. populism as a "political ideology", a "political style" and a "political strategy". I will instead rely on a slightly different categorization: populism as an "ideology or discourse" (e.g., Mudde 2004; Aslanidis 2016); populism as a "strategy" (e.g., Weyland 2001); populism as a "logic or a political project" (e.g., Laclau 2005a; Jansen 2011; Collins 2014) and populism as a "political-cultural style" (e.g., Ostiguy, 2009, 2017; Moffit and Torney 2013). All these approaches, focusing on different features of the populist phenomena, present some strengths and weaknesses. I argue that the first two approaches are better suited to describe what I will call *delegative populisms*, while the third one derives from an understanding of populism as a *participative*, *mobilising* phenomenon. The fourth approach, focusing on the peculiar "populist way of representing", is useful to understand both the subtypes I propose in this paper, although it also seems skewed towards a "delegative" interpretation.

Probably, Cas Mudde provides the most widespread definition of populism: "*an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the* volonté générale *(general will) of the people*" (Mudde 2004, 543). The conception of populism as an *ideology* (a "set of loosely interrelated ideas") has been defended for its clarity and easy operationalization (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2013; Aslanidis 2016), and in fact has been used for several empirical researches (e.g., Pauwels 2011; Akkerman et al. 2014).

Other scholars (e.g., Caiani and Della Porta, 2011; Aslanidis, 2016) have preferred considering it as a "rhetoric", a "discourse" or a "frame", i.e. a "*'schemata of interpretation' that allow their users 'to locate, perceive, identify, and label' complex events taking place in daily life*" (Goffman 1974, 21), providing "*a* diagnosis *by identifying 'some event or aspect of social life as problematic and in need of alteration', then proceed to suggest a* prognosis, *'a proposed solution to the diagnosed problem that specifies what needs to be done' and conclude by circulating a* motivational *urgency to take corrective action*" (Snow and Benford 1988, 199). While this approach is quite complementary to the "ideological" one (see Aslanidis and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2016), it has the merit of stressing the "diagnosis-prognosis scheme" implicit in the populist phenomena, which, as I argued elsewhere (Padoan, 2016), are likely to emerge as a reaction to some "pathologies" suffered by national representative democracies.

Mudde complements his definition identifying also the conceptual opposites of populism: *elitism* and *pluralism*. If elitism "*believe that the people are dishonest and vulgar, while the elite are superior in cultural, intellectual and moral terms*", pluralism "*assumes that societies are composed of several social groups with different ideas and interests*" and *"takes for granted that it is impossible to generate something like a 'general will' of the people"*, as "*the term ''pluralism'' has increasingly been used to refer . . . to ethnic, cultural, or religious groups, usually in a fashion that advocates wide latitude for such minorities to be able to pursue their own specific traditions and ways of life*" (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013).

The problem, here, is that Mudde conflates "populism" with "holism" or "organicism". He states that "*whereas pluralism appreciates societal divisions and sees politics as 'the art of compromise,' populism (and elitism) discards societal divisions, denounces social groups as 'special interests,' and rejects compromise as defeat*" (Mudde, 2013). In my view, Mudde goes too far: I agree with the potential (but not at all necessary) incompatibility between populism and specific groups defending their rights or interests, but this happens only when the 'special interests' are depicted as 'privileges' enjoyed by an ill-defined "elite". The complete dissolution of the different social or cultural sectors into a homogeneous "People" is not unavoidable.

The "ideological approach" is probably too much focused on the analysis of the populist right-wing parties in Western Europe. Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2013), in order to make their approach more adherent to other political realities, elaborated the distinction between "inclusionary" and "exclusionary populisms", according to three dimensions: material, political and symbolic. Nonetheless, there is a perfect coincidence between "left-wing" and "inclusionary" populisms (and between "right-wing" and "exclusionary" ones); moreover, the authors considered the Bolivian MAS as a "prototype" of the inclusionary populism. But if *''pluralism'' has increasingly been used to refer . . . to ethnic, cultural, or religious groups, usually in a fashion that advocates wide latitude for such minorities to be able to pursue their own specific traditions and ways of life*" (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013), it is very difficult to apply Mudde's definition to a party claiming for the defence of the indigenous peoples' rights (rhetorically at least). Even more striking is the contrast between Mudde's definition and a party such as Podemos, which has made of plurinationalism and the empowerment of the ethnic minorities (including Roma people and migrants) two important "flags". In my view, the relationship between "populism" and "pluralism" is highly undertheorized.

Weyland advances another influential definition, arguing that "*populism is best defined as a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large*

numbers of mostly unorganized followers" (2001, 14). According to this definition, populism is almost all about manipulation and a top-down relationship, leaving no space for a more complex analysis of the "tools" that "the people" have in order to influence the leader's actions (see also Ostiguy 2017).

This weakness emerges because even the Weyland's "strategic" approach is highly context-driven, as this scholar had in mind the Latin American "neo-populists" (such as Menem, Fujimori, Collor or, at the other side of the left-right axis, Chávez) emerged during the Nineties. Weyland tends to see in the People a sort of undistinguished "mob", which would fall apart in the absence of an articulating leader. This contrasts with the Latin American "classic populisms" such as Perón and Vargas, who led the processes of corporatist incorporation of the *organized* working class into the polity domain, decisively strengthening the union organizations and building the strongest mass-parties of the entire continent (Collier and Collier, 1991). More recently, the rise of the Bolivian MAS-IPSP is precisely the apex of a process fuelled by the progressive empowerment of the peasant unions.

Nonetheless, Weyland does point to a crucial, and often overlooked, issue: the eternal search of *power* and of the *occupation of the state institutions* by populist leaders and movements. Other scholars such as Canovan (1999), with her distinction between the "pragmatic" and "redemptive" faces of democracy (the latter being proper of populisms), and Laclau (2005a), who theorizes populism as a "counter-hegemonic process" in order to achieve the power, help stressing this feature. It is common to equate populism with "demagoguery", the tendency to promise something impossible to deliver. Populism has been portrayed as the "art of blame-shifting", through the identification of an ill-defined "elite" as the origin of social and economic problems, in order to justify its own governmental failures (Vasilopolou et al., 2014). If the liberal critics point to the Manichean and simplistic populist *Weltanschauung*, several leftist thinkers instead tend to consider the populists as unable to address the structural causes of the socioeconomic problems. Nonetheless, the "blame-shifting" strategy is by no means a prerogative of populists (Weaver, 1986), acting also as a mechanism to build strong collective identities based on an antagonist Other. Moreover, the "counter-hegemonic populist potential" displays all its strength precisely by broadening the "horizon of the possibilities", allowing for a wider discussion of the policy options available.

In fact, Weyland's main concern is for the populist tendency to "deliver too much" to its people, to implement unsustainable social and economic policies (Pribble, 2013), but also to weaken the institutional controls and to steer democracy towards unpredictable and authoritarian directions (O'Donnell, 1994). Weyland, thus, is fully conscious of the populist *anti-status quo* potential.

Laclau (2005a) offers a dynamic interpretation of the concept, conceiving it as a political *logic* challenging the existing institutions, through the articulation of different "unsatisfied" (and sometimes unexpressed) demands around an "empty signifier" able to condense a "chain of equivalence" between these demands. He argues that *"a movement is not populist because in its politics or ideology it presents actual contents identifiable as populistic, but because it shows a particular logic of articulation of those contents – whatever those contents are"* (Laclau, 2005b: 33). This marks a strong difference with class or issue-based political projects. For example, Jansen (2011: 84) recognizes that "*In characterizing such a broad swath of 'popular' society, leaders downplay differences and emphasize similarities (or at least unity through functional interdependence). In this respect, populist rhetoric differs from class-based, interest group, or issue-specific rhetoric*".

However, Jansen also adds that "*Suggesting that populist politics is about leaders mobilizing supporters undermines organicist assumptions that populist movements embody some natural confluence of the interests of — or symbiotic relationships between — prepolitical social groups* (Jansen 2011: 85). This means that the process of "building a people" surely implies a rearticulation of the main demands advanced by different social categories. However, this cannot imply that these demands (and the eventual related collective identities) will disappear during this process, nor that the internal relations *within* the "populist coalition" are exempt of tensions and completely solved by the leader's interpretation of the general will.

Relying on the Laclausian approach, authors such as Jansen or Collins (2014) focus on the strategies used in order to "build a people". All of them stress the process of construction of a new collective identity, able to subsume (without deleting) the previous identities and the interests (or, in the Laclau's jargon, "unsatisfied claims") carried on by the different actors and sectors that join the populist *project*. The definition of populism as a *mobilising project*, as both the authors do, implies that the "instrumental", agential and strategic element stressed by Weyland coexist with the contra-hegemonic and "redemptive" aspects underscored by Laclau and Canovan.

Mouffe (2000) even argues that populism should be read as the result of the irreconcilable tension between democracy and liberalism (see also Pappas 2012). Populism is clearly skewed towards the former, thus contributing to the building of an "agonist" democracy, in which there is little space left to compromise (and technocratic solutions), seen as intrinsically undemocratic. An "agonist democracy" relies on the belief that the social conflicts cannot be subjected to a "best" or "optimal" solution: conflict is politics, and politics is necessary for democracy. The *populist logic*, articulating the society into two camps, becomes the precondition for *politics*, it would be *constitutive of it*.

As neoliberalism can easily be read as a project aiming at "depoliticizing" the society, claiming for the free market as the most efficient solution to social conflicts (something that represents, of course, a very *political* operation) and for a "technocratic" way to govern, not only the possibilities of populism to emerge, but also the benign, *democratic* potential of populism are fully displayed.

Nonetheless, the Latin American "neopopulisms" of the Nineties (and, in Western Europe, Berlusconi), advancing a neoliberal policy agenda, represent a challenge for these "progressive" understandings of populism. In contrast with the "antineoliberal populists" analysed in the fifth section, they generally presented themselves as leaders governing according to an "ordinary common sense", fighting the "over-politicization" of the society – due to an "incompetent political class", which provoked social and economic negative consequences. It would be difficult to interpret these phenomena as attempts to "re-politicize" their democracies, although the polarization they provoked surely contributed to create a conflictive political climate.

In conclusion, the interpretation of populism as a logic, or as a mobilising political project, has the merit of being very attentive to the populist process of articulation of popular demands and to fruitfully stress the "counter-hegemonic" potential of populism. Nonetheless, it probably exaggerates when considering populism as *constitutive of politics,* overlooking that populism can also serve as a mechanism for "freezing" a highly-ideologized society.

3. The Populist Understanding of the Concept of "Representation": Accountability and Popular Sovereignty

The three approaches discussed above barely mention the most "visible" features of the populist phenomena: the "picturesque", expressive forms that populist leaders and supporters assume, often in order to highlight their antagonism against the "élite". In contrast, several scholars consider them much more than a mere "epiphenomenon" of the populisms. They understand populism as a "political style", the "*repertoires of performance that are used to create political relations*" (Moffitt and Tormey 2013, 7). According to these authors, the populist style is characterized by three main features: the "appeal to the People", the "perception of a crisis, breakdown or a threat" to the People and the use of "bad manners" (Ostiguy, 2009), a "*disregard for appropriate ways of acting in the political realm*" (Moffitt and Tormey 2013, 12).

The "stylistic" approach problematizes the relationship between the leader and the People, stressing how the "performances" of the former are not addressed to a "passive"

audience: instead, there is a "feedback loop" between the leader and the followers, who keep a crucial influence on the former's actions (Moffitt and Tormey 2013, 9). According to Ostiguy (2017), populism is better understood as a "*form of relationship between the "people" and a leader",* along two broad congruent dimensions. In the concept of populism coexist a socio-cultural dimension (referring to the "plebeian" and often vulgar expressive forms, functional to reinforce the frontier against the "elites" and the "privileged sectors") and a political-cultural one, which tends to reject the "formalisms" of the "polite", institutional forms of managing politics, which would prevent the "true People" from being heard by the legitimate authority. This approach helps to problematize the issue of the populist understandings of the concept of *representation*.

Following Pitkin (1967), this concept is semantically complex. "Representation" can be intended a) in a *formalistic* way (someone is *authorized* to act for somebody else); b) in a *descriptive* way (the representatives must be *similar* to the represented); c) in a *symbolic* way (the representatives *symbolize* the represented, by "subsuming" the main characteristics of the latters); d) in the sense of "acting in behalf of", by pursuing the concrete interests of the represented. The complexity increases due to the further division between the theories stressing, alternatively, the concepts of "authority" or of "accountability" as constitutive dimensions of the concept of "representation". "Representing" someone implies to have the authority to do that; however, for the "accountability" theorists, in the absence of some (meaningful) mechanism of accountability, there is no possible kind of representation.

As Ostiguy (2014, 20) argues, populism is *"a way to shorten the distances between the legitimate authority and the people"*: this goal can be pursued through very different strategies. It is not always true that populism suggests "a correction [of democracy] based on enhanced accountability rather than increased participation" (Barr 2009): as I will detail in the fourth and fifth section, several populist projects precisely pursue the direct participation of their People, in order to diminish (and in some cases to completely fill) the gap between the representatives and the represented. Nor it is always true that "contemporary populism focuses primarily on the *out*put and not on the *in*put of democracy" (Mudde 2004, 558): if it were so, some new, more "traditional" politicians advancing different political proposals could exploit the discontent, without recurring to the "populist toolkit".

As the "stylistic" approach stresses, an important feature of some populisms (and *particularly* of the "neopopulisms" of the Nineties) is the *re-presentational* leader's function, in the sense that he "presented again" (Arditi 2007) the People in the government through presenting himself as "one of them". The Berlusconi's rhetoric centred on his economic success (the "self-made man"), or the "colourful" aspect and "out-of-place"

behaviour of leaders such as Menem and Bucaram, are just a few examples of the *symbolic and descriptive representation* enacted by populist leaders.

Descriptive representation is also central in those populisms highlighting the presence, in their electoral lists, of "common, ordinary people", in contraposition of the "careerist politicians". Through these elements of symbolic and descriptive representation, populisms can claim that they really "pursue the interests of the people", by pretending to have a "common feeling" with the represented. Moreover, they often enact several mechanisms of direct and/or participative democracy, and can even be closer to the introduction of an "imperative mandate" and of "revocatory tools", thus contributing to the persistence of the "feedback loop" between the leader(s) and the people.

Of course, it would be ingenuous to overlook the "manipulative" and opportunistic features of these practices, as well as the potentially very dangerous plebiscitarian direction that populisms can (and often do) take. Nonetheless, populisms are not necessarily against "representative democracy": they are completely at odds with a *formalistic understanding of representation*. For populist leaders, parties, movements and voters, representative democracy must not be equated with the simple elections of their MPs every two, three or more years, waiting for the next elections in order to express a judgement on their behaviours and eventually to punish them through the ballots.

By strictly equating *popular sovereignty* with (more than merely formal) *accountability*, populisms are likely to attack those governments perceived as "distant" and "technocratic" (as the EU institutions), often portraying them as "servants" of some obscure, economic elites. Supranational institutions are also criticised for their poor electoral legitimacy, and for depriving the People of its sovereignty. The populist focus on the *vertical accountability* (O'Donnell 1994) often leads to question the "impartiality" of the institutional checks and balances, although, depending on the political context, it is also possible to observe populist movements *defending* these institutions, when the target of the populists is a "corrupted political and economic elite" *unaccountable* to the Law.

4. Looking at the "input": the electoral/delegative populisms…

The "stylistic" approach helps to go more deeply into the process of *reproduction* of populisms, and to problematize the "populist understanding" of the concept of representation. However, this approach does not openly discuss the different forms that populist phenomena assume in terms of organization and popular participation: this is the goal of the remaining sections.

A fundamental problem of the "inclusionary/exclusionary" dichotomy (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2013) is its exclusive focus on the *outputs* (such as the political programs or the policies implemented) delivered by the populisms, and their consequences (usually assumed as dangerous) on the quality of democracy, by evaluating how unsustainable expansionary policies (in the case of "inclusionary" populism), xenophobic appeals (in the case of the "exclusionary" one) or a "decisionist" policy-making style (in both cases) harm the liberal-democratic institutions.

An analysis of the deficiencies of specific liberal democratic regimes has often (and rightly) helped to understand the conditions leading to the emergence of populist phenomena. For example, Morgan (2011), in her analysis of the "party systems' collapses", mainly points on the incapacity of the existing parties of renewing their linkages with several social sectors, due to exogenous factors (such as economic crisis and international policy constraints) and endogenous ones (such as the existence of interparty agreements and organizational constraints).

Nonetheless, the populisms do not just promise an "easy solution" for these "diseases". They firstly provide a *diagnosis*, always centred on the way the "elites" manage politics and on the insufficient influence of the People, thus calling for restoring the *popular sovereignty* against the privileged sectors. The populisms, therefore, are highly attentive to improve the *input* side of the democratic processes as a necessary condition for changing the outputs. An alternative way of categorizing populism is to classifying it according to the *prognoses* provided, i.e. to the specific way used for "*shortening the distances between the legitimate authority and the people"* (Ostiguy 2014, 20).

To pursue this goal, the populisms advance different, and often contradictory, solutions. The legitimate authorities could be inattentive to the "real problems" of the "common people" because of the "privileges" they enjoy thanks to their socioeconomic condition, because of their closeness to some economic élites having a disproportionate influence on the policy-making process, because they belong to a "caste" more interested in the defence of their "privileges" than in offering solutions, or because the government has its hands tied by the multiple institutional "checks and balances" (often "occupied" by some, obscure "elites") preventing it from advancing an efficacious activity, among other things.

One "solution" could lie in *delegating* to a leader the management of the State, by limiting (and attacking) the influence of the institutional "checks and balances". This leader, consequently, would embody the "popular", "general will", against the multiple "inertial" points of resistance of those sectors favouring the *status quo*. Typically, the leader will establish direct, charismatic linkages with her/his People, through particular

styles or "ways to manage politics", and will be legitimized to exert the authority by the "power of the numbers" and by the pretension to be "one of the People".

Differently from a purely authoritarian solution, the *electoral-delegative populisms* tend to multiply the instances of electoral legitimacy of its power. The leader will show a particular attention to the opinion polls, in order to avoid losing the "contact" with the People. Some instances of direct (or plebiscitarian) democracy will be possibly enacted, particularly (but not necessarily) when in opposition, to "give the Voice to the People" – and, admittedly, to "avoid the blame" for taking unpopular measures. At the same time, because of her/his pretension to "embody the popular will", the leader will flaunt a "decisionist" style to deal with the problems s/he is supposed to fix, dismissing the institutions devoted to the "horizontal accountability", portraying them as useless "brakes" for her/his governmental action and as "enclaves" occupied by the old élites.

It is clear that this *electoral and delegative populism* is well described by scholars such as Mudde, Weyland (as "direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from unorganized numbers") and Pappas (as "democratic illiberalism"). Several historic political phenomena can be included in this typology, such as the "neopopulisms" of the Nineties, the Western European populist right and the ongoing presidency of Donald Trump. In all of these political experiences, the leader *embodies*, more than representing, her/his People, belonging to a socially constructed "heartland" (Taggart, 2000), typically oppressed by high taxation, menaced by immigrant people – who supposedly put in perils the People' rights – or unrepresented by other structures of interest representation, such as the unions, alleged of defending corporatist rights in detriment of the "working People".

In this sense, I prefer identifying in the "privileged sectors", and not just in the "elites", the enemies contrasted by the populist phenomena. According to the storytelling of leaders such as Berlusconi or Menem, the problems of the country relied on the "overprotection" enjoyed by some sectors, who led to excessive public expenditure, high unemployment rates or recurrent hyperinflations. According to the radical right rhetoric, the cosmopolitan elites "overprotect" the migrant people, who enjoy a "privileged" access to the welfare resources in detriment of the natives (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2013).

It should be noticed that the neopopulists aimed at "depoliticizing" their societies by calling for "efficient", market-friendly measures in order to allow the People for a full dedication to the private sphere. The same can be said of the populist right, although, in order to achieve this goal, the means are quite different: the populist radical rights see the main problem in the loss of the national sovereignty, calling for a restoration of the

power of the nation state, in detriment of the "technocratic elites". In fact, several radical right parties – such as the Northern League, the UKIP, the Front National or the Swiss UDC - campaign for a stronger use of the direct democracy's tools in order to challenge the elites' decisions. In this sense, they do call for a limited mobilization *and* politicization of their People, fully restricted to the voting sphere.

It would be a mistake to equate the *electoral-delegative* populism with the exclusionary ones. In Latin America, we observed the rising of left-wing leaders such as Chávez and his *Bolivarian Revolution* and Correa and his *Citizen Revolution*. The technocratic features of Correa's governments have been widely noticed (Becker 2013; Collins 2014), as well as the difficult relationship between Correa and the lively Ecuadorean social movements, who strongly oppose the extractivist and developmentalist strategy of the former president. Similarly, it would be very difficult to consider the *emergence* of the Chavism as a "participative" experience, albeit its (fulfilled) promise of implementing participative and direct democracy's tools in a new Constitution. Instead, Chávez represented the "strong man" coming from the army who would have ended with the Venezuelan *partidocracia* and installed a government *truly responsive* to the "general will of the People". As Roberts (2007) noticed, the strong popular mobilization and organization fostered by Chávez came in a secondary moment and responded to the necessity of building a "popular power" in order to counterbalance the economic and institutional resources of the Venezuelan "old order" aiming at stopping the Bolivarian project.

5. … and the participative-mobilising populisms

Instead of delegating the political decisions to a "strong leader", many populisms advance very different proposals in order to correct the inadequacies of the existing representative democracies. These populisms also point their finger at the unaccountability of the representatives, albeit for very different reasons. They often consider the MPs as a "political caste" enjoying strong privileges that prevent them from really understanding what happens in the *pays réel.* Accusations of corruptions are common. Crucially, MPs are often alleged of "betraying" the popular mandate, because of their closeness to "powerful, privileged sectors or elites", because of being part of the "establishment", and because of their frequent "transformism", i.e. their passing from a parliamentary group to another one or from supporting different governments during a legislative mandate. All of these critiques concern the lack of control of the People towards their representatives/delegates in the public offices. Nonetheless, the solution would consist in the direct occupation of the public institutions by the People, thus leading its mobilization

and pushing for its direct involvement in the political decisions. I define this populist subtype as *participative-mobilising populism.*

Analytically distinct, but often empirically linked with those accusations, is the common dissatisfaction against the "political parties" that populisms both represent and contribute to foster. "Mainstream" political parties are seen as self-referential organizations that do not provide a satisfactory channel for the participation of the citizens in the political realm, being, in turn, more attentive to accede to the public economic resources. The "cartelization" of the political parties (Katz and Mair, 1995) has triggered a growing popular dissatisfaction against them, whereas several, well-known macro-phenomena (such as the decline of the mass party organizations and party membership, the "disenfranchisement" of broad social sectors from the previous partisan alignments, the decline of political participation, particularly among younger strata, among other things) contribute to delegitimize the "traditional" political parties.

The participative-mobilising populist projects often look more similar to a social movement than to a political party. They call for a "genuine popular participation", around specific issues or "flags", and struggle for the re-appropriation of the public institutions. They call for a re-politicization of the society, relying on an antagonistic frontier between "Us" and "Them", and claim for the necessity of a strong popular mobilization in order to oppose the "elites" and the "privileged sectors" favoured by the *status quo*. Far from exhausting their battle in the electoral arena, they call for a "popular resurrection" in order to "decide from below" and to "closely control the institutions". As almost all the populist phenomena – with the possible exception of the "neopopulisms" – they aim at restoring the *popular* sovereignty of the People through the *empowerment of the nation-State*, identifying the locus of the power in the public institutions. They are fully aware of the centrality of the "national battlefield", as well as of the necessity of relying on "national signifiers" in order to build new, enduring and encompassing collective identities.

This is not to deny the function carried on by the leaders of populist movements and parties. Nonetheless, the same leader's actions can be "shaped from below" thanks to the mobilization of particular sectors forming part of the heterogeneous coalition built by her/him. The perfect example of this dynamic is the historical functioning of the classic Peronist movement, whose leader was very differently "interpreted" by its multiple factions, each of them attempting at influencing Perón (and his successors) by showing their mobilising power whenever it was possible. The leader, thus, acts as a "decider of last resort" between the different factions within the movement, and becomes his/herself as the central "battlefield" that each faction aims at occupying in order to lead the

movement towards the preferred direction. Probably, the most important function carried on by the leader is to prevent that the internal divisions and struggles would translate into a conflict over the leadership of the movement, irreversibly fracturing it.

At the same time, it is impossible to deny that this *participative-mobilizing populist subtype* often shows top-down, even "militarised" forms of popular mobilizations. The leader often pretends discipline and dedication to the Cause from her/his People, thus leading towards potentially totalitarian directions. The Bolivarian Circles and their involvement in the anti-poverty programs known as *Missions* in the *Chavista* populism represent well-known examples (Hawkins 2009). Nonetheless, in several other populisms (and even in Chavism), certain (and sometimes very strong) forms of spontaneous consolidation of grass-roots movements emerge. These grassroots can display poor horizontal and vertical coordination, particularly during the inception phase of a populist movement, and, in fact, this "institutional disorder" is functional to a rapid diffusion of the movement. The usually lesser costs to join the movement are likely to attract higher memberships than the "traditional" political parties, where the barriers to entry and the internal stratifications and hierarchies are stronger.

6. Four cases of (Anti-Neoliberal) Participative-Mobilising Populisms

The Bolivian MAS-IPSP ("Movement Towards Socialism – Political Instrument for the Sovereignty of the People"), the Argentine Kirchnerism, the Spanish Podemos and the Italian Five Star Movement (M5S) represent contemporary examples of participative-mobilizing populisms. All these political projects emerged in the aftermath of a deep crisis of the neoliberal model and denounced the loss of popular (and national) sovereignty in their democratic regimes, promising its restoration. They have advanced a polarising political discourse, drawing a clear boundary between the People and its Enemies, which include supranational and international financial institutions, multinational corporations and their "representatives" at the national level.

All of them clearly called for the active participation of their People in their projects, instead of simply asking for their support through the ballots. In all of them, a certain degree of hierarchization and power centralization coexists with strong instances of grass-roots participation and involvement in the decision-making process. Said this, these political projects stemmed from very different social and political contexts and their internal organization strongly vary.

The MAS-IPSP was created in 1995, as an "organic decision" of the main Bolivian peasant and coca-grower unions and social movements. According to the well-known Panebianco's (1988) typology, it is an example of "externally legitimated party", as it is conceived as a "political instrument" of the founder organizations in order to run electorally and elect their representatives in the institutions. The process of candidates' selection at all the levels *should be* entirely delegated to the social movements, through multi-tiered internal elections; in fact, at least since the decision of reserving some posts to "invitees" figures (typically technocrats and intellectuals closer to the project) in order to expand the party's support in the urban areas, the leader Evo Morales and his inner circle have acquired a growing (albeit not unlimited) decisional power even in this issue (Anría 2014; interview with Marité Zegada). The decision of creating their own "political instrument" stemmed from the necessity of stopping the successful attempts of co-optation of the movements' leaders by the "neoliberal parties" that dominated the centripetal Bolivian party system during the so-called "Pacted Democracy" (interviews with Juana Quispe – President of the MAS-IPSP parliamentary group – and with Juan de la Cruz – one of the MAS-IPSP's founders).

For the sake of space, it is not possible here to describe the extremely complex history of the long Bolivian contentious phase, which lasted at least twenty years (since 1990 until 2010), conducing to the democratic election of the historical MAS-IPSP's leader Evo Morales (a *cocalero* peasant) to the national presidency in 2005. The MAS-IPSP became the Bolivian hegemonic party mainly due to the strong territorial control by the peasant unions, which are powerful organizations of small landowners that, apart from struggling for channelling public resources in developmentalist projects, advancing with the Agrarian Reform, defending the recognition of cultural rights, are also involved in quasi-judiciary decisions, compelling for all of their members and taken in a deliberative way. The Bolivian social movements showed both very high mobilising skills and the ability of establishing alliances with several other local or sectorial actors emerging during the Nineties against the neoliberal government of that time (interviews with Eduardo Córdova and Fernando Mayorga). In particular, the coca-growers' unions, menaced by the coca eradication programs violently implemented by the Bolivian army and by its US allies, played an important role during the uprising in Cochabamba against the privatization of the local water company (2000), while both the Highlands unions and the coca-growers actively participated in the violent protest in La Paz and El Alto against the selling of the Bolivian gas to Chile (2003), leading to the resignation of the right-wing president Sánchez de Losada. Although the MAS-IPSP has opened to the participation of many other grass-roots organizations (such as the industrial and mineworkers' unions, the

miners organized through cooperatives, the urban vendors' and transport workers' unions, the Highlands and Lowlands indigenous organizations, all of which form part of the ruling social coalition), the "political instrument" is still dominated by the founders' organizations, the so-called *trillizas*[2] and the coca-grower unions. It is common to hear from the own MAS-IPSP's leaders that the party "does not exist", being a mere political brand in order to run electorally (interviews with the MAS-IPSP's MP Manuel Canelas and with the Vice-Presidency officers Juan Pinto), as the "real power" belongs to the social movements.

Fully in line with the well-known motto *Ruling by Obeying*, the social movements' bases intend their representatives as mere "speakers" of their (both sectorial and territorial) constituencies (interview with the MAS-IPSP's MP Martiriano Mamani). At the same time, they are expected to faithfully obey to *their* government, which, notwithstanding the "participative", bottom-up rhetoric, keep the initiative power under the unchallenged leadership of Evo Morales (interviews with Juana Quispe and with the MAS-IPSP's MP Shirley Suarez). Nonetheless, it would be a big mistake to downplay the power of the social movements, which increasingly act as corporatist organizations struggling for the access to the public resources, while the President acts as a "decider of last resort" of the multiple and contrasting demands. The Bolivian system of interest intermediation under the *masistas* governments must be understood as a complex "chamber of compensation" between the contrasting demands of the heterogeneous – and well-organised – social sectors taking part in the *Process of Change*.

The "anticolonial", anti-imperialist and "indigenous-communitarian" discourse of the origins has been gradually substituted by a statist, developmentalist project aiming at fostering economic growth and investing in vast social and development programs. The old pluralist, neoliberal (as well as clientelistic and corrupted) regime has thus been substituted by a statist-corporatist one, in which the old clientelistic networks – particularly in the urban centres – are now exploited by the ruling party, whereas the different organizations aligned with the government are often involved in opaque negotiations. Nonetheless, the mobilising capacity of the different social movements is still very high, and can be used as a resource for the negotiations within the ruling coalition, but also in order to back the governmental campaigns.

If the *masista* experience is, at least in its origins, a purely bottom-up process, the same cannot be said about the Argentine Kirchnerism. Néstor Kirchner reached the presidency when the "Argentine unemployed people outnumbered his voters", as it is often remarked. Back then he was a poorly known governor of a remote Southern Argentine

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[2] The *trillizas* ('triplets') are the CSUTCB (the Peasant Federation), the CSCIOB (the Rural Settlers' Federation) and the 'Bartolinas' (the Women Peasant Federation).

Province: he could win thanks to the endorsement by the exiting President, the right-of-center Peronist Duhalde, who chose to support him in order to prevent his archrival (and former President) Carlos Menem from winning the elections (Ostiguy 2005). Argentina was still trapped into a dramatic economic crisis, which provoked, among other things, an unprecedented unemployment rate, the default of its public debt and a drastic contraction of its GDP.

Social unrests were shocking the country since the mid- Nineties, when several movements, mostly formed by unemployed and public sector workers enrolled in radical unions, began organising road-blockages (*piquetes*) and popular uprisings (*puebladas*) throughout numerous provinces, firstly in the *Interior* and then in the Buenos Aires' Province (PBA), demanding the reversal of the austerity measures and the distribution of unemployment subsidies (*planes*) (Pereyra and Svampa 2003). The unrests extended to the middle class sectors when the centrist President De La Rúa opted for freezing the bank accounts (the infamous *corralito*) as a desperate defence of the dollarization of the economy. The result was the generalised and cross-class violent riots that forced De La Rúa to flee the Presidential Palace (December, 2001), an institutional crisis symbolised by the alternation of five Presidents in fifteen days and, finally, the interim Presidency of the former PBA's governor Duhalde. The Duhalde's term lasted just fourteen months and was characterised by a timid economic recovery and by persistent road-blockages organised by numerous *piqueteros'* groups, demanding jobs and the administration of the *planes,* in competition with the extended Peronist clientelistic machine.

In this unpromising scenario, Kirchner began a polarizing, *nacional y popular* discourse, claiming against the "old political class", "neoliberalism" and the "Fatherlands' enemies", putting in the same box the neoliberal governments of the Nineties and the reactionary military dictatorship of the 1976-1983 period. Concretely, he adopted a tougher stance and an anti-imperialist rhetoric towards the international economic institutions and the country creditors. At the same time, he began working for the prosecution of the army's officers involved in the human rights' violations during the Argentine dictatorship. Kirchner called for the recuperation of the traditional Peronist goals ("Economic Independency", "Political Sovereignty" and "Social Justice"), claiming for the consolidation of a "National Capitalism" and dialoguing with the bulk of the *piquetero* sectors and with both the "mainstream" and "dissident" Argentine labor movements (interviews with Carlos Sánchez – leading figure in the *Federación Tierra y Vivienda* movement – and with Héctor Cabrera – member of the Central Committee of the *Central de los Trabajadores de Argentina*). At the same time, he did not definitively break with the "Peronist old guard", being able to conduct the majority of the Peronist politicians

to his side, "freeing" himself from Duhalde's control and leaving him in an isolated position. The least voted President of the Argentine democracy soon was able to inaugurate the most stable governmental "era" in the modern times.

Kirchner's main ability was to present himself as a progressive figure – thus attracting vast middle class sectors, also thanks to the rapid economic recovery, as a product of his heterodox measures – *and* to retain the traditional Peronist popular constituencies (and, crucially, the majority of the Peronist local leaders). At the same time, he was able to incorporate (even offering governmental posts) into his coalition the most "dialoguist" social movements' and unions' leaders, through both programmatic and clientelistic exchanges (Boyanovski 2010; interview with Fernando Esteche – Leader of the *Movimiento Popular Quebracho*, a far-left Peronist group). These organizations soon would have formed the true "social bases" of the Kirchnerist project, i.e., its most faithful allies (interview with Sebastián Etchemendy, former officer in the Minister of Labour). This would have been evident during the so-called *Conflicto del Campo* (2008), which saw the government of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner opposed to the big rural landowners (backed by the political opposition) around the governmental attempt to raise the fiscal imposition of the soybeans' exports (Boyanovski 2010).

The long Kirchners' political era (under Néstor until 2007, and under Cristina until 2015) has been labelled by Arzadún (2013) as the "triumph of the politics over the economics". This implied the incorporation of the social movements (Rossi, 2015) into the polity domain, the empowerment of the bargaining power of the unions (Etchemendy and Collier, 2007), and, more generally, the introduction of a statist, anti-neoliberal economic project. At the same time, the government (particularly during Cristina's term) often resorted to the active mobilisation of its followers in order to show the popular support for its political campaigns. The Argentine political climate of the Nineties could be resumed by the title of the famous Martuccelli and Svampa's (1997) book, "*Empty Squares*", referring to the clientelistic and demobilising tactics adopted by the Peronist party under Menem (Levitsky 2003) and to the social disarticulation brought by neoliberalism. In turn, the Kirchnerism decisively contributed to the re-politicization of the Argentine society. Kirchners' governments provided multiple points of access to the polity domain to those movements' and unions' leaders willing to support the project, through a combination of progressive measures and traditional clientelism. In sum, it was a top-down political project, in which the grass-roots mobilization fulfilled two basic functions: to support the Leader against the political attacks from the opposition, and to defend the influence achieved by the movements into the decision-making process. The mobilising features were surely not restricted to the electoral moment, although, differently

from the Bolivian case, the "participative" element did not extend to the candidates' selection process, which remained confined to the decisions of the party's apparatus.

The two Southern European instances of participative-mobilising populism have erupted in the middle of the Great Recession. Podemos and the M5S merge a populist discourse, dividing the society into a "corrupt elite" and a "virtuous and exploited People", with a strong call for the active participation of the citizens in the public sphere. At the same time, both parties rely on a strong, if very different, leadership, representing the most visible "face" or "voice". Nonetheless, the differences between these two phenomena surely outnumber the similarities.

The theoretical definitions of populism by Mudde and Weyland help to capture some traits of the M5S' experience. Its pretension to represent the "general will of the People" (with possible clashes with a pluralist *Weltanschauung*) clearly emerges from statement like this: *"You asked me if we opened ourselves to the "civil society" [during the process of the formation of the first electoral lists for the Sicilian elections]. Well, we did not need to do that, because* we are the civil society*"* (Giancarlo Cancelleri, M5S' candidate for the Sicilian governorship in 2013, my interview). At the same time, the relationship between the founder and leader (the "guarantor" of the Movement, or the "megaphone" of the activists) Beppe Grillo and his followers is surely an *unmediated and uninstitutionalized* one, as Weyland puts. Nonetheless, an analysis of the M5S' experience based exclusively on these aspects would be limited.

The M5S puts a strong emphasis on the active participation of its activists in important activities such as the elaboration of the political programs and the selection of the partisan candidacies. Moreover, it stresses the centrality of the party-on-the-ground, which must primarily focus on territorial issues in a strongly autonomous way. It is precisely the peculiar internal organization, and its evolution through "diffusion" more than through "penetration" (Panebianco 1988), that allowed the M5S to present itself as a heterogeneous "aggregator of unsatisfied demands" (to use the Laclau's jargon) at the national and local level, often working side-by-side with local movements (Mosca 2014). Similarly to the MAS-IPSP, the M5S advances a drastic critique of the representative democracy *per se*, defending the introduction of an imperative mandate for their "speakers", i.e. the party's representatives in the public institutions.

One obvious difference is that, while the MAS-IPSP is conceived as the instrument of the organised bases, the M5S' are expected to fully adhere to the *political program* ("our Bible", as several interviewees defined it), whose legitimacy derives from the "constituent power" of the (individual) citizens. Similarly, the M5S often claims for having contributed to strengthen the *descriptive representation* of the Italian Parliament, through the election of "ordinary People" (*gente comune*). There is, here, some (vague) parallels

with the changes provoked by the irruption of the MAS-IPSP, although this party corrected the "White bias" in the Bolivian institutions through the inclusion of the delegates of its indigenous, peasant and corporatist organizations into the electoral lists.

Of course, this would be an ingenuous and idyllic portrait of the concrete functioning of the M5S. Its detractors rightly underscore, among other things, the power asymmetry between the leader and the bases and the resource owned by the former in order to "address" the internal debates towards already established positions (Tronconi 2015). According to an insider such as the former M5S' MP Zaccagnini (my interview), the own creation of the current "party's elite" clearly responded to a top-down process of selection of the most "faithful" followers of the leadership among the elected representatives of the Movement. Nonetheless, what is more relevant for this paper is the insufficient description of this political project as "*focused primarily on the output and not on the input of democracy*".

Podemos, in this sense similarly to Kirchnerism, does not attack representative democracy *per se*, instead attacking the "political and economic caste" that ruled in Spain since its transition to democracy. The rising of Podemos would be unconceivable without taking into account the *Indignados* (Hughes 2011) assembly-based movement (popularly known as *15-M*) and the following *Mareas* protesting against the cuts on public spending implemented by the right-of-center governments. The 15-M movement, in particular, represented a highly spontaneous mobilization organized through the web-based campaign *Real Democracy Now!*. The 15-M attacked the self-referential political system and the loss of popular sovereignty due to the domination of the international capital, as the famous slogan "*We are not goods at disposal to politicians and bankers!"* summarized.

Podemos does not aspire to represent the 15-M, and does not conceive itself as the "political instrument" of any social movements. Nonetheless, the "hypothesis" that led a few political scientists to the decision of creating a political party was based on the change in the Spanish political environment by the protest cycle inaugurated by the demonstrations in the Puerta del Sol square. Said otherwise, Podemos represents the attempt of bringing into the institutions the main demands of several horizontal movements such as the 15-M, the *Mareas* or the PAHs (*Platforms of the Victims of Banks' Evictions*), which achieved a strong resonance in the public sphere. The "hypothesis Podemos" relied on the belief that the *public institutions* and the own *nation-State* still keep an extraordinary potential for promoting social change, notwithstanding its power erosion and transfer to supranational and financial institutions (Errejón and Mouffe 2015).

Almost all the Podemos' leading figures, both at the national and regional levels, have an academic and/or militant background. Even at the grassroots levels, and differently

from the M5S, the double militancy (in the party and in civic associations or social movements) is majoritarian, according to the interviews I collected in different Podemos' Territorial Circles in Barcelona and Madrid and with several Podemos' members of regional parliaments.

Said this, the Podemos' project is mostly a top-down one. Since its origins it was centred on the charismatic and media-friendly figure of Pablo Iglesias, whose face represented the first party's brand in the electoral ballots for the 2014 European Parliamentary Elections. At the First Citizens' Assembly (i.e., the Party's Congress) held in Vistalegre (October, 2014), the party adopted a strongly hierarchical organogram, in order to build a smooth and efficient "electoral war machine" instead of a more horizontal internal organization. For sure, each internal office must be elected through the vote of the party's members. The low barriers to membership and the use of on-line voting procedure allow for high levels of participation of the bases. Moreover, Podemos, similarly to the M5S, strongly relies on the social media for its communicative strategy, and it has created several web-based tools in order to allow its membership for advancing legislative and programmatic proposals, although the relevance of these initiatives have remained quite limited.

Nonetheless, the party's elite (the inner circle led by the Podemos' founders) opted for a procedural voting system favouring the victory of "its" candidates in the elections for the Citizens' Congress (i.e., the Party's internal "Parliament"). At the same time, the elections for the main offices at the regional level saw the victory (with some exceptions) of those lists that received the "endorsement" of the national Directive Committee, thus increasing the "homogeneity" of the party's elites throughout all the different levels (interviews with Rodrigo Amírola – Member of the Podemos' Political Secretary – and with Luís Alegre – Former Podemos' Political Secretary in Madrid). Since the promising results achieved in the European Parliamentary Elections, the number of the Podemos' Circles (i.e., partisan sections, territorially or issue-based, which do not require to be a Podemos' member in order to join in) skyrocketed: nonetheless, the centralising process for the local elites' selection approximates the construction of its organization to a process of *territorial penetration* more than *diffusion*, to use Panebianco's terminology. In turn, the Circles have seen their relevance diminished, as their militants do not enjoy more "voice" in the Podemos' internal functioning than the "on-line" members of the party.

This potential lack of incentives to the off-line participation has been partially addressed through the implementation of the party's program *Impulsa,* which provides financial resources for the social, political and cultural initiatives organised by the Circles (interview with Sergio Arroyo – Member of the Podemos' Secretary of Participation).

Moreover, during the lively internal debate for the internal electoral campaign for the Second Citizens' Assembly (held in Vistalegre on February, 2017), it emerged the idea of strengthening the Circles through the destination of financial resources, in order to help building, thanks to the activities at the grassroots levels and in collaboration with the movements, that *National and Popular Movement* that Podemos aspire to be.

Therefore, in Podemos coexists a typically populist, polarising and interclassist rhetoric against the "political and economic caste", a strong leadership and a lively bottom-up participation of the bases. The Municipalist Platforms joined by Podemos that rule in Barcelona, Madrid and several other Spanish cities make the aspiration of facilitating the active citizens' involvement in the decision-making process even clearer. Once again, an understanding of populism as a corrective of the representative democracy based on "*enhanced accountability* rather than *increased participation*" proved to be insufficient to understand several, contemporary populist phenomena.

7. Concluding Remarks: The Populist (and Citizenist) Re-Politicization

All the instances of participative-mobilising populisms briefly discussed above stem from socioeconomic and political contexts that favoured their emergence. The crisis of the Washington Consensus hegemony in Latin America at the end of the Nineties and the Great Recession in Southern Europe, as well as the attempts of addressing both crises through orthodox (i.e., responding to the neoliberal "single thought") economic measures, nurtured popular reactions that provided the "political opportunity structure" for the emerging of participative-mobilising populist phenomena. They show a "majoritarian pretension" of "truly representing" the People, against those political elite that "sold" their public institutions to the economic ones and contributed to the power shift from the nation-State to obscure supranational and financial institutions.

Nonetheless, most of the contemporary populisms seem closer to the "electoral-delegative" pole. The electoral-delegative populisms stress the symbolic representation provided by a charismatic leader, who, moreover, pretends to act "in behalf of" his/her People and promises to "fix" the problems caused by the "old regime". In this sense, the restoration of the centrality of the nation-State is functional to give to the leader those power resources deliberately assigned by the "old regime" to some obscure supranational forces unaccountable to the People. Nonetheless, the People does not expect to be involved in the detailed management of the *res publica*: it just asks for a government respondent to its "general will".

This could surely lead to anti-pluralist directions, to portray as "privileged sectors" all the dissonant voices and to enter in collision with the institutional checks and balances. Nonetheless, and differently from the classic totalitarian regimes, the final goal is to allow the "common people" to improve their living conditions in their *private sphere*: in this sense, it could be said that even the re-politicisation that electoral-delegative populisms advance is functional to a subsequent de-politicisation, similarly to the ideological project of the "neo-populists" of the Nineties.

In contrast, those populisms closer to the "participative-mobilising" pole aims at politicising the public decisions both at the local and national levels, through the recuperation of the nation-State and the direct involvement of the citizens in the decision-making process, thus trying to revert the process of social atomisation provoked by the neoliberal hegemony. In the case of the M5S, nonetheless, the kind of participation promoted is on an individual basis, thus conceiving itself as expression of the "general will" of the People. Podemos, in turn, has been able to position itself as a kind of "favourite interlocutor" for the antineoliberal social movements, defending its role as autonomous political actor. In both cases, the recurrent use of the concept of *citizen* shows the commitment of these projects towards a sort of "informed activation" of the citizenship.

In the Bolivian and Argentine cases, the incorporation of the People into the polity domain is achieved more through the intermediation of the popular social movements and organizations than on an individual basis. The concept of *citizen* is clearly substituted, in the MAS-IPSP and Kirchnerism rhetoric, by the concept of *People(s)* and *Nation(s)*, two collective ideas that must be intended in a communitarian and anti-imperialist way, completely at odds with the individualistic ideological hegemony of the Nineties and potentially less compatible with a liberal democratic regime (although they clearly represent *democratic* experiences). In my view, the enormous disparities in terms of resources, between the sociological profile of the M5S and Podemos' activists and those forming the bulk of the MAS-IPSP and Kirchnerist electorates explain the different *Weltanschauung* and repertoires, between the Latin American *populisms* and the European *citizenisms*.

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