POPULISM AS AN ENTITY, ITS MANIFESTATIONS AND THE STUDY OF POPULISM AT THE REGIME LEVEL

Rescuing Democratic Popular Parties from Populists

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, Orhun Kırlaç, candidate for the MA degree in Political Science declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

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ABSTRACT

The existing literature on populism fails to answer many questions regarding the implications of populism at the regime level. This study argues that this is a consequence of not applying diverse definitions of populism to relevant questions. Through a theoretical evaluation of the existing definitions, it is argued that a distinction between populism as a political style and *populism as an 'entity'* should be made, and latter should apply to regime-related questions. Populism as an entity, however, should be studied at where it *manifests* itself, that is *regime preferences*. Based on these arguments, this thesis finds that the genus of populism at the regime level is made up of *actors for regime ends*. One of these actors is populists, which are elite-centred actors with authoritarian regime preferences. However, actors which have democratic regime preferences, and which constitute a channel for ordinary citizens to involve in government level politics should be distinguished from them, something which current theory fails to do. These actors are *democratic popular parties*. Finally, it is argued that these findings can help the study of populism at regime level by detecting a clearer analytical ground for research and separating the actors who have different regime-related actions from each other.

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INTRODUCTION

Populism, is one of the most controversial, yet most commonly used concepts in the field of political science. Since its appearance in the 19th century, the concept had gained widespread attention in the literature in different periods. The last wave of ‘populist’ politics that has risen since the 1990s had put it once again in the central stage, especially with the rise of the actors like Erdoğan and Orban, and election of Trump in the United States. The reason for interest in populism, however, is not limited to that. The rise of abovementioned actors, coincided with the perception that mainstream political parties such as Macron’s Renaissance, UK Conservative Party, or social democratic Republican People’s Party in Turkey are increasingly using a populist appeal to their electors. The consequence of this in the field of populism, was competing definitions and theoretical frameworks. Some authors define populism as a political ‘style’, ‘discursive repertoire’, a ‘symbolic appeal to the sociocultural low’ (Brubaker 2017; Kazin 1995; Moffit 2016; Mouffe 2019; Ostiguy 2017; Stavrakakis 2014) while others call it an idea or a ‘thin-centred ideology’ (Mudde 2004; Mudde and Kaltwasser 2013; Pappas 2019) or a political strategy resembling a form of party organisation (Weyland 2017).

This perplexity, together with heavily loaded journalistic use of the concept has led some authors to question the utility of the concept. For example, Manuel Cervera-Marzal opposes to the use of the concept of populism for he thinks that it is used with the purpose of stigmatising non-centrist movements both to the left and right (2020, 634). Similarly, Yannis Stavrakakis argues that the concept is used for condemning popular demands, despite he does not oppose to the use of the concept totally (2014, 505). Whether or not we call it populism, however, it is beyond doubt that there are phenomena that are worth studying. Autocratisation brought about by actors like Orban or Erdoğan is a phenomenon that cannot be denied attention, especially considering significant differences they have with more 'traditional' forms of authoritarianism such as the Franco dictatorship in Spain or the military regime in Greece between 1967 and 1974. Neither is it meaningless to pay attention to the perception that Macron more and more reminds everyone the so-called 'populists.' Even in the case that this perception does not reflect reality, why is there such a perception?

Inspiration for the main question of this thesis comes from this perplexity in the field, together with the acknowledgement that there are phenomena worth studying for understanding what is taking place in democractic regimes all across the globe, if anything is taking place at all. In most of the studies of populism, actors like Syriza or Podemos are considered under populism together with Erdoğan's AKP, Orban's Fidesz or Chavez's political movement. Under particular conceptualisations of populism, this might be analytically valid for certain questions. However, considering authoritarian tendencies in the latter group and lack of a -at least easily detectable- similar tendency in the former, is it analytically useful to lump these all in together when studying these actors' effects on the regimes? The closest answer to this question comes from Chantal Mouffe (2019), emphasising a left-right divide in populism arguing that left-populism could strengthen liberal democracies. However, if this divide is right, should we call Chavez regime democratic due to its left-leaning ideology? These issues point out to the existence of some unanswered questions regarding populism's regime implications and lack of a theoretical framework that can answer these questions. In response to this, the main question of this thesis is *how can populism be studied at the regime level*?

A re-evaluation of the existing literature proves that the current study of populism is not necessarily as perplexed as it seems, however. What is necessary is to apply the right definitions and frameworks to the right questions regarding populism. To establish this at the regime-related questions, and inspired by Moffitt's words that 'populism (as a political style) is something that is done instead of a thing or entity' (2016), a division between closely related, yet diverse phenomena worthy of studying is necessary. One is *populism as something that is done* in the words of Moffit, which represents the branch of literature that defines populism as a political style or performance, and is useful for analysing how electoral politics is pursued by politicians. It can be used by most, if not all political traditions for diverse political ends. I argue that the second is *populism as an entity*, which is not just a style of doing politics, but instead defined either as an ideology, idea or a political organisational structure. It is the latter that matters for populism's study at the regime level, for the former might be utilised for diverse regime related ends as it is mainly a mean for different goals. Identification of *populism as an entity* does not directly lead to understanding populism's regime implications, on the other hand. To be able to do this, this thesis argues that the main focus of populism's study at the regime level should be where populism is *manifested* at the regime level, that is *regime preferences*. An incorporation of the discussions provided by Murat Akan in *the Politics of Secularism* (2017) in regard to ideas and institutional outcomes and political ends, enables this thesis to fill the gap between various definitions of populism as an entity and populism's regime implications. Consequently, the genus question is also answered: populism at the regime level should be studied as one among the *actors for regime ends*.

Upon this basis of studying populism at the regime level, two further questions naturally arise, first of which is *what are populism's implications at the regime level*? A theoretical discussion based on the existing literature on populism, democracy and public sphere of opinion formation leads to the conclusion that populism as it manifests itself at the regime level is an *authoritarian regime preference*, and it is pursued by *elite-centred actors*, which means that it is not a channel for the inclusion of the ordinary citizens to politics at the government level. However, this contradicts with what most of the literature detects as the main arguments of the populist actors in regards to their regime goals, that is restating a 'true' popular sovereignty by bringing 'people' back into politics (Mudde 2004; Mudde and Kaltwasser 2013; Pappas 2019; Taggarts 2000). However, most of the current studies do not make a distinction between actors that democratise regimes further while also nurturing inclusion of ordinary citizens to governmental level politics and those who do the opposite if they use a similar language. This is a consequence of studying the actors either by looking at their discourse, or at their ideological affiliations. This is where the second question is: *are all the actors conceptualised as populist at the regime level actually populist?* This thesis argues that studying populism at the regime level based on a conceptualisation of populism as an entity, focusing on how this entity manifests itself at the regime level and by identifying the centrality of popular actors for democratisation through a review of historical works can help answering this question. By creating a three-dimensional space for identifying actors through a theoretical discussion, this thesis argues that there are two distinct actors seeking governmental power, but lumped in together under populism in current analytical frameworks. One is *populists*, which has authoritarian regime preferences and is elite-led as demonstrated by Sozen (2019) earlier. The main contribution of this thesis, is defining the other, the *democratic popular parties*, which have democratic regime preferences and are channels for further inclusion of citizens to governmental level politics. I argue that this distinction may provide an analytical ground for answering many significant questions such as *why strong populist movements appear* and *why masses' perception of democratic deficit is translated into authoritarian mobilisations, and not to democratic ones*?

DEFINITIONS OF POPULISM AND THE STUDY OF POPULISM AT THE REGIME LEVEL

One branch of literature defines populism as a ‘political style’, ‘repertoire’, ‘mode of persuasion’ or ‘ways of acting or being in politics’ (Moffit 2016; Kazin 1995; Brubaker 2017; Ostiguy 2017) which can be summed up as a ‘way of doing politics.’ Moffit, one of the influential authors in this branch of literature of populism, argues that mediatisation is becoming a significant part of politics and this is critical to bring populism to the 21st century context. In line with this, he argues that populism is a political style that consists of repertoires of symbolical performances that produce spaces of power (Peetz 2017, 494-495; Moffit 2016, 29). Two significant features of this political style are its emphasis on people and elite dichotomy and on the ‘performance of crisis, breakdown or threat’ (Moffit 2016, 45). As Peetz argues, a significant contribution of Moffit is his incorporation of the performativity literature into populism studies, and his conceptualisation of the politician as the performer, and the people as the audience (Peetz 2017, 495). Kazin (1995) on the other hand, participates in the discussion regarding the populism of the People’s Party in 1890s in the United States and its link to McCarthyism (Postel 2019, 4). According to Kazin, it is true that the two movements do not share a common ideology, but what is common in them is a ‘mode of persuasion’, and this is what populism in reality is (Kazin 1995). Overall, he claims that populism is a ‘language or style’ that delineates the people as a ‘noble assemblage’ and juxtaposes it with the elites (Kazin 1995). Consequently, populism acted as both ‘hope and menace’ in the US politics for centuries, and as claimed by Judis, who builds up his framework on Kazin’s arguments, it was utilised across time and contexts: by the left-wing People’s party, post-WW II American right-wing, and then by Le Pen in France (Judis 2016, 14-19, 88-89).

Pierre Ostiguy, another influential author in populism, can be grouped within this family of definitions of populism. Ostiguy, comes up with a relational definition of populism with a focus on its socio-cultural dimension (2017, 73). He conceives political appeals in a high-low dimension of socio-cultural appeals. ‘The low’ appeals to the ‘unpresentable other’ and works with the symbols of the ‘true people’, those who are ‘one of us’, while the ‘high’ symbolises the opposite (75-77). It does not depend on whether the leader is rich, advantaged or not. In this sense, populism is a way of performing the low in politics and ‘mobilising the unpresented other.’ In other words, populism is ‘flaunting the low’ (77-89). Ostiguy differentiates populism from pure manipulation however. Instead it is not exclusively a top-down relationship, but a ‘two-way phenomenon.’ Consequently, populism is not a worldview or ideology, it is identity creation (73). One final aspect of Ostiguy’s approach, is that populism is not particularly tied to either left or right movements or to particular regimes. Neither it is by definition related to being democratic or not. Any actor to be found within these paradigms might mobilise the ‘high’ or the ‘low’ (Ostiguy 2017, 75-77). One final author that should be mentioned within this approach is Rogers Brubaker (2017). Brubaker evaluates the criticisms for the usefulness of the populism as a concept, some of them being harbouring too diverse political programs or being too normatively loaded (359). He argues that conceptualisation of populism as a political style overcomes these problems, as it is a form of discursive and stylistic repertoire that is used across many political actors (360). According to him, populism itself is a ‘political repertoire … [that] seeks to characterise … constituent elements’, and populist styles have ‘relatively standardised elements’ that is open to contextual elaboration, and is conceptualised in a family resemblance fashion (361). Consequently, populist style and repertoire might be utilised by democratic or antidemocratic, left or right ends.

One major criticism that might be raised for this definition of populism is that in fact it might be identical with the ordinary practice of electoral politics, thus it is used almost by all and almost in everywhere at any time, thus the concept of populism in itself is meaningless and analytically useless. It is also true that populism as a political style, repertoire and performance, is time to time used to mobilise in a normatively loaded sense due to its vague definition in the literature. Even without normative bias, in case it is perceived almost identical to electoral propaganda might make its use meaningless. In response to this, most of the authors put significant limits to the concept to distinguish it from other forms of electoral rhetoric, such as the symbolic use of a barely defined people -as in Taggart's heartland (2000)- or a distinctively built antagonism in the appeal (Brubaker 2017, 364). However, Brubaker's intervention is also significant to answer these criticisms. Brubaker, by defining populism as a political stylistic repertoire, argues that populism is a matter of degree, and parts of this repertoire might be mobilised time to time with different intensity. His statement that this repertoire is 'chronically available' but 'not chronically deployed', shows that there are moments that this repertoire is utilised especially commonly (362). Thus, it is possible to distinguish moments of populism from non-populism, as we can distinguish how in response to Le Pen or UKIP, the mainstream Macron or the British Conservative party might be using a more populist style compared to former eras.

It is then, possible to argue that the definition of populism as a political style is useful for certain analytical purposes, mainly detecting the difference in certain political agents' way of building their rhetoric, how public discussions regarding common matters are evolving or changing, how these discourses affect political participation or democracy, and others. Despite some rightful criticisms, the concept of populism as a political style, repertoire, or performance is possibly salvable through interventions. However, populism as a political style is still unable to answer some major questions at the regime level. For example, if both the social democratic Republican People's Party in Turkey -the main democratic opposition to Erdoğan regime- and Erdoğan himself are using a populist style, are the regime implications of the two actors same? Answer could simply be authoritarianism of the latter, but then, what is the difference between Colonels' Junta in Greece between 1967 and 1974 and Erdoğan's regime in Turkey? Are they the same type of authoritarianism, and are their vision regarding the people and its relation to authority same? These questions, as they cannot be answered by the populism as a political style in an uneasy fashion, show that there is another phenomenon that is worth studying. This is a phenomenon that might be related to the political style, but is different from that. Moffit says, populism is something that is done, and not a thing or entity (2016, 96). The fact that populism defined as political style is something that is *done*, should not disregard the fact that there might be a 'thing' or 'entity' worth studying. That phenomenon that cannot be studied through the lens of populism as a style, I argue, is an *entity* that is either an ideology, a political organisational style or another. Thus, the problem is not that if there is 'populism that is something that is done' there cannot be 'populism as a thing or entity', but use of these two in an interchangeable manner. This thesis does not argue however, that the 'entity' worth studying should necessarily be called populism. However, for purposes of convenience, the term 'populism' is utilised throughout this thesis due to its prevalence in the literature.

Urbinati (2019, 117), argues that definition of populism as a political style lacks the ability to capture the different anti-establishment position of populism from republican paradigm, democratic partisanship and traditional oppositional politics. According to her, this is due to lack of attention to how populism relate to institutional aspects of democracy, and she argues that the 'strategy' approach can instead do so. Despite that this thesis does not argue that populism as a political style should necessarily do so, as it has analytical utility for studying other issues such as those indicated above, Urbinati is right in that the strategy approach is closer to detecting the necessity to study the 'entity' in Moffit's words. As the main representative of this approach, Kurt Weyland (2001) works with the perplexity in the field of populism as he thinks that conceptual non-clarity causes authors to 'talk past each other' (1). He criticises the style approach in that many political figures who would not be identified as populist would time to time use a populist style, thus this definition impedes authors from determining the cases of populism clearly (12). Putting it into the perspective of this thesis, Weyland is right in that populism as a style can hinder the study of populism as an 'entity' by blending the positive and negative cases if it travels to this level of analysis. In response, Weyland defines populism as a political strategy in which a charismatic, personalistic leader builds an uninstitutionalised support base through unmediated relations between the leader and its supporters (14). There is no significant intermediary organisation between the followers and the leader, and this lack of institutionalisation subordinates the former to the latter (14). It is thus, possible to conceive Weyland's definition of 'populism as a strategy' as a form of political organisational structure. In line with this, Weyland argues that what differs populism from traditional party organisations is that as it lacks an institutionalised support mechanism which ties supporters to the party -and make the party itself the 'ruler-, the leader must base themselves by intense contact with the support base and charisma to compensate for the lack of sustained loyalty towards organised parties (13). Finally, he argues that if populists 'choose success' and get to stay in power, they must institutionalise this relationship similar to the traditional parties. This means that 'populist leadership is transitory' (14). Although Weyland's accounts capture very critical issues regarding the organisational features of populist political actors, there is room for criticism regarding certain issues. Weyland argues that as support to populist leaders is not institutionalised but is maintained through patron-client ties, the loyalty of the supporters can easily decline if expectations are not met (13). However, examples such as Erdoğan's high support rates despite economic crisis, high unemployment or poverty shows that this is probably not true, and the relation between the populists and the masses has something that makes it resistant. Another is his argument regarding the transitoriness of populism, and the necessity of its abolishment when the leader is in power. The examples of Erdoğan or Peron shows that instead populism abolishes itself when it is in power, the populist 'strategy' -or form of organisation- can instead spread to the whole state and democratic mechanism by de-institutionalising the channels through which the masses reach the governing circles. This has further implications, however. If populism is a strategy in the sense it is used by Weyland, and it is a organisational form that leaders use in response to changing leadership expectations, why it spreads to whole state and political institutions when populists come to power? Weyland's 'strategy' provides a valuable framework for understanding how a populist way of organisation effects democratic relationships between the represented and the representative. However, it does not explain why this organisation spreads to a whole political system. The line of literature that defines populism as an idea or ideology, on the other hand, can answer this question.

Takis Pappas (2019), defines populism as the idea that sovereignty should be owned and practiced by the 'people', and sees institutions as a menace before that (33). It is thus, against the liberal democratic framework which provides checks against tyranny of the majority, enables pluralism in society and safeguarding individual interest from the political. He argues that the exact conceptualisation of the 'people' depends on the context, yet what is common in all populisms is that the people is the majority, homogenous and has 'moral rights' (33). Overall, he argues that populism is the same thing as democratic illiberalism, in other words, it is 'always democratic but never liberal' (35). However, Pappas's definition misses capturing the importance of a 'populist elite'. It is true that populists most of the time claim that their rule is a way for people to be real sovereigns, but taking this discourse literally undermines the theory of populism, as it would hardly be right to claim that the populists imagine an eliteless society. It is after all no coincidence that most authors of populism emphasise the central role of the leader in populist parties. Cas Mudde (2004) partly answers this gap by giving a more central role to the leader in his framework. He defines populism as a thin centred ideology that divides society into the 'pure people' and 'corrupt elite', and realising the 'volante general' should be the basis of politics (543). It is, a thin centred ideology, because it does not have the same degree of robust intellectual basis as other ideologies, and it attaches itself to more refined ideologies (544). However, Mudde's conceptualisation still does not fully answer to the issue of the 'populist elite'. He argues that a charismatic leader and 'direct communication' are important in populism, yet they are merely its facilitators and are not central to it (545). However, as is explained later in this thesis, the relationship between the 'populist elite' and the followers are central to understanding populism, thus the populist elite should be incorporated to the basis of populism's definition and theory to capture its distinctive place within/vis-a-vis democratic regimes -or political regimes in which it operates in general. Secondly, the argument that unmediated sovereignty of the people is at the basis of populist idea or ideology also misses a significant issue central to what populism is and how it operates in relation to political regimes. As is explained later, the way that populism builds the relationship between the populist elite and its constituents, makes this relationship top-down and not necessarily a medium of unmediated sovereignty as Sozen (2019) suggests. The fact that Pappas defines populism as an idea and Mudde as a thin centred ideology does not make a significant analytical difference also. Pappas's idea can be incorporated into different ideologies, as well as Mudde's thin centred ideology, thus both explain how a nationalist and religious party can be populist. Most important overall, is the fact that definition of populism as an idea/ideology explains why populism changes the political system when it is in power, unlike a strategy approach which expects it to be an organisational style of parties or political movements that assimilate into the traditional party structures and act within the existing boundaries of the democratic regime when it comes to power.

Nadia Urbinati (2019) in her theory of populism detects the issue of the 'populist elite' and incorporates it to her framework and her definition of populism centrally. She criticises the ideational approach of Mudde and Kaltwasser (2013) for not accounting for the issue of representation and the leader's role (Urbinati 2019, 116). Building upon Manin's work (1997), she argues that party democracy of the current liberal democratic system was obtained by pluralising leadership in a fight against the 'government of notables', and argues that populism denies this plurality (119). Consequently, she argues that the populist leadership demands the 'good' majority to identify with its representative ruler. According to her, the thin-centred ideology approach misses this 'intolerant ruler' who builds a relationship of faith with its followers, and she argues that populism is in fact a 'form of direct representation' (120). Capturing this point has fundamental consequences for understanding what populism is at the regime level -capturing what populism in power is, as Urbinati precisely emphasises-, as this has direct consequences for understanding how populism relates to democracy. In a similar fashion, Urbinati defines populism in power as a 'new form of mixed regime', in which a certain part of the population gains strength over the rest of the society and conflicts with constitutional democracy for a different kind of representational relation, what Urbinati calls 'direct representation' (124). This, according to her, is another kind of democracy in which the leader and the people have a more direct relationship, which makes it different from direct democracy (120, 124). Her remarks regarding populism in power is not a form of direct democracy are significant, and are partly a result of the fact that she identifies the 'populist elite'[1], however whether this new form of mixed regime is a kind of democracy is open to discussion and is discussed later in the section regarding democracy and populism. By her remarks about populism in power and adding the 'populist elite' to this framework, Urbinati makes another crucial contribution, that is detecting populism's manifestation as a regime preference when in power, and a kind of relationship between the ruler and the ruled. Mudde (2004) and Pappas (2019) miss this point by excluding the 'populist elite' from their theory, which hinders the ability to capture how such an ideology necessarily transforms the institutional relations when in power. Weyland's strategy approach, captures the change in elite-mass relationship, but by diminishing populism to a strategy -or a party organisation- misses how and why this relationship transforms the whole regime when it has enough power. Urbinati fills this gap.

Despite Urbinati criticises the ideational approach, and the thin ideology definition, it is hardly proper to argue that her framework completely contradicts with such a definition in an insurmountable manner. Firstly, she herself mentions that populism is an ideology, which constructs trust through faith rather than open deliberation (Urbinati 2019, 122), and she defines populism as a new form of mixed regime and a new kind of democracy only when it is in power (124). However, problematising the relationship between ideology and regime preference is crucial to study populism at the regime level. Murat Akan (2017), in his work analysing how different secular institutional outcomes happened in France and Turkey, comes up with a discussion regarding the relationship between ideas and institutions, which is significant for not falling to a kind of 'ideological determinism' in populism's study at the regime level. Akan argues that most former studies -who claim to do Weberian analysis- put a lot of emphasis in the significance of ideas and reinterpretations of secularism in determining

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[1] It is also worthy to note that direct democracy, as can be exemplified in its Athenian form, is not free of checks and balances institutionalised in forms different from those of the constitutional democracy, as Sozen (2019) argues.

institutional outcomes. However, these accounts lack an explanation of how ideas relate to institutions precisely (17). He turns his attention to Weber himself and to anthropologist Clifford Geertz, and argues that Weber himself claimed that there is a gap between ideas and conducts which should be paid attention to. Akan also adds that, Geertz finds out that there is no simple isomorphic mode between 'meaning' and 'action', and the interaction of the two can happen through a wide range of modes (18).

What does it mean for the study of populism at the regime level, then? In line with this, I argue that whatever populism as an entity is -an ideology, idea, or a new kind of relationship between the represented and the representative[2]- it *manifests itself* as a certain kind of regime preference and this is what precisely matters for its analytical use in understanding its relationship with democracy. The populist leaders and parties might have this regime preference because of their ideological commitments to a 'populist ideology', they might also do so for they see it conducive to another ideology or normative preference they have. They might even have this regime preference for material interest. What matters in the end is what sort of a regime they fight for. Studying these motivations might be significant for other questions regarding populism, but at the regime level, they do not matter as regime preference encapsulates all kinds of motivations ranging from ideology to interest, when it is contextually limited[3].

Here it is significant to discuss one issue that might seem to contradict with Akan's framework. Akan argues that ideas are not completely irrelevant and looking only at institutional choices might undermine the study of secularism (2017, 17-18). He argues that institutional frameworks might be preferred by actors pursuing different ends as a result of the

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[2] In fact, it is better to say between the elite and its constituent masses, as Sozen (2019) is most probably right in that it is no more than a representative relationship.

[3] To see why contextual limitation is significant for the validity of this argument, please see the chapter 'the Genus and the Generalisability of Populism at the Regime Level: Actors for Ends.'

contextual constraints that they act within -for example if an actor who wants religion to control all public space cannot feasibly provide an institutional framework enabling this, it might support the same institutions with those who want state neutrality towards religion as it is the best possible alternative to institutions demobilising religion-. To control for this, in addition to institutional choices, he studies *argumentations* which are based on different logics regarding religion and public space and he captures the difference between actors with same institutional choices but different ends regarding religion (28). This should not necessarily conflict with taking regime preference as the main locus of populism at the regime level. In Akan's analysis regarding secularism, mobilisation-demobilisation of religion and state neutrality are the main *ends* pursued by the actors. Institutional choices are the *means*. For populism at the regime level the *end* for the populists is the regime. This is so, because the concept of regime by definition includes inclusion/exclusion of the populus to political arena, which might be the political *ends* for actors who have normative commitments to popular/elitist rule. The concept of regime also captures other motivations relating to power such as interest: constraints over the executive are surely a significant matter for a leader who might be after the *ends* that are gains of power or wealth. This is very similar to a Catholic Party's aim for mobilising religion in Third Republic France. In other words, regime preference is equivalent of the preferences towards religion's place in public space, not of institutional choices regarding secularism.

POPULISM AS AN *ENTITY* AND DEMOCRACY

Theorising populism without acknowledging the central role of the populist elite has certain consequences for understanding populism's relationship with democracy. As Pappas (2019) argues that populism is the idea that people should own the sovereignty without the interruption of the institutions -namely, liberal constitutionalism-, he naturally concludes that populism is 'always democratic and never liberal'. Mudde and Kaltwasser (2013), acknowledge some place to leadership in populism, yet argue that this is not central to populism. They, therefore, detect an ambivalent relationship between democracy and populism and argue that it is both a 'threat and corrective' for it (206). According to them, populism can benefit democracy by increasing inclusion of marginalised segments of the society, while its negative stance towards public contestation and opposition affect democracy in a negative manner (206). More significantly, Mudde and Kaltwasser argue that populists see constitutional checks and balances as a menace before the realisation of popular sovereignty, thus the prefer forms of direct democracy to the liberal democratic framework. However, they are not against democratic representation per se, instead, they are suspicious of unelected bodies. Consequently, they argue that populism is a form of 'democratic extremism' (207, 208). The problem with this approach is that they tend to view populism as a force for less mediated, stronger popular sovereignty, different from constitutional democracy and similar to direct democracy, or isonomy in the Athenian sense as explained by Arendt ([1963] 1987, 30). However, an analysis of populism that detects the centrality of the populist elite in populist's regime preferences, together with an understanding of constitutional democracy as a complex structure of institutions that are embedded in each other in the way that Wolfgang Merkel (2004) argues -together with its criticism by Levitsky and Way (2010)-, proves otherwise.

As Arendt (1987 [1963], 30) and Manin (1997, 28) argue, the principle that lies behind Athenian democracy is to rule and being ruled in turn. Such an understanding is based on the principle that there is no differentiation between the people and the ruler, consequently it is not possible to talk about the autonomy of the ruler (Sozen 2019, 271). The populist elite, on the other hand, does not mean to destroy representation per se, but wants to develop an alternative way of representation. As Urbinati puts into words, populism is actually ‘a way of elite transformation’ (2014, 157), mainly for a new kind of representative regime. Regardless of whether populists develop a rhetoric of unmediated popular sovereignty -which can easily be part of the rhetoric of many other political actors-, populism actually is not in favour of direct democracy, or unmediated popular rule in the Athenian sense for it does not aim to create a political regime without differentiated rulers.

If they are not in favour of completely unmediated popular sovereignty, or what ancients called isonomy as indicated by Arendt ([1963] 1987, 30), what is the meaning of their regime preferences for democracy[4], then? To answer this question, it is necessary to evaluate the kind of democratic institutional framework in which they operate -that is constitutional democracy-, and how they aim to change it. For this, Merkel’s (2004) concept of embeddedness has crucial significance. Merkel argues that, if they are not combined with other procedures and institutions, elections by themselves do not fulfil their democratic duty (37). This is because if they do not guarantee various political rights that enable opposition in between elections and accountability of the governing to the governed, they are self-destructive (35) According to him, (constitutional) democracies developed partial regimes such as political and civil rights or division of powers and horizontal accountability, which are embedded in each other in the sense that they survive by depending on each other and

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[4] Here the concept of democracy is not used only to mean liberal or constitutional democracy, but democracy as a type of regime in which the people govern themselves in its possible various form.

reinforcing each other (43). This is mainly provided by constitutionality and liberal institutions. Consequently, he argues that ‘democracy is a complex of interdependent and independent partial regimes’ (43). In other words, as Sozen puts it into words clearly, it is not possible to single out any institution within constitutional democracy as the democratic or oligarchic part of representative democracy (275), which means that they tend to act democratic only when in relation to each other. On the other hand, Merkel argues that when a particular partial regime lacks in the system, ‘logic of a constitutional democracy becomes disrupted’ (Merkel 2004, 48). He defines these political systems as ‘defective democracies’. However, Levitsky and Way (2010) argue against calling these regimes democracy. According to them, when such institutional frameworks are disrupted, the level of electoral manipulation, harassment and violence against opposition forces, and the destruction of civil and political liberties reach to an extend that these regimes are no longer truly democratic, even though political competition is not yet completely eliminated in every case (3, 5). Consequently, they argue that such regimes are another kind of non-democratic regime, which they call ‘competitive authoritarianism’ (3, 4). Coming from the perspective of Sozen who puts this into the historical perspective of Manin (1997), who claims that representative government was an idea of mixed oligarchic and democratic rule, the conclusion is that the democratisation of these mixed systems is provided by pluralising leadership (Urbinati 2019, 119,) thus giving the ‘divide and rule’ power to the hands of the people for decreasing the elite’s autonomy (Sozen 2019, 271). Consequently, Levitsky and Way are right in that such diversion from constitutional democracy is an exit to non-democracy.

In line with this, if democracy is taken as liberal or constitutional democracy, an ‘illiberal democracy’ is no democracy unless it comes up with an alternative framework to enable principle of ruling and being ruled at the same time, or in other words non-separation of the governed and the governing-, as Sozen also suggests similarly for lack of institution building by populists (2019, 269). Or alternatively, they must create alternative institutional solutions for keeping the governed act responsible to the demos if the ruler is to remain separate from the ruled. Populism lacks both of them at the regime level. It aims to enable the governance of the one and only ‘moral elite’ (Mudde 2004, 543), it is against the existence of oppositional forces (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2013, 206) and it aims to overcome institutional mechanisms which it sees as a hindrance of the will of the people (Pappas 2019, 33). Thus, populism does not abolish the centrality of the political elite. Neither does it accept pluralisation of the elite, which enables the demos to use the divide and rule for its sovereignty. It is also against institutional checks and balances, which protects citizens political rights and limits the elites’ power vis a vis the demos. Whatever its main goal is, where it manifests itself, that is regime choices, populism is force for autocratisation and not for democratisation.

The works that detect the central position of the elite tend to put a clearer distinction between direct democracy and populism, and also can detect the authoritarian tendencies in populism better. Finchelstein and Urbinati (2018), argue that populism alters the public opinion’s tenor, yet this change is not bottom up but rather through the representative (20). Urbinati, in her 2019 work, adds that the new relationship between the leader is based on faith, rather than open deliberation, and consequently she rules out the argument that populism is related to direct democracy (120). Instead, it is a form of direct representation. The most significant consequence of this reading is defining populism as a transmutation or transfiguration of representative democracy (Finchelstein and Urbinati 2018, 15; Urbinati 2019, 118). According to Finchelstein and Urbinati (2018), populism reinterprets democracy’s fundamentals, it undermines its procedures, and undermines equal political liberty by turning elections into a practice that excludes minorities outside of its own majority, and damages the principle that democracy belongs to all citizens (23, 27). Therefore, it transforms liberal democracy to a new type of democracy that is realised through a new, direct relationship between the masses and the leader (Urbinati 2019, 124), which means it constructs new channels for popular sovereignty at the expense of democracy ‘as we know it’ (124). In this sense, she argues that it is kind of an ‘audience democracy’ (121).

These authors, argue that populism at the regime level is not yet an exit from democracy, but is ‘democracy stretched to its extreme borders’, and is constitutional democracy’s ‘internal periphery’ (Finchelstein and Urbinati 2018, 15 ; Urbinati 2019, 118). In other words, by identifying the elite along with its aim of transforming elite-mass relations and its implications at regime preferences, they detect the potential authoritarian tendency within populism. According to this line of argument, since populists aim for creating a new kind of representative relationship between the elite and the masses, the regime framework they advocate is not a kind of direct democracy, but a form of majoritarianism instead. This new relationship brings out a certain kind of popular sovereignty (Urbinati 2019, 124). However, this popular sovereignty and the ‘people’ behind it are constructed in a manner that is hostile to the democratic principle that allows for open contestation between the majority and the opponent (Urbinati 2019, 124). Taggart argues that populists flexibly articulate the ‘people’ as they need, they construct a people that is the majority and good at the expense of minorities they define to be representing special interests and corrupting politicians (2000, 92, 93, 95). In line with this, Urbinati agrees with Arato in that a people as an imaginary entity is created which is ‘incarnated in the leader’ (Urbinati 2019, 122). However, this majority is the moral one, along with its leader, and is always the right one (122) and the minorities are a ‘disease’ (Finchelstein and Urbinati 2018 24). This differentiation of populist majority from democracy’s basis that democracy belongs to citizens as a whole, dangerously transforms democracy to a ‘regime of majority against minority’ (Finchelstein and Urbinati 2018, 27, 29). Finchelstein and Urbinati call this an ‘authoritarian understanding of how democracy should be ruled' (2018, 24). Looking at its historical trajectory, they argue that populism is a kind of post-fascism for the post-WW II period in which fascism is not a realistic antiliberal option anymore. This post-fascism brings together elections, remaining democratic institutions and a leader embodying the 'people' when in power, which enables it to create a narrower democracy by not destroying it (Finchelstein and Urbinati 2018, 17, 26, 27). They do not completely disregard the possibility of an exit from democracy, however. Considering the excess power the populist elites have in their relationship with their supporters, they argue that populism creates the risk of transforming democracy into the rule of a tiny elite. When they have enough power, populist leaders and parties might try to obtain an unbounded power and prolong their rule (Finchelstein and Urbinati 2018; Roberts 2013, 153; Urbinati 2019, 121).

On the other hand, an evaluation of the role of public sphere and public opinion formation in democracy is significant to problematise majoritarian aspect of populism. Habermas argues that a social domain of communicative interactions enables reason to open way to political emancipation of societies, and this kind of discursive rationality enables communication free of domination (De Angelis 2021, 437-438). He also argues that civil society increases this sphere for interest articulation as well as interest aggregation as it creates a pre-institutional space for critical argumentation (Merkel 2004, 47). This is crucial since democratic opinion formulation must be happening in a 'non-power-driven public sphere', in a public forum that is 'public, pluralistic and autonomous from private interests of all sorts' (Merkel 2004, 47; Urbinati 2014, 4). Consequently, a public sphere as such is crucial for the 'formation of public will' (De Angelis 2021, 443). Urbinati, in her work *Democracy Disfigured* (2014), comes up with a conceptualisation of representative democracy as a 'diarchic system' made up of will and opinion and detects 'alarming mutations' from representative democracy due to transfigurations from this diarchic nature (1, 2). Defining opinion as ‘extrainstitutional domain of political opinions’, and analysing how the changes in the public sphere of opinion formation affect representative democracy -and its diarchic system- (2, 12), Urbinati can explain how the majoritarianism in populism can actually evolve into the populist elites’ hegemony over the pacified masses. She argues that populism views public opinion as a ‘terrain of conquest’. It contests established elite in the name of representing the opinion of a part of the people, yet while doing this, it is hostile to minorities as well as pluralism at the party level (7, 11, 12). However, in doing this populism is also hostile to intermediaries, and puts the leader at the centre of political representation. Consequently, populism ‘verticalises’ politics further even though it claims to bring the people back into politics, as public opinion loses its function of giving voice and power to citizens, oversee institutions and enabling citizens to develop alternative political agenda (7-8). This verticalization of public opinion formation is critical, considering Urbinati’s argument that complex public sphere of opinion is significant for representative democracy as it makes power visible, and by making it visible, also public (13). It is, thus, possible to claim that by increasing populist elite’s power in public opinion formation by ‘de-pluralising’ it, attacking intermediaries and decreasing public sphere’s autonomy vis-à-vis populist elite’s own interests, the populist leader robs public opinion off of what makes it truly democratic similar to what Habermas says. In other words, the sphere of opinion formation is no more as public as it was before. In line with this, Urbinati argues despite populism intends[5] to invert masses’ passivity, it creates a militant passivity as it encapsulates people’s opinion in a leader that claims to be the ‘true’ representative of a people that they tie down to an ideology (153). Consequently, she claims that populism may turn the people into a ‘reactive mass of

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[5] Urbinati uses the word ‘intend’. However, within the framework of this thesis it is better to interpret this as a claim by populists, since the intentions of populists are beyond the interest of this thesis’s framework which is interested in populists’ regime preferences. Populists, studied at the regime level in this thesis, may have the intention to do so, or develop a rhetoric as such for other kinds of intentions. What matters is their acts, as only their acts have consequences at the regime level.

followers', and transform representative democracy into a 'plebiscitarian democracy' in which the citizens turn into a silent audience, 'homo videns', who can watch and hear the politicians but cannot speak (157). To sum up, just as recognising the populist elite identifies the possibility that populism stretches democracy to its 'extreme borders', recognising the populist elite's relation to the public sphere of opinion formation identifies populist majoritarianism's tendency to be stretched to 'majoritarianism's extreme borders' leaning towards elite hegemony, together with the potential of an exit from majoritarianism itself.

The branch of literature that fails to detect the centrality of the elite in populism, fails to differentiate populism in power from direct democracy, and interpret the attacks of the leader to institutions outside of elections as a manifestation of this tendency towards direct democracy. The latter branch of literature, on the other hand, puts the populist elite at the centre of populism and can detect that populism is different from direct democracy, and consequently can see how it transforms representative democracy in an authoritarian direction despite it does not necessarily claim that the line towards non-democracy is crossed. However, these authors fail to acknowledge the depth to which populists alter the procedures and institutions of representative democracy. Procedural justifications of democracy argue that not just the ends, but the means through which democracy is realised enable the realisation of moral values such as autonomy, equal respect or non-domination (Destri 2021, 45; Urbinati 2014, 8-11). In line with this, Urbinati claims that populism rejects the normative character of democratic procedures, and instead sees them as a mean towards an end (2014, 8). Consequently, populism twists the procedural aspects of democracy, and most importantly 'devalue' them and undermine equal political liberty (Finchelstein and Urbinati 2018, 15, 27). It does not suspend free and fair elections, however, it utilises public support to "purify elections from their formalistic and procedural character" (Finchelstein and Urbinati 2018, 16; Urbinati 2019, 124).

These authors point out to the problematic relationship populism has with democratic proceduralism. However, Yunus Sozen (2019) explains the nature of this relationship and its consequences for populism's relationship with democracy clearly, as he provides the framework to "connect theoretical arguments to concrete democratic institutions' (Sozen 2019, 268). Sozen bases his argument on the conceptualisation of democracy as a "mixed regime" of oligarchy and democracy in line with Manin, and as indicated before, he argues that it is not possible to 'single-out' an institution as promoting democracy or oligarchy within the mixed regime of representative democracy, since they enable both democratic and oligarchic aspects of modern democracy within its coherent logic (275). In the words of Merkel, they are embedded in each other[6]. He then discusses election as a political procedure. Through a rich discussion of the texts of Manin, Aristotle and Hansen he describes how elections were seen as an oligarchic method of selecting leaders by the ancients, in contrast to democracy's method, that is lots and rotation which does not create a separation between the governed and the governing. Elections on the other hand might create a ruling class especially with the possibility of re-election, and they tend to favour upper classes and the more powerful by decreasing the equal possibility of citizens' election to the office (Sozen 2019, 271). In other words, when in solitude, elections feed into oligarchy, and create the differentiation as well as relative autonomy of the ruler from the ruled (271, 272). The coherent logic of representative democracy that brings together various institutions enables a framework that turns this regime into a mix of democracy and oligarchy from bare oligarchy. According to Sozen, representative democracy restrains the autonomy of the now present ruling group by three components: making elections competitive, establishing liberties that

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[6] It is worthy to note here that Sozen's (2019) framework of coherent logic and Merkel's (2004) 'embeddedness' are not totally the same. Merkel argues that institutions of representative democracy cannot function democratically when separated. However, Sozen adds that even when these institutions are combined in the coherent logic of modern democracy, they still enhance both democratic and oligarchic aspects of democracy. Sozen develops this framework to find the locus of populism within liberal democracy, which is significant for studying the causes of populism.

enable effective opposition to government (at all levels, not just party level) and a constitutional design that oversees the protection of those liberties. In other words, if elections -which is a barely democratic institution by itself- are practiced in an environment in which liberties enable oppositional challenge, the rulers have to provide reasons for and details of their actions and policies similar to Urbinati's argument that a complex public sphere of opinion formation makes power visible and public (Sozen 2019, 274; Urbinati 2019, 13). This is why no single institution of representative democracy can be singled out as responsible for the oligarchic or democratic aspect of the mixed regime of representative democracy, since they act differently when they are combined in the coherent logic of this regime (Sozen 2019, 275). In other words, it is not true, as populists claim, that elections provide the democratic aspect of representative democracy, while constitutions and checks and balances provide the oligarchic aspect, which means that the argument that overcoming the institutions that bind elected bodies will provide democratisation is basically wrong.

Building upon this argumentation, Sozen makes a critical intervention for the study of populism, by identifying how exactly populism alters the procedural aspects of democracy. According to him, populists delegitimise -representative- democracy's institutions other than elections as instruments of elite hegemony. In contrast, they 'sacralise' and 'singularise' competitive elections as the only instrument for the realisation of popular will. However, in explicit contrast to their rhetoric, singularisation of elections brings forth the authoritarian function of this institution which would otherwise function democratically under the coherent logic of representative democracy (269). As it increases the autonomy of the populist elite, the popular will is not realised, but instead it is manufactured by the elite who is now devoid of institutional checks and restraints. This means the representative democracy's logic is turned upside down: the framework now provides 'strong rulers and weak citizens', not vice versa. As a result, populism is not the 'tyranny of the majority', but instead, 'tyranny of the executive branch' (269). In line with this, Sozen argues that populism presents an authoritarian threat, and potentially gives way to authoritarianism or competitive authoritarianism. Unlike claimed by the abovementioned authors (Finchelstein and Urbinati 2018; Urbinati 2014; Urbinati 2019), it is thus, not merely a risk for liberal constitutional democracy, but 'to democracy itself' (Sozen 2019, 277).

Populism, as discussed above, is not a corrective force for democracy. Nor does it have a similarity with direct democracy. However, it is also not the internal periphery of democracy as it is not a form of majoritarianism. Populism, as it fully manifests itself at the regime level, is an elite-centred regime framework in which a particular kind of elite -the populist elite- is at the centre of power, without serious competition or restraint. The rival elite is delegitimised and impoverished of institutional mechanisms which enable them to provide a serious alternative. The same goes for the masses. The institutional framework which creates a space for political activity of the masses is restrained. Furthermore, the complex public sphere of opinion formation, which enables citizens to form independent opinions in a pre-institutional space is likely to be restrained, as media outlets are likely to be subordinated to the rulers as Urbinati says, and intermediary institutions tend to lose their democratic function similar to what was observed in Peron's Argentina with corporatist Peronist trade unions (Urbinati 2014; James 1988, 10). To sum up, populism is not at all popular, or democratic. It is instead elite centred and antidemocratic, and when populist actors have enough power to overcome the restraints before them, the regime they create is a form of non-democracy.

GENUS AND GENERALISABILITY OF POPULISM AT THE REGIME LEVEL: *ACTORS FOR 'ENDS'*

Akan, in his framework for analysing institutional outcomes regarding secularism, defines three types of actors aiming for certain *ends* regarding religion's place in public sphere: actors for mobilisation of religion, demobilisation of religion and for state neutrality towards religion (2017, 29). This is a consequence of him problematising an understanding that directly ties ideas to institutional outcomes. As discussed before, the motivations, ideas or ideologies of populists -or any kind of actor- is not indispensable to understand what is their regime preference, regime being the *end* for the actors and regime preference capturing various motivations actors might have such as ideology or interest. In line with this, when studying populism at the regime level, it is more useful to talk about *actors for ends* to create a typology for an operationalizable theory, the *end* here being a certain kind of regime. The genus of the concepts for studying populism at the regime level, is thus made of actors. Consequently, for creating a typology, I use the term *populist* instead of 'populism' to answer the genus problem at the regime level. I argue that *populists* are the *actors* that act for a regime form envisioned by populism. This is not to say that the term 'populism' should completely be abandoned. The argument here is valid only for the question 'how actors relate to and affect the regime', and thus also for the question 'how populists affect democracy'. In other words, for the study of populism at the regime level. However, even at this level, asking the question 'why is populism on the rise?' is completely relevant, considering that populism here signifies the phenomenon that actors which singularize elections, destroy intermediaries between elites and masses and undermine constitutional checks and balances are getting stronger. What I argue essentially is, when creating operationalisable concepts for a theory of populism at the regime level, we should work with *populists, fascists, democratic mass movements* etc. The reason for this is that populism is not a regime type. When a populist envisioning of a regime is fully realized, this regime is either a form of competitive authoritarianism or full authoritarianism, genus of which also includes democracy.

Exactly for the reason that the unit of analysis here is an actor in relation to a regime, it is right to limit the generalisability of this argument to a context in which democracy enjoys a normative hegemony and a democratic regime of some sort is already present or among strong possibilities. This is in line with Urbinati’s (2019) and Finchelstein and Urbinati’s (2018) claim that populism is a form of post-fascism in a world fascism is ‘not a viable anti-liberal option’. Under conditions that this kind of democratic hegemony is not present, actors who aim to monopolise elite power and strengthen the elite vis-à-vis masses might prefer much diverse regime options for their diverse motivations. Also, under such a context, adherence to a regime similar to that of populists under democratic hegemony might be a result of normative preference, thus also of ideology. In other words, actors might prefer such a regime not because it is the most viable option, but because they prefer it *despite* it is not the most viable option. For example, if an authoritarian actor chooses to retain singularised elections despite a monarchic or dictatorial regime is more viable, the framework presented here might not apply. For this, the framework presented here is limited for circumstances in which democracy has normative hegemony and is one of the viable regime options.

A NEW KIND OF ACTOR: RESCUING *DEMOCRATIC POPULAR PARTIES* FROM *POPULISTS*

Charles Tilly (2007) argues that the issue of democratisation always lies in the tension between elite's struggle to maintain power or respond to popular pressures (58). Thus, democratising causal mechanisms 'almost always involve popular contention' (78). Goran Therborn (1977) in his historical work, demonstrate this by examining various cases. Looking at the cases of 19th century, he argues that democratising demands such as equal vote share had been risen by working class movements and democratisation almost always happened following mass struggles (12-16, 29). In other words, 'contradiction between democracy and minority privileges', that was present in 19th century European parliamentary regimes, were mostly overcome by working-class mobilisation (5). As the first example of such movements, Chartism was advocating 'democratic and powerful legislature to end the tyranny of the landlords and moneylords' (Bevir 2000, 355; Therborn 1977, 16). Combined with their demands for universal suffrage -for men-, equal electoral districts etc., Chartism was a kind of 'premature anti-oligarchism' according to John Plotz (2000, 104). Even though not always successful at the first instance, Plotz argues that they ensured 'enduring forms of civil rights for disenfranchised groups' (104).

To sum up, popular political movements have always been significant actors for democratisation[7], despite not necessarily being the only ones. However, it is crucial to articulate what is meant by popular here by juxtaposing Chartists and reactionary accounts against Chartist-like movements. According to Hall (2004), Chartist movement consisted of a large mass component made up of ordinary people. Yet, these people were organising around plebeian intellectuals and discussing, and participating in the decision-making processes

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[7] This is not to claim that elite-centred actors cannot be actors for democracy, but instead to claim that popular movements cannot be disregarded their crucial role in democratisation.

among them. These organisations were building connections with national leaders and national organisations through the plebeian intellectuals (181). In other words, the organisation of the Chartist movement was enabling a form of bottom-up public opinion formation (Plotz 2000, 106), enabling ordinary people to be -at least to some degree- agents of politics, not only objects of politics. Additionally, these organisational relations limit the autonomy of organisation's elites. They are popular in this sense. On the other hand, Plotz's analysis of reactionary thinkers and movements show that there is an opposite trend. The movements theorised and practiced by them surely have a mass component. However, mass voices are not considered plausible, but power of the masses is. Thus, according to them, the energy of the crowds should not have been dismissed. Represented in a harsh form in Mussolini, the crowds were supposed to be 'immunised' to voices other than the leader, and should have been turned into 'loyal Fascist crowds' (Plotz 2000, 105)[8]. They are not popular in this sense: despite the mass component in it, masses are not political agents proper, but are passivated militant masses in Urbinati's words.

It is, then crucial to ask this question: where are these 'popular' actors today? Yannis Stavrakakis (2014) and Chantal Mouffe (2019), search for them within populism, but on the left side of it. Stavrakakis argues that the anti-populist logic present in neoliberal post-democracy denounces popular demands as populist. Drawing on from Laclau and Canovan, he disagrees with opposing popular to populism as he agrees with the claim that such a distinction would feed into denouncement of any construction of the 'people' that can articulate these popular demands when is opposed to a power bloc (Stavrakakis 2014, 505-506). Similarly, Mouffe argues that the populist movements that develop in response to 'post-

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[8] The similarities between fascism in this sense, and populists are considerable. However, the difference between them should be considered as a matter of contextual validity, in line with Finchelstein and Urbinati claiming populism to be post-fascism created for a different context (2018, 17). For the details of their discussion regarding the difference between fascism and populism, see the pages 16-19 and 27-28 in Finchelstein and Urbinati (2018).

democratic dismissal of popular sovereignty' has a democratic nucleus in it (2019, 6, 8). According to her, a left-wing populist strategy should construct this mass reaction in a democratic manner and introduce a 'populist regime to deepen democratic institutions (Mouffe 2019, 6). In this sense, left populism is a 'radical reformist' movement for not undermining, but for deepening liberal democratic framework (9-10). The crucial point here is that both Mouffe and Stavrakakis define populism as a political 'style' or 'discourse (Mouffe 2019, 6; Stavrakakis 2014, 506). The populist style is constructed as a *mean* for an *end* that left as an ideology would feed into, that is democracy. Holding that the left-wing actors *always* aim for immediate democracy and their organisation is *always* popular as described beforehand in this thesis, this argument could be true, as they would provide democratisation by the mean of substantially including demos into governmental politics. However, this is not necessarily the case. Not every left-wing actor has a normative preference for democracy at the immediate moment. Even if such a normative commitment was present intrinsically in left-wing actors, there is never a guarantee that the actor will act with ideological/normative motivations. Some other motivations might intervene, and might end up the actor having non-democratic regime preferences. This is why a left versus right wing populism divide is not suitable for studying populism at the regime level: it is based on populism as style, that is a *mean* that can be mobilised for *any* end, and the assumption that ideological preferences are directly translated to regime preferences. This would prevent the detection of left-wing actors' authoritarian regime preferences when they have populist style. Not so surprisingly, Stavrakakis mentioning Chavez regime along with others, argues that contemporary populism in Latin America enables incorporation of disenfranchised strata, thus increases participatory aspect of democracy despite sometimes undermine its liberal aspects. He concludes that, this might be signalling an advancement of democracy (2014, 507). However, as discussed before, undermining liberal aspects of constitutional democracy undermines democracy itself. This can be seen at the obvious autocratisation in Venezuela following the establishment of Chavez regime.

Studying populism from the perspective of populism as an entity, and focusing its manifestation at the regime preferences might answer this problem by detecting the authoritarian and democratic actors lumped in together as populist in many analyses. To do this, the dimensions through which the actors are classified should be established. As indicated in the theoretical discussions before, populism is 1: *elite-centred* and 2: *authoritarian*. The actors that can be seen in the historical European examples of democratisation, and that are defined as 'left-populist' by Mouffe and Stavrakakis in contemporary world are 1: *popular* and 2: *democratic*. Then, the first dimension is the *organisational structure of the actors*, in terms of whether this organisation enables construction of ordinary citizens as political subjects that can form and advocate opinions and are not completely vulnerable to the organisational elite's political agenda promotion, or vice versa. The second dimension is the *regime preference of the actors*: whether the actor prefers to change institutions in a manner that decreases autonomy of the national political elite and aims to create pre-institutionalised public sphere that enables democratic public opinion formation free of domination, or vice versa.

However, this is not enough. Populist actors are clearly distinguished from unorganised mass movements such as Occupy Wall Street. Urbinati, while distinguishing populism from social movements[9], argues that what differs them from populism is that they are 'headless', and they are not organised in a way to capture political power at the level of government. She adds, that distinguishing 'government' and 'movement' form is crucial.

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[9] Here, Urbinati uses 'popular movements', 'movements of protest', 'popular' and 'social movements' interchangeably. However, the term popular is used to indicate mainly for the mass component of such movements. In order to prevent confusion, the term 'mass movements' is used in this thesis, and the term 'popular' refers to the definition that was provided earlier.

(2014, 129-130). If an actor that aims obtaining governmental power is at the same time *popular* and *democratic*, there is nothing to distinguish them from democratic mass movements such as Occupy Wall Street. Consequently, a third dimension is necessary, that is *institutionalisation*. This means whether the political actor in question is a loose conglomerate of non-organised or barely organised actors, or it is thoroughly institutionalised with the aim of performing government power such as in the political party form.

Table 1: Defining dimensions of the actors at the regime level.

Dimensions	Values
Institutionalisation	Non-institutionalised
	Institutionalised
Organisational Structure	Elite-Centred
	Popular
Regime Preference	Autocratic
	Democratic

The aim of this thesis is not to create an exhaustive typology of all political actors at the regime level, generalisable to the contexts in which democracy has normative hegemony and is a viable regime option. Instead, the purpose is to distinguish political actors that are *institutionalised, popular and democratic* from *populists*, which are lumped together under current theories of populism at the regime level. The reason for this is that they are mobilised for different ends at the regime level, which means this distinction is crucial for any analysis of populism's regime implications. In order to do this, three types of actors are defined:

1. *Populists*: institutionalised *AND* elite-centred *AND* authoritarian
2. *Democratic Popular Parties*[10]: institutionalised *AND* popular *AND* democratic
3. *Democratic Mass Movements*: non-institutionalised *AND* popular *AND* democratic

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[10] These actors are called 'parties' for the reason that it is expected that institutionalised popular democratic actors are more likely to use political party as their form of institutionalisation to capture governmental power. However, further empirical study might detect other institutionalised organisational forms, which might require re-evaluation of the term 'party'.

Populists and *Democratic Popular Parties* are the two actors lumped in together under populism, but should be distinguished from each other for they act differently at the regime level and the driving force within them is different even in the case they both use a populist discourse. *Democratic mass movements* are not lumped in together with populism under current theories, but their definition is significant to draw the conceptual limit between democratic popular parties and mass movements similar to Occupy Wall Street.

It is also necessary to explain what is meant by regime preference to be able to operationalise it in further studies. There are two components regarding regime preferences, that are institutions and public sphere of opinion formation. The *institutional preferences* are choices for institutional arrangements that constitute the governing system such as elections, liberal rights frameworks, lots and rotation, institutions such as checks and balances like constitution and courts etc. If an actor pursues an institutional design that will enable the citizens to have significant voice in government they prefer a democratic choice. If the arrangement empowers elites vis-à-vis the masses, it is an authoritarian choice. Study of these should be made rigorously, and considering the combined effect they make as a certain kind of arrangement. The second aspect, that is public sphere of opinion formation, is for detecting mechanisms of how public opinion and political agenda are created in a polity. If an actor respects or strengthens independent intermediary organisations and a 'pre-institutionalised public sphere free of domination', that is a democratic regime preference. The signifiers of that are most likely to be independent and pluralist media[11], independent associations, trade unions, or even more informal and loosely organised spaces for discussion and political agenda creation. An authoritarian public sphere choice might either try to subdue such intermediaries to the elite and the powerful, or might try to completely eliminate at least some

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[11] What is meant by this is not only independence from political authorities, but also from exclusive dominance of certain groups within the polity such as private media companies that control an excessively large section of media.

of them to monopolise public sphere of opinion formation. The relative weighs of these two components are to be established by further theoretical and empirical evaluation, however.

Finally, why is it significant that an actor itself is popular or elite-centred as long as its regime choices are democratic? The significance of this is if an actor is popular and institutionalised, it enables *substantial inclusion* of ordinary citizens to politics at the governmental level. This is crucial for two reasons. Firstly, it strengthens the democratic aspects of the regime as it *softens* the distinction between the ruler and the ruled. The second, is about the 'democratic nucleus' that Mouffe finds in populist outcries (2019, 8). Populists claim to strengthen popular sovereignty despite substantially they do the opposite by mobilising this essentially democratic outcry for authoritarian ends. Democratic Popular Parties, can substantially respond to this democratic outcry as they are themselves popular and can pursue power at the government level which means they are a channel through which ordinary citizens might reach governmental politics even if not always directly. This is something that elite-centred democratic actors cannot do. Consequently, this dimension can provide clearer analyses for the literature that searches for the reason of populism at a sort of democratic deficit or representation problem.

CONCLUSION

This thesis argues that distinguishing *populism as an entity* from populism as a political style benefits populism's study at the regime level, as it enables the detection of a focus of study other than a mean that can be mobilised for various political goals. However, to provide a clear framework for studying populism at the regime level, the locus of analysis should be populism's manifestation of itself at the regime level, that is regime preferences of actors under contexts in which democracy has normative hegemony and is a viable regime option. As a consequence of this, it is necessary to distinguish two separate actors that is lumped in together under the term 'populist' in current theory. First of them is the populists. Populists, as Sozen (2019) demonstrated, alter the formal institutions of constitutional democracy in a way that their arrangement no longer ensures democratic rule, but instead enables the ruler to act without serious democratic constraint. They also tend to transform public sphere of opinion formation in both their political organisation and the polity in general, which enables populist elites to monopolise opinion formation and political agenda creation. They are consequently not a channel for the ordinary citizens' incorporation into politics at the governmental level, but instead they monopolise the governing circles for the populist elite both vis-à-vis the masses and the other elite. The second, *democratic popular parties*, do the opposite. They do not alter the formal institutional arrangements and the public sphere that enable democracy within representative regimes, or they alter them in a way an alternative democratic framework is established. The way the public sphere and decision-making mechanisms are constructed within their organisations makes them *popular*, which means that they are channels through which ordinary citizens can affect governmental level politics in a meaningful way.

Further research is necessary to establish the details for operationalising and measuring some of the concepts presented here, however. For example, how exactly the actors that are popular or elite-centred will be identified? A possible way is looking at how political agendas are formed within their organisations. Is it the elite that leads the political agenda, or is it made through broadly-based discussions reaching to the lowest levels of party organisation? How strong is the influence of social movements, political associations, trade unions or intellectuals in shaping the discussions within it? How important is the depth of political and intellectual accumulation of knowledge in an organisation's lower levels, and the loose social organisations outside of the party that constitute the social basis of the political tradition the party represents? How can we measure if it is enough for creating a sphere of opinion formation independent from party leaders or related media organs? With regards to the regime realm, what are the relative weighs of formal governmental institutions and public sphere in determining an actor's regime preference as democratic or authoritarian? These are all questions that can be answered by closely working with cases and discovering the limits of what can actually be measured and the methods for reaching the empirical evidence within those limits. While doing all these, it is of course significant that the defining lines between actors are not always as clear in real life as in theory. In addition, there is always room for institutional inversion: actors surely might transform into another type within time. Empirical application of the framework presented here should consider these possibilities.

By focusing populism's study at the regime level on *regime preferences*, the framework presented here sets up a concrete analytical ground for further research. Studying choices for formal institutional arrangements and public sphere of opinion formation enables a clearer identification of populist and non-populist actors. This focus may also help researchers better understand in what way populist actors and democratic popular parties alter liberal democracy, what are the methods used by them and what are the alternatives to what they do. Additionally, studying concrete actions may make empirical evaluations of populism easier and more precise. Despite abovementioned challenges, actors' choices for formal institutions and public sphere of opinion formation can be detected by studying changes in constitution, appointment of officials to government bodies, legal or economic pressures on media organisations, party organisations or political associations within a polity. Detecting these at the empirical level, is likely to be easier in comparison to detecting the intentions of politicians by studying their discourse. On the other hand, distinguishing populists from *democratic popular parties* separates two distinct actors with distinct regime ends which are lumped in together under same unit of analysis in current theory. This distinction is crucial in responding the question *why strong populist movements appear* as most authors search for the answer in a sort of democratic deficit or 'representation crisis' in contemporary representative regimes. If large sections of society feel alienated from representative democracy, why their discontent is directed towards authoritarian channels and not to democratic ones which enables their inclusion to decision-making procedures? Why there was no significant authoritarian turn in Greece despite deep economic crisis and political turbulence after 2008, unlike Turkey, whose long 1990s gave birth to Erdoğan's rise? Making this distinction, opens way to a line of research that can answer these questions, which are crucial to detect and understand the threats to democracy, along with the opportunities to save it.

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