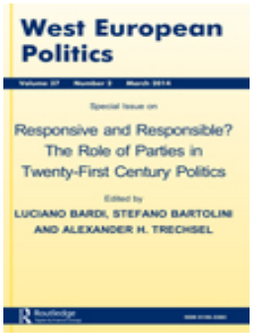

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The Populist Challenge

HANSPETER KRIESI

Populism has been on the rise for some time in Europe now, and its rise has been one of the key concerns of Peter Mair. He has linked it to the increasing erosion of the representative function of European party systems. The spectre that haunted him was 'partyless democracy', a democratic regime where parties had lost their representative function, which opened the door for unmediated populist protest. While largely sharing his interpretation of the overall structural trends giving rise to the populist challenges in Western Europe, the article is critical of the static character of his assessment. It suggests that there are three forms of 'protest populism', all of which may eventually end up transforming the West European party systems in the name of the new structuring conflicts that characterise contemporary European societies. In addition, it proposes to extend the scope of Peter's argument to the less established democracies of Central and Eastern Europe.

Populism has been on the rise for some time in Europe now, and its rise has been one of the key concerns of Peter Mair. He has linked it to the increasing erosion of the representative function of European party systems. In numerous publications, he has observed a number of converging trends which characterise all West European countries and which all point to the decline of parties as intermediaries between the citizens and public policy: declining party membership and party identification, declining voter turnout, and increasing volatility of the vote. The spectre that haunted Peter was 'partyless democracy', a democratic regime where parties had lost their representative function, which opened the door for populist protest. I would like to address this populist challenge and discuss the way Peter dealt with it in his work.

In my discussion of the populist challenge in Western Europe, I shall attempt to put the trends Peter identified in a somewhat different perspective. While sharing his overall assessment of the origins of the populist challenge in this part of Europe, I do not necessarily share the implications he drew for the further development of the West European party systems. More optimistic in my assessment than Peter was, I would like to suggest that populism is a productive force that may serve as the catalyst for a profound realignment of West

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European party systems – a realignment that brings the West European party systems more in line with the transformed conflict structures of West European societies.

The erosion of the representative function of political parties that preoccupied Peter is a West European phenomenon, which means that the scope of his discussion of populism was largely confined to Western Europe. But the rise of populism has not been limited to Western Europe. It has also been rampant in Central and Eastern European countries since they have made their transition to democracy. The reasons for the rise of populism in these countries, however, have little to do with erosion of the parties' representative function. Instead, what has plagued the party systems in these parts of Europe was their insufficient institutionalisation which gave rise to a quite specific type of populism. After having discussed the populist challenge in Western Europe, I shall extend the discussion of populism to Central and Eastern European countries, in order to point out the different origins of the rise of populism in the two parts of Europe, and to identify the specificities of the two at first sight very similar phenomena.

Before getting to Peter's assessment of the populist challenge, however, let me briefly clarify what is commonly understood under the term 'populism'. As suggested by Peter's former student, Cas Mudde (2004: 543), the term populism refers to a 'thin' ideology that can be defined as 'an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous 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'. This definition includes the existence of two homogenous groups – 'the people' and 'the elite', the antagonistic relationship between the two, the idea of popular sovereignty, and the positive valorisation of 'the people' combined with the denigration of 'the elite'. Most importantly, populism has a monolithic conception of the people. As Canovan (2002: 34) points out, the people is always conceived as a homogenous category, a unity, a corporate body capable of having common interests and a common will – a 'volonté générale'.

For populists, the people are paramount. But, given the diverse interpretations of 'the people', it is impossible to arrive at a clear-cut definition of the phenomenon without giving 'the people' a more specific meaning. Populism's meaning varies with the understanding given to 'the people', i.e. to the idealised conception of the community (the 'heartland') to which it applies. It is precisely for this reason that populism is a 'thin' ideology which needs to be associated with more substantive ideologies to become a 'thick' ideology. Following Mény and Surel (2000) we can identify at least three conceptions of 'the people' – a political one (the people as sovereign), a cultural one (the people as a nation) and an economic one (the people as a class). The notion of the people as nation is typically associated with *right-wing populism*, while the notion of people as a class (the class of the downtrodden which stands for the people as a whole) is characteristic of *left-wing populism*. The people as

sovereign implies a specific vision of democracy. While it may be part of both left- and right-wing versions of populism, it may also be the genuine element that is less concerned with national exclusiveness or class struggle, and more with the functioning of democracy per se.

Whatever the meaning of the people, the general conception of populism as a 'thin' ideology implies quite a specific perspective on democracy. The populist theory of democracy is rarely made explicit, but it provides the key to the understanding of the populist ideology. Populism is, according to the minimal definition of Pappas (2013a, 2013b), 'democratic illiberalism'. First of all, populist democracy is illiberal, because it takes 'government by the people' literally and rejects all checks and balances on the popular will. Constitutive elements of liberal, 'Madisonian' democracy – the rule of law, the division of power or respect for the rights of minorities – are rejected because they confine the people's sovereignty. In addition, populist democracy is also an illiberal vision of democracy because of its monolithic conception of the people, which implies that the popular majority (the 'general will') is always right (Riker 1982: 8–16), and it is illiberal because of its hostility to the 'aristocratic element' (Manin 1995: 174–91) of representative democracy – the fact that the representatives constitute a selective political elite that cannot be controlled on a daily basis. Populists are against all kinds of intermediaries between the people and the decision-makers, and against political parties in particular (Pasquino 2008: 21). They plead for a more direct linkage of masses to elites (Taggart 2002: 67). The central populist message is that politics has escaped popular control and that popular control has to be restored.[1] In general, populism has a strong anti-institutional impulse – 'the romantic impulse of directness, spontaneity and the overcoming of alienation', which it shares with other 'redemptive' visions of democracy (Canovan 1999: 10).

The populist attempt to provide a closer link between the citizens and the decision-makers may take different forms, but the characteristic way for the populist vision of democracy to provide such a direct linkage between the people and those who govern is to introduce *a charismatic leader* (or a political organisation). This leader does not belong to the established political elites, but is an outsider (a new challenger), who incarnates the demands of 'the people'. The populist leader has direct, unmediated access to the people's grievances, and acts as *the* spokesperson of the vox populi (Abts 2011: 930). The monolithic conception of the leader (there is only one) or the leader's political organisation (it is hierarchically structured and centralised) corresponds to the monolithic conception of 'the people'. The leader as the spokesperson of the vox populi is, in fact, one with the people whose deepest feelings he (or she) articulates.[2] The direct, populist form of representation by a charismatic leader promises to make politics transparent by offering 'a short-cut that bypasses philosophical disputes and institutional niceties' (Canovan 2002: 34).[3]

Let me conclude this short discussion of the concept of populism by pointing out an important distinction which I take from Jagers and Walgrave (2007) – the distinction between populist ideology and populist communication

strategies: the populist ideology manifests itself in the political communication strategies of populist leaders. Such strategies appeal to and identify with the people seen as a unified unambiguously positive entity, they tap into feelings of resentment against the elites, and they call for increased power to the people (March 2012). As an expression of the populist ideology, populist communication strategies may be used to identify the populist ideology empirically, i.e. the operationalisation of the populist ideology may be based on an analysis of populist communication strategies.

Preconditions for the Rise of Populism in West European Democracies

Arguably, political parties are the most important organisations linking voters and their representatives in established democracies. But parties have a double function: they not only link civil society to the polity, they also organise and give coherence to the institutions of government. As Peter Mair (2009: 5) observes, their unique contribution to the development of modern democracy was that they combined these two crucial roles (representation and government) into one. However, as Katz and Mair's (1995, 2009) highly influential 'cartel party thesis' has maintained, in Western democracies parties moved their centre of gravity from civil society to the state and have begun to shift from combining representative and governmental roles to strengthening their governmental role – to the detriment of their representation function. Peter has not ceased to document empirically the erosion of the parties' role as intermediaries between the citizens and public policy (e.g. Mair 2006). Relying on party membership as the strongest and most consistent indicator, together with van Biezen and Poguntke (van Biezen *et al.* 2012), he documented the dramatic decline of party membership ratios over the last 30 years and concluded (p. 42) that parties 'have all but abandoned any pretensions to being mass organizations'.

I would like to suggest, very much in line with Peter's own interpretations, I think, that the erosion of the parties' representation function in Western Europe has deeper structural roots, which are related to two major challenges of contemporary democracy – the increased importance of the European and the global level in the contemporary multilevel governance structures and the increasing mediatisation of politics. Let me first turn to the structural changes introduced by the embedding of national governments into increasingly important supra- and international governance structures – i.e. to the increasing denationalisation of politics and policy-making. As is well known, these structural changes lead to the empowerment of the executive branch to the detriment of parliament, which, in turn, serves to reinforce the governing function of the parties that routinely govern, to the detriment of their representative function (which operates above all through parliament). Second, the addition of a European level of decision-making has led to longer, and less transparent, chains of delegation, which has, in turn, reduced the accountability of the political decision-makers. This increasing lack of accountability has been reinforced

by the fact that, as Peter Mair (2009) has observed, the parties which routinely govern are exposed to an increasing tension between their role as representatives of the national citizen publics, and their role as responsible governments. As representatives of the national citizen publics, they are expected to be responsive and accountable to their voters; as responsible governments, they are expected to take into account the increasing number of principals constituted by the many veto players who now surround the government in its multi-level institutional setting. This extension of the scope of accountability not only implies that the governing parties' manoeuvring space is reduced, but also and most importantly that their accountability to the national constituency of voters – i.e. their representative function – is diminished.

Finally, the increasing importance of supra- and international governance structures contributes to the increasing divorce between 'front-stage' and 'back-stage' politics at the national level. The electoral channel has, of course, never been the only channel of representation at the national level in established democracies. It has always been complemented by the administrative channel and protest politics and, in some countries, by a direct democratic channel. However, the increasing importance of the European Union and other supranational actors has reinforced representation in the administrative channel to the detriment of the electoral channel. In other words, so-called 'non-majoritarian' forms of representation in a range of arenas that are not directly electorally accountable, little visible, and operating 'back-stage' have become more important than the 'front-stage' of the electoral channel, which contributes to the hollowing out of the parties' representation function that has always focused on the electoral channel.

These implications of the increasing importance of supra- and international governance structures for the parties' representation function are reinforced and decisively shaped by the effects of *mediatisation*. The mediatisation of politics contributes to the shifting balance of party functions by reducing the role of the party apparatus, by linking the parties' leaders more directly to their voters, by enhancing the personalisation of political leadership, and by fostering the 'depoliticisation' of the party base. First of all, the increasing autonomy of the media from the political system and their increasing role for politics leads to the adaptation of politicians, parties and governments to the imperatives of the 'media logic'. Parties and politicians devote more attention to what Esser (2013) calls the 'self-mediatization of politics', i.e. the self-initiated stage-management of politics by means of strategic communication in an effort to master the new rules that govern access to the public sphere. Politicians, parties and governments professionalise their internal and external communication and devote more of their resources to communication (Esser and Matthes 2013). Professional communication specialists at the service of party leaders and governments are replacing party militants. The party leaders communicate directly with the public audience via the media and they no longer need the party apparatus to get their message to their constituency.

This reliance on more direct communication between the party leaders and the public audience of the voters contributes to the personalisation of power, since the success of the party increasingly depends on the communication qualities of its leaders (Garzia forthcoming). As we have seen, populism implies the mobilisation by charismatic personal leadership. Personalised leadership is a natural corollary of populism's reaction against politics-as-usual (Canovan 1999: 6). What seems to be occurring as a result of the expansion of the 'media logic' in politics is that personalised leadership also becomes part of politics-as-usual. Accordingly, Mény and Surel (2000: 124) arrive at the conclusion that never before has charisma had as important a role as it has today, not only in politics, but also in economics and religion. This argument reminds us of Weber's (1992: 44–49) vision of a 'plebiscitary democracy'. However, in Weber's view, which built on his observation of democratic politics in the early 1920s, the party leader was something of a 'plebiscitary dictator', because he was able to mobilise the masses by using the party apparatus (the 'party machine', including the foot soldiers of the regular party members). Relying on media-centred communication, by contrast, the contemporary party leader is able to mobilise the masses largely without the party apparatus.

Mediatisation also reinforces the uncoupling of 'front-stage' and 'back-stage' politics. On the one hand, as is argued by Esser (2013), the 'front-stage' of the political process, i.e. the political contest side of 'politics', is more easily subjected to self-mediatisation by politicians than the 'back-stage' of policy-making. The on-going 'back-stage' policy-making processes generally are too numerous for the limited scope of public attention, they need to be kept out of the limelight to protect the negotiators' room for manoeuvre, and they often are too complex and too technical for detailed public scrutiny. On the other hand, the journalists' practices in a professionalised and commercialised media system – negative reporting, horse-race journalism (focusing on strategies, personalities and campaign tactics), conflict-focus, personalisation, infotainment and their intrusive or interventionist reporting (journalists reporting on politics in their own words granting politicians only limited opportunities to present themselves with their own voice) – mainly tend to focus on the political contest at the detriment of the policies' substantive content.

This, in turn, contributes to the 'depoliticisation' of politics – politics either becomes a technocratic exercise ('back-stage' politics) or a largely symbolic contest between figureheads ('front-stage' politics). In Peter's analysis, the reduction of politics on the 'front-stage' to symbolic contests was reinforced by the convergence of the parties that habitually govern in ideological terms – by the fact that they tend to become increasingly similar in terms of the policies they defend. As a result, while 'party leaderships retreat into institutions, drawing their terms of reference ever more readily from their roles as governors or public-office holders', 'citizens retreat into private life or more specialized and often ad hoc forms of representation' (Mair 2006: 33).

Last, but certainly not least, the role of the media for politics is currently transformed by the development of new forms of political communication as a

result of the availability of new media. Thus, the internet and in particular the social media have generated new forms of campaigning allowing for a closer interaction between the public and the party leaders. This has created a new media logic and new forms of 'media-centred' political communication, which not only reinforce the autonomy of the media and allow for a direct link between the political leaders and the public, but also run against the grain of the mediatisation thesis as it has been developed so far. Thus, the interactive characteristics of these new media have the potential for new forms of politicisation, and for a reconnection of 'front-stage' and 'back-stage' politics. In any case, they provide a powerful tool for populist challengers who seek to mobilise outside of the established channels of political communication.

The Populist Challenge in West European Democracies

Peter Mair (2000) summarised these tendencies by what he called the rise of a 'partyless democracy'. As he suggested (Mair 2002: 91), 'populist democracy may be understood as popular democracy without parties'. What he had in mind was a largely neutral and non-partisan system of governance, appealing to a largely undifferentiated mass electorate whose relations with the institutions of government are no longer mediated to any significant extent by traditional political parties. His exemplary case of this phenomenon was the British New Labour government under Tony Blair: 'non-partisan leaders with a non-partisan programme running a non-partisan government in the interest of the people as a whole' (Mair 2002: 96). As Peter Mair (2002: 88) saw it, such a 'partyless democracy' was intimately linked to populism as it is more commonly understood and as I have conceptualised it in the introduction, since it made it all the more easy for populist challengers to mobilise:

> As party leaderships become increasingly remote from the wider society, and as they also appear increasingly similar to one another in ideological or policy terms, it simply becomes that much easier for populist protestors to rally against the supposed privileges of an undifferentiated political class. As party democracy weakens, therefore, the opportunities for populist protest clearly increase.

In other words, the decline of the parties' representative function – brought about, among other things, by the increasing importance of supra- and international governance structures and the increasing mediatisation of politics – contributes to the alienation of the voters from the traditional political process. The voters get the impression that the parties that habitually govern are all alike, that they all betray the public behind the scenes, and that they all deserve to be sanctioned by a popular vote in the upcoming elections. In other words, the decline of the parties' representation function invites populist reactions in the traditional sense.

In a reassessment of their original thesis, Katz and Mair (2009: 757) conceded that not all parties are part of the 'cartel', and in yet another contribution (Mair 2011) Peter has added that we might observe a division of labour between two types of parties: on the one side, he put the parties which habitually govern and take responsibility – the mainstream parties or the core of the party system. On the other side, he put the parties which give voice to the people, i.e. which fulfil the representation function and which often adopt a rather populist style. In other words, Peter Mair (2011: 14) thought that 'it is possible to speak of a growing divide in the European party system between parties which claim to represent, but don't deliver, and those which deliver, but are no longer seen to represent'. In a nutshell, he expected a division of labour between 'partyless populism' by the mainstream parties, and 'protest populism' mobilised by permanent challenger parties at the margin of the party system.

While being a largely accurate assessment of the empirical situation of West European party systems at the time of Peter's writing, his notion of a division of labour between two types of parties strikes me as excessively static. It does not allow for the possibility of a dynamic transformation of the populist challengers, on the one hand, and of the party systems in question, on the other. According to my own assessment of the current state of West European party systems, the division of labour envisaged by Peter may be of a transitory nature. Indeed, as I see it, the rise of 'protest populism' takes three different forms, all of which have the potential to transform the configurations of these systems as we have known them:

- the rise of new challengers in the party system,
- the radical rejection of the party system as such, and
- the expansion of conflict beyond the party system.

I take up these three forms of 'protest populism' one by one. Peter's argument of a division of labour between two types of parties seems to assume that a majority of voters continue to opt for the mainstream parties, even if they no longer feel represented by them. There is, however, no reason why this assumption should hold in the not so long run: there is, first of all, the distinct possibility that the new challengers in the party system take up the representative function by politicising the conflicts which have been neglected or 'depoliticised' by the established mainstream parties. It is quite possible – and against the background of the 'Great Recession' that hit Europe in 2008, the economic consequences of which are still with us at the time of this writing, increasingly likely – that the attempt of the mainstream parties to focus on the management of public affairs will fail and that they will be forced to face new challengers who give voice to the suppressed conflicts and succeed in 'bringing the voters back in'. Moreover, it is quite likely that these new challengers do so in a populist manner, insisting on the betrayal of the people by the political elite.

As a 'thin' ideology, populism can be easily combined with different 'thick' ideologies (Mudde 2004: 544), which elaborate the common core of the 'sovereign people' in various ways – in terms of class, nation, 'losers' of different stripes. In other words, the populists' thin core messages are likely to have a substantive complement that speaks to the grievances of a specific part of the population which is taken to be the whole by the populist discourse. Their 'thin' populist ideology is likely to be associated with substantive demands that relate to these grievances and that are linked to a more elaborate ideology. The decline of the established parties' representation function has freed the voters from their partisan ideologies and loyalties, but, at the same time, made them increasingly available for the sirens of new political forces promising to cater to their needs. As a result, the new populist challengers may be the driving forces of processes of restructuration and realignment of the party system (Kitschelt 2000; Kitschelt and Rehm 2012). One of the results of such processes of restructuration is that the new populist challengers within the party system may enter into government or support governments from the outside, as has happened repeatedly in Western Europe up to now.

Thus, together with my colleagues, I have argued (Kriesi *et al.* 2006, 2008, 2012) that the new right-populist parties which, for more than 20 years now have spearheaded the nationalist reaction to economic (neoliberal reform of the economy including delocalisation, liberalisation of financial markets, and privatisation), cultural (immigration), and political (European integration, internationalisation of politics) processes of denationalisation do not simply articulate a populist challenge to the mainstream parties which habitually govern. Instead, they articulate a new structural conflict that opposes globalisation 'losers' to globalisation 'winners'. In several countries, the success of these new populist challengers has given rise to the transformation of established parties which start to compete for the mobilisation of the demands of the 'losers'. Some of these new challengers or transformed established parties have, indeed, taken up government responsibilities (e.g. the SVP in Switzerland, the FPÖ in Austria, the Lega and the PdL in Italy) or supported minority governments without becoming formal members of the governing coalitions (e.g. the Danish People's Party, and the Dutch PVV).

So far, this new conflict between globalisation 'winners' and 'losers' has above all been successfully articulated by new populists from the right. Against the background of the 'Great Recession', it is important to consider that the consequences of denationalisation may also be pursued by new populist challengers from the left. While populist challengers on the right privilege the political and cultural dimensions of denationalisation processes, new populist challengers on the left are likely to prefer to frame conflicts linked to denationalisation processes in socio-economic terms. Accordingly, I expect the populist right to mobilise in defence of the national identity, the national political community, and of the nation-state, while I expect the left's populist mobilisations to take the form of the defence of the national welfare state (e.g. mobilisation against Europe in the name of the national social welfare state model) as well

as in defence of the economic privileges of domestic sectors of the economy and of domestic production sites (e.g. mobilisation against the delocalisation of production sites such as the mobilisation of the Italian unions in the Pomigliano case, the mobilisations against liberalising directives of the EU Commission, such as the 'Bolkestein directive', or the mobilisations of Syriza against the austerity policies imposed by the 'Troika' in a country like Greece). This kind of socially conservative populism of the left is to be distinguished from cosmopolitan forms of mobilisation of the left (e.g. in favour of a European social model at the European level, in favour of 'global justice', a multicultural society, or in support of the extension of social rights to immigrants).

Second, under the pressure of the economic crisis, the erosion of the established parties' representation function may also give rise to a more wholesale rejection of the party system in general. The new challengers may revolt against the party system as such. This is what Rosanvallon (2006: 271–77) has in mind when he considers populism as the 'pure politics of non-politics', the 'perfect anti-politics', or the 'absolute counter-democracy'. He identifies three characteristic traits of populism as anti-politics: the compulsive and permanent stigmatisation of the governing authorities, up to the point where they are constituted as an inimical power; the total rejection of politics, an apocalyptic vision of politics, which does not involve constructive criticism; and the criminalisation or ridiculing of the essence of power.

Illustrations of such a radicalised form of populism include Jon Gnarr's 'best party' in Iceland or the movement 'cinque stelle' of the Italian comic Beppe Grillo. In the local elections in Iceland in spring 2010, revolting against the established parties of the country, the voters in the country's capital Reykjavik turned to the 'best party' of the comic Jon Gunnar Kristinsson, which became the largest party with 35 per cent of the vote and obtained the position of mayor. 'Jon Gnarr' had founded the 'best party' at the end of 2009 – as a parody of traditional politics. In his election campaign, he asked, among other things, for a 'transparent' handling of corruption and he promised to break all campaign promises. In the Italian national elections in February 2013, Grillo's 'movimento cinque stelle' won no less than 25.5 per cent of the vote. Refusing to cooperate with any of the mainstream parties to form a government, the Grillini put the Italian party system under increasing strain. Their strategy of non-cooperation eventually forced the two mainstream parties to form a grand coalition government – a step without precedent in Italian politics, which may yet lead to internal splits in each one of the mainstream coalition partners and to the formation of new parties. It is too early to tell, but given the current impasse in the Italian party system, Grillo's success may serve as the catalyst for a profound transformation of the Italian party system.

In the Italian case, surprisingly, the radical rejection of the mainstream parties still takes place in the electoral channel. And, in fact, this radical rejection of party politics may not be as clearly distinct from the rise of other new challengers. The anti-parties may transform themselves into parties that last and that become regular competitors in the electoral channel. Thus, Grillo rejects the

idea that he is riding on an anti-political wave, and maintains that his movement mobilises for a fundamental political renewal.[4] He mobilises against the rampant corruption in Italian politics, and the programme of his movement asks for a drastic reduction in the costly state, for more direct democracy, and for more federalism. It demands that Italy leave the Eurozone and calls for the creation of the United States of Italy. It is critical about globalisation, it is against the construction of the high-speed train line between Lyon and Torino, and pleads for the localisation of economic structures. As representatives of such anti-parties get elected, as they are socialised into the governing function of parties (at the local level first, at higher levels later on), these groups may be transformed into regular parties, even if they keep their populist characteristics to some extent. And even if they do not transform themselves into regular parties, such anti-parties may serve as the catalysts that transform the party system in a way that restores the representative function to the mainstream parties.

Last, but certainly not least, in the absence of immediately available options in the electoral arena, discontented groups of citizens may mobilise outside of the electoral channel and, in particular, they may resort to the protest arena, and try to force political concessions from political elites by directly appealing to the general public. This is Schattschneider's (1960) idea of the 'expansion of conflict'. Public protest is designed to unleash a public debate, to draw the attention of the public to the grievances of the actors in question, to create controversy where there was none, and to obtain the support of the public for the actors' concerns. Discontented citizens are all the more ready to resort to protest, since protest mobilisation has become increasingly conventional, at least in Western Europe. Western European countries have become 'movement societies', in the apt term coined by Meyer and Tarrow (1998). As this term suggests, political protest has become an integral part of these countries' way of life: protest behaviour is no longer used as a last resort only, but employed with greater frequency, by more diverse constituencies, to represent a wider range of claims than ever before. We observe the 'normalisation of the unconventional' (Fuchs 1991). Professionalisation and institutionalisation are changing the social movement into an instrument of conventional politics and social movement organisations become rather like interest groups. However, while protest becomes conventional across Western Europe, the typical action repertoire of protest may still vary from one country to another. Thus, in Southern Europe, the political strike combined with large demonstrations constitutes a core element of the protest repertoire, while citizens in Northern Europe are equally likely to demonstrate, but much less likely to combine demonstrations with political strikes.

Strong social movements tend to spawn new political organisations, allowing them to stabilise their mobilisation capacity. In other words, social movements tend to institutionalise, among other things in the form of political parties. Thus, the major party families which exist today have come out of social movements of the past. The most recent addition to the party system are

the Green parties, which have come out of the new social movements of the 1970s.

All three forms of 'protest populism' are likely to benefit from the very same mediatisation trends that contribute to the erosion of the representation function of the established parties. Thus, Mazzoleni (2008: 50) suggests that populist challengers can generally rely on some sort of 'media complicity': the media provide a significant degree of support for the rise of populist phenomena in general, because, under conditions of mediatisation, news coverage yields to general popular tastes. Examples of the media's own populism include their craving for the more extreme and scandalous aspects of politics, their dramatisation of the political language, and their increasing use of populist formats and approaches (talk shows, phone-ins, solicitation of calls, faxes, and e-mails for response by interviewed politicians etc. – Blumler and Kavanagh 1999: 220). Successful populist challengers are attractive for the media because they have news value: they tend to have charisma, they are typically outsiders, who have not been part of the traditional political elites in their respective countries, they share the resentment of their clientele, and they are crass enough to express the emotions and ideas of these potentials (i.e. who spell out publicly what the 'common man' has always thought). The Dutch Pim Fortuyn would be an illustrative example of such a political figure (see Buruma 2006: ch. 2), like the Italian Beppe Grillo.

These new challengers are also likely to make use of the new forms of communication, as I have suggested above. Thus, Beppe Grillo, the Italian anti-politician, has made skilful use of a mix of on-line communications and local appearances in his campaign for the Italian national elections 2013. As a self-styled David taking on not only the entire political class, but also the established media (Ruggero 2012), he used the new media to organise on-line primaries for the selection of the electoral candidates of his movement, and he mainly made use of blogs – an on-line form of communication of rather low interactivity – to communicate his views to his followers and to the public at large. In addition, he made public appearances across Italy, drawing large crowds, which guaranteed him news value and television coverage, although he explicitly refused to talk to TV journalists and to appear on the TV talk-shows.

The Rise of Populism in Central and Eastern Europe

As I pointed out in the introduction, Peter's discussion of populism exclusively addressed the situation of the party systems in West European countries. However, we also find the phenomenon of populism in Central and Eastern Europe. In fact, in these countries, populism, if anything, is even more widespread. As we enter the world of Central and Eastern European politics, Peter's analysis no longer applies, but we can still build on his key insight that populism is a proximate result of a party system that does not fulfil its representation function. In following this insight, we should keep in mind, however, that, in the

very different world of Central and Eastern European politics, the reasons for the party system's dysfunctions are not the same as in Western Europe. While the mainstream parties of West European party systems are *no longer* adequately representing their constituencies, the Central and Eastern European party systems have not yet produced mainstream parties that adequately represent their constituencies: in contrast to the party systems of Western Europe, the party systems in Central and Eastern Europe have never been institutionalised to the same extent.

The concept of the institutionalisation of the party system has been introduced by Mainwaring and Scully (1995, 1999). In general, 'institutionalization refers to a process by which a practice or organization becomes well established and widely known, if not universally accepted' (Mainwaring and Scully 1995: 4). An institutionalised party system 'is one in which actors develop expectations and behaviour based on the premise that the fundamental contours and rules of party competition and behaviour will prevail into the foreseeable future' (Mainwaring 1999: 25). For a party system to be institutionalised, four conditions must obtain (Mainwaring 1999: 26f.; Mainwaring and Scully 1995: 4–6). First and most important is stability in the rules and nature of party competition: the configuration of the party system does not change from one election to the other, no new challengers appear at each election, the volatility of the electoral outcome is low. Second, the parties have stable roots in society, which allows them to structure the preferences of the voters. As a consequence, the parties' relative ideological positions tend to be consistent. Third, the parties are considered to be legitimate by the major political actors. Finally, party organisations matter. They are not subordinate to the interests of ambitious leaders. They acquire an independent status and value of their own.

When measured by these four criteria, party systems in Central and Eastern Europe appear to be little institutionalised. Just like the Latin American party systems, they are characterised by an extraordinarily high level of volatility; they have not (yet) developed stable roots in society, the concept of cleavages structuring the party system hardly applies to them; they are hardly considered legitimate by the citizens of their countries, and their organisations tend to be unstable. The most important empirical evidence for the lack of institutionalisation of these party systems comes from Neff Powell and Tucker (2013), who show that the very high level of volatility in these systems since the democratic transition has above all been due to the entry and exit of parties, and not to switches between established parties. The lack of institutionalisation of these party systems means that it makes no sense to speak of the erosion of the parties' representation function in this part of Europe. However, the fact that Central and Eastern European party systems have not yet been institutionalised to the same degree as West European party systems makes them even more susceptible to populist phenomena. In Central and Eastern Europe, the low level of institutionalisation of the party systems provides a general opportunity for the rise of new populist challengers.

This opportunity becomes all the more important, given the widespread dissatisfaction of the Central and Eastern European publics with their political elites. The low level of political and administrative performance contributes to the constitution of anti-elitist sentiments which provide a general breeding ground for populist challengers. Thus, a strong majority in all Central and Eastern European EU member states perceives public officials as acting in a corrupt manner when exercising their power. The levels of distrust are especially high in Bulgaria, Romania, Lithuania and Slovakia. This kind of survey data is confirmed by various macro-level ratings, such as the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators or Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index. Moreover, sizeable majorities of the citizens in these countries feel unfairly treated by their public authorities. As Linde (2012) shows, together, perceptions of corruption and feelings of unfair treatment by authorities explain a large amount of the lack of support for the regime (i.e. satisfaction with how democracy works) in these countries. There is a deep-seated disenchantment of citizens with democratic politics.

Perceived political corruption, dissatisfaction with government performance and perceived lack of representation are, of course, at the origin of a lack of legitimacy not only in Central and Eastern Europe. As a matter of fact, as Dahlberg *et al.* (2013: 21) show, perceived corruption and lack of representation have stronger effects on political dissatisfaction in established democracies, which makes them suggest that 'there are greater expectations in terms of performance, both on the input as well as on the output side of the democratic system in older more established democracies'. But if dissatisfied democrats have greater expectations in established democracies, there are greater numbers of dissatisfied democrats in the newly emerging democracies (Dahlberg *et al.* 2013: 15). While these dissatisfied democrats constitute a potential for populist mobilisation everywhere, my point here is that their large numbers in Central and Eastern Europe become particularly conducive to populist mobilisation in the context of a non-institutionalised party system.

As a result of this particular combination of circumstances, the populist mobilisation takes on particular characteristics in Central and Eastern Europe, too. Ucen (2007: 54) calls it the rise of a new 'centrist populism':

> The prototypical parties of new populism are non-radical challengers mobilizing disappointed electorates against under-performing and morally failing established parties ... In a true populist vein, their tough anti-establishment appeal is directed against *all* previous configurations of the ruling elite (although in some cases, proponents of the new anti-establishment politics may have been part of this elite). Dominance of anti-establishment posture over ideology in political projects may be the grounds for considering them the 'purest' populist parties, since they are almost completely unencumbered by ideological constraints … In other words, it is possible to see them as a moderate manifestation of populist

ideology, only lightly attached to more complex ideologies and indulging themselves primarily in the critique of the establishment.

Interestingly, such new parties often became the strongest force in parliament in their first ever elections, even if they have been indistinguishable from incumbent parties in programmatic terms. Their newness allows them to claim that they will fight against a corrupt regime and political establishment. Their innovative character is typically reduced to a new style of communication and to some – rather symbolic – institutional reforms. Examples of such parties include the Slovakian Smer (founded in 1999) of the maverick leftist politician Robert Fico, which won the elections in 2006, and again in 2012; the National Movement Simeon II (NDSV) of the former Bulgarian monarch Simeon, which garnered almost 43 per cent of the vote and exactly half the seats in the 2001 parliamentary elections, or the three new Baltic parties discussed by Sikk (2009): the Lithuanian New Union (Social Liberals), which became the second most popular party in Lithuania in its first elections in 2000; New Era, the winner of 2002 parliamentary elections in Latvia; and the Estonian Res Publica that obtained 24.6 per cent of votes, becoming one of the two strongest parties in parliament in 2003. As Sikk (2009) observes, 'anti-incumbency was a defining feature of these parties, as otherwise they were politically very similar to some major pre-existing parties. The project of "newness" as opposed to "old politics" was highlighted both at the substantive and rhetorical level. The parties campaigned for more open and accountable policies'.

Conclusion

In his preface to the volume which republishes the classic papers of his mentor, Hans Daalder, Peter Mair (2011a: xii) writes that 'reading and studying such classics also serves a more practical purpose. It reminds us of the important questions that continue to face comparative politics, and it helps us to avoid re-inventing the wheel, generation after generation'. In addressing the rise of populism in West European democracies, Peter has certainly raised an important question in a series of texts that have already become classics in his lifetime.

Building on his assessment of the double populist challenge faced by West European polities – a populist democracy without parties at the centre of the political system giving rise to populist protest at its periphery – I have made an attempt to put his interpretation into a new perspective. While largely sharing his interpretation of the overall structural trends giving rise to the populist challenges in West European countries – an erosion of the representation function of the parties buttressed by the increasing importance of the supra- and international level of governance and by the increasing role of the media in national politics – I have been struck by the static character of his assessment. Connecting his interpretation to my own work, and benefiting from hindsight –

especially from the knowledge about the electoral fall-out of the Great Recession, I have suggested that there are three forms of 'protest populism', all of which may eventually end up transforming the West European party systems in the name of the new structuring conflicts that characterise contemporary European societies.

In addition, I have proposed to extend the scope of Peter's argument to the less established democracies of Central and Eastern Europe, where populism is also rooted in the debilitated state of the party system's representation function, but where this function has never been institutionalised properly. As I have proposed, the populist challenges to the party systems of Central and Eastern Europe are mainly linked to their lack of institutionalisation, as well as to the low-quality performance of the public authorities in these countries.

Notes

1. Similarly, Mény and Surel (2000: 181) identify three elements at the core of populist ideology: (a) the people constitutes the foundation of the community, (b) its superior legitimacy is flouted by some actors or processes, which has to be denounced, and (c) the people's place in society has to be re-established.
2. Arditi (2003: 22) speaks of 'a joint presence without representation' to characterise the immediate presence of both the people and the leader.
3. It provides a triple simplification (Rosanvallon 2011: 6–7): (a) a political simplification by considering the people as an obvious subject; (b) a procedural simplification by maintaining that the established elites are corrupt and that the only real form of democracy is the direct appeal to the people; and (c) a structural simplification by maintaining that the social cohesion of society is provided by an identity, usually defined in negative terms, and not by the quality of the social relations.
4. See interview with Beppe Grillo, NZZ, No. 113, Wednesday, 16 May 2012, 9.

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