The Populist Turn in the Politics of the New Europe

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Introduction
Populism is a feature of representative politics. The tenacity of and tensions within European representative democratic practices, ideas and institutions mean that contemporary Europe provides fertile territory for populism. From Bové to Haider to Berlusconi and Bossi via Chevenement and Stoibe politicians, movements and parties have used populism to great effect to challenge the functioning of representative democracy in contemporary Europe while at the same time championing the virtues of representation. This tells us something (or some things) about the shortcomings or inherent difficulties of representative politics. And it tells us something about populism.

Woven into the post-war Western European experience of representative politics has been the project of European integration. While institutions and practices of representative politics continued, stabilised or established themselves at domestic levels, a growing number of European nations bound their states together in unprecedented and unparalleled ways in a number of key areas. The paradox is, of course, that the European integration project has been one not founded on representative politics but on elite agreements premised on the 'permissive consensus' at the mass level. The paragon of representative politics has created a project indelibly stamped with the accusation of a 'democratic deficit'. This tells us something about Europe.

Across Europe we have witnessed a number of forms of what can be seen as populist mobilisation. None of them are 'exclusively populist' but are rather different forms of mobilisation that have strong populist features. In social movement terms, we have seen across parts of Europe different forms of mobilisation over the same issue in the protests over fuel prices (Imig, 2002). We have also seen anti-globalisation protests as direct action in different places in Europe (and beyond) and in different forms. More conventional forms of mobilisation are apparent in Western Europe in the success of new populist parties in of the right such as the Freedom Party (FPO) in Austria or *Forza Italia* in Italy (Betz and Immerfall, Taggart, 1995. We have finally the phenomenon of Euroscepticism as a marginal but almost ubiquitous force across EU member and candidate states (Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2002). Euroscepticism has often taken anti-elite form championing the mass demands for more representatin and less integration. I take these three political forces as indicative of populism across Europe and they will serve as examples in the paper of populist potential.

This paper is an essay on populism in contemporary Europe. I want to focus on the paradox of representative European domestic politics and the weakness of the representative politics of the European integration project. The paper is constructed as a think-piece rather than a paper gathering empirical data. In this paper I therefore offer a short review of one of the key taxonomies of populism and how it relates to Europe. Following that I suggest an alternative view of populism in which there are six characteristic features. These six features are then discussed with reference to the three cases of populist mobilization. Finally I conclude with the argument that instances of populist mobilization in contemporary Europe are limited in their scope for collectiv impact.

Populism
Populism, when it manifests itself, does so with a spectacular quality. Populist politicians, movements or parties emerge and grow quickly and gain attention but find it difficult to sustain that momentum and therefore will usually fade fast. This means that populist moments are episodic and establishing a 'canon' of what are definitive populist movements or moments is difficult. But it is possible. Recently there has been a recent spate of interest in populism, a fact partly attested to by the existence of this panel. Much the attention in Europe however has focused exclusively on the populism of the far right (Mény & Surel, 2000; 2002; Taguieff, 2002).

We may hold the European post-war experience up as an example of the success of representative politics and yet when we turn to look at populism's real impact it has historically been elsewhere. Latin America, the United States, Canada, Russia and Africa have all experienced significant populist movements or populist moments. From the experience of the <u>narodniki</u> in pre-revolutionary Russia, through the US populists of the 1870s, Juan Perón in Argentina, Social Credit in Alberta in the 1930s, to the experience of Nyerere in Tanzania, we have a welter of non-European populist moments.

In Europe populism's most visible presence has been through the far right where, variously mixed with an agenda of anti-immigration, hostility to taxation and ethnic regionalism, a series of political parties on the far right have gained small but significant footholds in the electoral systems of a number of major West European countries. The European concern with fascism and particularly sensitivity towards any activity on the extreme right has occluded the consideration that this has as much to do with populism as with neo-fascism. Refocusing however on the populism of the far right tells us much more about their roots in the common European experience.

It is far easier and has a far more respectable pedigree to trace the lines of neo-fascism between the parties on the far right. The newspaper coverage of the recent success of the FPO in Austria has invariably mentioned instances of Jorg Haider's positive references to Hitler's employment policies. These are significant but an over concern with Haider's sympathies towards the fascism of the past can have the effect of disguising the fact that his party has gained high levels of popular support among the Austrian voters and that this is built on his party's critique of present politics in an unabashedly populist fashion and that the future potential of the FPO will be built on support from those feeling effectively disenfranchised and disaffected from the prevailing political class.

There can be no doubt that those lines exist and that it is useful to identify the common manifestations of neo-fascism between these parties. But other lines also exist and some of these other lineages extend to different and diverse political phenomena that otherwise seem disparate. Indeed using populism to analyse the new parties on the far right is attacked because, it is argued populism extends to other phenonema that are not 'normally' classified as populist such as Blair's New Labour (Eatwell: 2000: 412). The difficulty of this is that it misunderstands populism and therefore misses the point that there may indeed be disparate elements of populism in a wide range of phenomena not normally classified as populist.

Populism connects the new populism with grass-roots mobilisation against globalisation or Americanisation such as the movement that occurred in the Summer of 2000 around the French farmer Jose Bove whose battle against fast food became a *cause celebre* among the population of Millau where he ransacked a McDonalds restaurant. It connects growing Euroscepticism, which itself embraces the far right with greens, conservatives and ex-communists. Simply looking at the far right manifestation of populism in contemporary Europe misses much of the picture.

In the next section I offer a short review of Maraget Canovan's work on populism as it relates to the European experience, as Canovan is attempting a universal view of populism and one that is not confined to the far right. Following that I offer an alternative view of populism.

Views of Populism
Margaret Canovan (1981) offers the most ambitious attempts to get to grips with populism. She draws back from seeing populism as unified and rather offers a key differentiation between agrarian populism and political populism. This covers the range of populist movements throughout history and across the world. Detailed consideration of these means that she breaks down agrarian populism into the populism of farmers, of peasants and of intellectuals. One form of agrarion populism comes from movements such as the German agrarian movement of the 1890s which, she argues is linked to other agrarian populists (mainly in North America) in the the demands of farmers for government intervention in the economy (Canovan, 1981: 104).

Moving to the rural radicalism of the Russian narodnichestvo, Canovan highlights the tendency for this form of populism to oscillate between idealised deference for the peasantry and the need to provide leadership to this idealised group (Canovan, 1981: 109). In these cases, she suggests that the role of elites in attempting to catalyze and mobilise the rural population means that this form of agrarian populism is effectively that of the intellectuals. It takes, what Canovan describes a different form of agrarian populism to see the peasantry unequivocally take centre stage. It is through peasant parties of Eastern Europe that emerged in the early twentieth century and which grew into the Green Uprising that Canovan sees the peasant variant of agrarian populism. This movement in Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia after the First World War attempted to develop and implement ideas of voluntary co-operation between peasants with an emphasis on democracy, family property and an antagonism to the cities. Canovan suggests that there is enough overlap between these different types of agrarian populism to 'make intelligible the use of a single term' but not 'to unite all these movements into a single political phenomenon with a single ideology, program, or socioeconomic base' (Canovan, 1981: 133).

An exclusive focus on agrarian populism misses much. As Canovan suggests, it is therefore important to consider those parts of populism that are 'political' (Canovan, 1981: 136). She suggests that it needs to incorporate populist dictatorship, populist democracy, reactionary populism and politicians' populism. One part of this form of populism is exemplified in calls for direct democracy. Implicit in this is the need to supplement democracy with these institutions, is the assumption that representative democracy can over-represent certain interests and that its institutions can become captured by powerful interests, so transforming benign representative institutions into levers of power for the already powerful. She makes reference to Switzerland where the

institutions of direct democracy are not so much additional institutional features, but rather integral parts of the governmental structure. The Swiss case illustrates that populist forms of democracy can yield a system which stresses decentralisation and the extensive use of referendums to overcome a highly fragmented and segmented population and which produces a form of functioning democracy in difficult circumstances, and provides us with a model with which to assess the 'virtues and defects of populist democracy' (Canovan, 1981: 202).

The third form of political populism that Canovan suggests is that of reactionary populism. Here the European exemplar would be Enoch Powell in Britain. In 1968 Powell made a speech in which he warned against the dangers of immigration for British culture. He made appeals that stressed the gap between the values of elites and those of the people revealing 'a clash between reactionary, authoritarian, racist, or chauvinist views at the grass roots, and the progressive, liberal, tolerant cosmopolitan characteristic of the elite' (Canovan, 1981: 229). What also defined the populism of Powell is that he was reacting against the apparent tide of progress. Canovan makes the point that this clash between progress and populism is heavily dependent on the context, on what is seen as 'progress'. In this sense populism, as a reaction to the prevailing dominant ideas can be both reactive and yet rational. What is, in Canovan's terms 'disreputable' can also be a reaction on the part of popular opinion to real conditions of hardship (Canovan, 1981: 257-8).

The final type of political populism is politician's populism for Canovan. This is a style of politics that plays on the ambiguity on who 'the people' are. In considering accounts of populism drawing on African experiences, it is clear that there are claims by some politicians to represent a unified people above and beyond divisions that otherwise cross their country. These are used to justify systems of one-party rule. In another sense, politicians also try and construct a unified people through creating cross-class or 'catch-all' coalitions. Jimmy Carter's successful campaign for the US presidency saw Carter using both populist imagery of the outsider, honest farmer seeking office while at the same time deliberating appealing to both liberal and conservative instincts in the electorate (Canovan, 1981: 269-73). Canovan does not use European examples here but we could use those such as Haider's appeal in Austria as an outsider.

Canovan in outlining her seven categories makes the point that no core to populism can be found but rather we can identify a number of different syndromes. Bringing out the similarities across the seven types allows Canovan to suggest that there are clusters of similarities around the 'populism of the little man', authoritarian populism and revolutionary populism (Canovan, 1981: 291-2). She also suggests that particular historical manifestations of populism can both combine and separate the categories (Canovan, 1981: 293). The only common themes across all seven types are a resort to appeals to the people and a distrust of elites (Canovan, 1981: 264) and the usefulness of this is, according to Canovan limited at best (Canovan, 1981: 298). Her conclusion is that populism is a term that is widely used and so it is important to provide some clarity but it incorporates a wide range of phenomena without a common core and therefore her attempt to provide a taxonomy is the only way to deal with this complexity.

It becomes almost obligatory to make, in any writing on populism, the point that populism is a difficult concept. Populism is invariably miscast, misused and misconstrued. This is not inevitable and it is possible to discern some features of

populism that can be used to apply the concept without waylaying the observer with a sort of conceptual guilt or artistic conceptual license.

I want to argue in this paper that populism can, in contrast to Canovan (1981) be identified as having certain universal features. Populism, as an ideal type, has six characteristic features which we spell out in some detail.[1]

The first theme is that populism is hostile to representative politics. This means not it can only exist where there are the institutions or the ideas of representative politics but rather that, although populism is potentially ubiquitous in cultural terms or in terms of a political style, it is only under the conditions created by representative politics that it can become a political force or that we can talk about it as a set of ideas. With modernity ('late' or otherwise), come the institutions of representative politics and with those institutions come certain processes and demands that forces populism, insofar as it makes claims, to transmute from a cultural *leitmotif* into either a fully-fledged political movement or political ideology.

The tension that Mény and Surel (2002) identify between representation and constitutionalism as a source of populism is here apparent. Certainly populists are dissatisfied with the 'horizontal' guarantees of constitutionalism. The security offered by 'rights' (especially individual and minority rights) or the resort to complex judicial redress for injustices are anathemas to populists. However, it is not simply the case that populism calls for greater 'vertical' access of the masses to elites through representation. There is a case made by populists for greater linkage of masses to elites but this can be through processes of direct democracy as much as through processes of representative politics. Indeed the very complexity of the processes of representative politics are often, for populists, a greater source of frustration than constitutionalism. In the way that populists mobilise they often rely on charismatic leadership at the extreme or at least on centralised political structures. This is clear in new populist parties which are often characterised by both centralised structures and by the pre-eminence of key individuals. When we think of the new populists, it is easy to associate this politics with individuals such as Berlusconi, Haider, Le Pen or Bossi. What this means is that populists do not seek more *representative* government as much as *better* government.

The second theme is that populists tend to identify themselves with a 'heartland' which represents an idealised conception of the community they serve. It is from this territory of the imagination, that populists construct the 'people' as the object of their politics. As Canovan (1984) notes, the 'people' is too broad and diffuse a concept to have real meaning as it means different things to different populists. This is why it is mistaken to take populists at their words and see the 'people' as the uniting principle of populism. The commitment to the 'people' is in fact a derivative consequence of the implicit of explicit commitment to a 'heartland'. The 'people' are nothing more than the populace of the heartland and to understand what any populist means by the 'people' we need therefore to understand what they mean by their heartland.

The heartland is a construction of an ideal world but unlike utopian conceptions, it is constructed retrospectively from the past – it is in essence a past-derived vision

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[1] For a fuller explanation see Taggart (2000).

projected onto the present as that which has been lost. Unlike other ideologies that derive their visions of the future from the key values (e.g. egalitarianiam or communitarianism), populism derives what values it has from its conception of the heartland. It is a diffuse vision, blurred around the edges but no less powerful for that. It is no doubt romanticised and a profoundly ahistorical conception but, again, no less powerful for that. We see it in political discourse as the resort to 'Middle America' or 'Middle England' as imagined constituencies characterised by moderation, dutifulness and 'ordinariness'.

Examples of heartlands can be derived from the conception of the new populists of a Europe of nations with each having an ethnic and cultural homogeneity. There is a strong implied vision of a world as it 'was' in the rejection of immigration, the complications of globalisation and the encroachment of taxation, and the intrusions of the state and its agents in the form of politicians, intellectuals, bureacrats and boffins. The essence of the heartland is that it is the good life but that, unlike utopias, it is a life that has already been lived and so shown to be feasile. It assumes or asserts that there was a good life before the corruptions and distortions of the present.

The term heartland is used because heartlands are something which are felt rather than reasoned, and something which are shrouded in imprecision. This means that different positions can implicitly conjur up heartlands that differ from each other but where the difference can be ascribed to the nature of heartlands rather than to the different starting positions of the advocates. This ambiguity works in favour of populists because it disguises or ignores what might otherwise be divisions among its constituency. This suits populists who portray themselves as monolithic and untainted by internal conflict, even when the reality is that populism is particularly given to factionalism.

The third theme of populism is that it lacks core values. This stems from the importance of heartland, from where core values are derived. The variety of versions of the heartland explains why populism is attached to some very different ideological position from the left to the right. 'Populist' is frequently used as an epithet or qualifier to another ideological position and this is not coincidental. As a typical example of this Meny and Sorel (2002), refer to the debate about national-populisme in France. The attachment of populism to other sets of ideas is indicative of its inherent incompleteness and great flexibility. Populists have been revolutionary, reactionary, left-wing, right-wing, authoritarian and libertarian. This is not indicative of the emptiness of populism as a concept but it does reveal the empty heart of populism that gives it both weakness and potential ubiquity. Populism reacts against elites and institutions. The nature of these will vary and so the nature of populism varies with them.

The experience of populism in contemporary Europe is mainly limited to the right and is manifest most systematically in the new populism of the new radical right. In this sense, contemporary European mobilised populism lies on the right of the political spectrum. Less systemically, some Euroscepticism has strong elements of populism. In EU member-states and in accession states in other parts of Europe Euroscepticism draws its sources from a wide range of political opinions – from the left-libertarian 'new politics' of some green movements through communist parties to agrarian

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parties and conservative parties on and moving back to the new populist agenda of the radical right (Taggart, 1998; Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2002).

The fourth theme is that populism is a reaction to a sense of extreme crisis. Populism is not the politics of the stable, ordered polity but comes as an accompaniment to change, crisis and challenge. This crisis may well stem from a sense of moral decay but it always spills over into a critique of politics and into the sense that politics as usual cannot deal with the unusual conditions of crisis. Some of the land-mark instances of populist movements have come about during times of great change, such as pre-revolutionary Russia or post-Civil War America. What is perhaps more important is that populism tends to emerge when there is a strong *sense* of crisis and populists use that sense to inject an urgency and an importance to their message.

Whether there is in fact a crisis of legitimacy in contemporary Europe with mass publics withdrawing support from political institutions is a matter of debate (see Klingemann and Fuchs, 1995). What is indisputable is that there is public political debate about legitimacy whether it be in terms of the constitution of the state, the role of political parties or the nature of corruption in countries such as Germany, Austria, Italy and Belgium. It is out of these debates, and that contemporary European populists have seized on issues out of which to make political capital.

This leads to the fifth theme which focuses around the self-limiting quality of populism. As populists only mobilise when they are overcome with a sense of crisis, we can see that they are reluctantly political. This explains why they tend to try to adopt new and different forms of politics but it also explains why it becomes very difficult to sustain populist movements in the long-term, because these new forms of politics are often difficult to develop over a long period of time. The appeal of populist to their constituencies is usually on the basis of their unusualness and therefore as they become institutionalised into politics, they inevitably lose a major part of their popular appeal. Populists will often prefer to portray themselves as movements rather than parties but movements have greater difficulty institutionalising themselves and so this self-portrayal is not costless.

Populists have often relied on charismatic leaders. This means that in the very form of authority, they are expressing a rejection of more bureaucratised, regularised and constrained forms of leadership. This gives populists leaders momentum in the short term but it also presents difficulties because the issue of succession, in the long term, becomes fundamentally problematic. Personalising leadership works while the same person is in command but creates problems in transferring authority to new leaders. This is partly why populist movements are so spectacular – they appear, build support and are highly visible through their leaders but the movements often share the same political 'shelf-life' as those leaders.

The final theme is that populists tend to be highly chameleonic. The attributes of the context in which populism occurs will spill into the form that populism takes. This is not to say that the contextual attributes hide the 'real' nature of populism, but is simply to observe that populism is de facto substantially contextually-contingent. The study of populism has been dominated by studies of particular populist movements. This is partially a consequence of the nature of populism. As populism is invariably heavily coloured by its context, it is not always apparent that there are similarities

over what is populism in different times and places. Deciding what is the 'canon' of populist cases is itself a contentious exercise. The lack of even a shared sense of self-identity on the part of populists makes their identification difficult. Although populist politicians do not necessarily balk at describing themselves as populists, they rarely use that term in their name.

The importance of *specific* versions of a heartland means that each populist movement sees itself very much in terms of its own specific features rather than as part of a wider populist phenomenon. Populist mobilise when *their* heartland is threatened not when *a* heartland is threatened. This means that the context has a key influence on determining what populists are exercised about and in how they frame their language of frustration. It is in this sense that populism is highly-chameleonic and therefore that different instances may seem to be inherently different whereas they may be drawing a similar populist impulse.

The six features of populism demonstrate how populism is different from other ideologies. The lack of core values, self-limitation and chameleonic features partially explain why populism is so episodic and therefore why, as a subject of study populism is both rather esoteric and difficult. However, taken together, the six features also illustrate why populism is a potential barometer of the health of representative politics. Something as difficult to get hold of as populism is analytically hard to deal with, but it is also very easy for it to suddenly appear and transform itself into a significant political force – albeit short-lived – because it draws on some deeply embedded and potentially ubiquitous fears about the limits of representative politics.

Having identified the six features of populism I want to suggest why they have a particular resonance in contemporary Europe.

Representative Politics
The breaching of the divide between Western and Eastern Europe has meant a convergence around both the institutions of liberal democracies and the practices of representative politics. While we do not have to necessarily enjoin with those arguing the triumphalist line about the victory of liberal democracy, it would be churlish not to acknowledge the similarity in institutional architecture and in the tenor of public debate about the nature of those institutions. Elections, parties, interest groups and legislative assemblies combine to constitute the very stuff of representative politics in Eastern and Central Europe. Across the new Europe, representative politics has become the prevailing form of politics.

There has been no simple progression from one-party rule to a stable multipartyism emulating the Western European experience. The development of representative politics in East and Central Europe has thrown up electoral success for ex-communists, the downfall of heroes of the 1989 anti-communist revolutionaries such as Walesa in Poland, and the rise of xenophobic reactionary political parties. Those arguing for a simple linear development of representative politics in the former communist states with a gradual process of stabilisation and 'normalisation' to a point where convergence with Western European political systems was inevitable were wrong both about the nature of Eastern transition, and implicitly, about nature of Western European party systems. The development of representative politics means not the creation of a set of institutions but the initiation of a type of politics around

those institutions and the very unpredictability and transitory nature of many of the post-1989 movements is an inherent feature of representative politics.

The reversion to a communist legacy or to an ethnic nationalism reflects reactions against the nature of representative politics. Fastening onto the very antithesis of the dominant consensus is a way of expressing an almost primal reaction against the very nature of contemporary politics. When that contemporary politics is representative politics, then the reaction is against it and instinctively populist.

At the level of European integration and particularly Euroscepticism it is easy to see the link with representative politics. The 'democratic deficit' is something that explicitly links the critiques of the EU with the values of representative politics. What is interesting is that the same arguments come from left and right of the political spectrum and now, with the Convention on the Future of Europe, they even link with the EU's own self-critique. Almost universally there is an acceptance that the architecture of the EU is somehow insufficiently representative. For some the solutions come in increasing representation in the EU's institutions (such as increasing the powers or the representativeness of the European parliament) while for Eurosceptics, the solution usually lies in strengthening the power of domestic representative institutions at the expense of EU institutions.

While the democratic deficit of the EU makes the structures look less like domestic conventional representative structures, the recent dynamics of European integration have pushed the EU into areas that make it take on the functions we would normally attribute to the nation-state. With the Euro, the move (however halting) towards a common foreign policy and many of the aspects covered under JHA the EU is looking, for populists, more and more state-like. In coins, armies, policy forces and borders we have important symbols of 'state-ness'. While the EU in terms of its form looks unlike domestic representative systems, in terms of functions it seems to be taking on many of the tasks of a modern state. This gives populist appeals to limit European integration a particular resonance for their audiences.

The critiques of globalisation and the fuel protests are a little different in their relation to representative politics than the other manifestations. What defines this social movement activity is their focus on direct action and on spectacular politics. This is indicative of their critique of existing practices of representative politics. They have resorted to direct action because of the argument that political parties, interest groups and indeed representative institutions such as parliament are all insufficiently representative. They therefore share the critique with new populist forces that established political parties are unrepresentative and act as an exclusive cartel.

In the new Europe, western, central and eastern European states have converged around a model of representative politics at the domestic levels. This has allowed populists to gain a foothold in those systems in the guise of new populists in Western Europe and in the guise of ethnic nationalism or ex-communists in central and Eastern Europe. Across EU member and candidate states Euroscecptical forces and arguments have established a toe-hold in nearly all party systems and have often resorted to populist positions. This is not to say that any of these forces are anything like majorities. In fact, it may well be testimony to the relative health of representative

politics, that populism has become expressed and incorporated as a marginal minority force within it.

The Politics of the Heartland

While much writing on populism has stressed the commitment to 'the people', the common basis of this lies more in the causes of populism than in populism itself. Populism is a reaction against representative politics and, as such, takes the language of popular sovereignty to use against the insitutions of representation. In this sense the invocation of 'the people' is an empty claim. In another sense, 'the people' does have real meaning. Meaning is invested in the people as occupants of a 'heartland'.

The heartland is a construction of the good life derived retrospectively from a romanticized conception of life as it has been lived. It differs from a utopia which is constructed as the embodiment of values and which is something not yet existing. Indeed, one of the literal implications of the word 'utopia' is that a place that exists nowhere whereas the key to understanding the heartland is that it is, for populists, a desciption of a reality - and one that has been experienced.

The heartland serves as the raw material from which values are derived and from which a populist constituency is derived. The point about the good life as embodied in the heartland is that it is an apolitical vision in the sense that it is characterised by its lack of politics. Populists are reluctantly political and it is only when threatened by crisis that they will mobilise into movements and parties. This accounts for populists' hostility towards politicians and their propensity to follow charismatic leaders as an alternative to wholesale political involvement on their own part.

One feature of the heartland is its unitary nature. The heartland is characterised by its singularity. This makes for a politics of simplicity. The populist good life is untroubled by class division. Despite the fact that, in practice, we can identify very clear class bases to populist movements such as the People's Party in the US or the Peronists in Argentina, the populist self-perception centres around the idea of a singular but universal version of political truth. Populists often take on quasi and sometimes semi-religious themes and tones. They assert that there is right and there is wrong, there is wisdom and there is corruption and that it is in the politics of populism that wisdom, rectitude and simple right reside.

The simplicity and singularity of the heartland is at odds with the structures and processes of European integration. The complexity of the institutional structures and the fact that they do not accord with domestic political institutions makes the architecture of the EU not only a distant one but also a foreign one for populists. Looking for a simple equivalent to a legislature means looking not at the European Parliament but to the Council of Ministers linked to the European Parliament by a complex procedure. Looking for the head of the EU means casting a glance at the Commission President but also the Council presidency. All these complexities have their roots in a difficult balancing act of unprecedented integration but this is little comfort to the populists. The singularity of the heartland is at odds with a European project that seeks to affirm complementary identities, regional, local and national.

European policies as well as structures also provide fertile ground for populist mobilisation. For example, questions about the nature of immigration and asylum have become key questions in domestic and international politics in contemporary European politics. The nature of immigration and the legal limits and lengths of asylum policy have a resonance that has been drawn on by parties of the right but which extends to a much fuller popular debate, most apparent in the UK at present. These issues go to the very heart of identity questions and, in the terms of this paper, often embody fundamental questions about the nature of the heartland. At domestic levels concerns about immigration raise questions about the monolithic nature of the heartland. Implicitly the fear of defenders of the heartland is that adding diversity to the heartland 'pluralises' a unitary concept and in so doing makes it far more difficult to invoke as a means of mobilisation.

At international levels, debates in the EU about immigration touch on the notion of whether there is or can ever be a European heartland. Others talk about this in terms of identity, citizenship (Meehan, 1993; Weiner, 1998) or demos (Chryssouchoou, 1998). The difference here is that these debates are oriented around the construction of something whereas the heartland refers to something which has already existed. In terms of winning populists over to Europe, the idea of constructing a new identity is hardly then a winning one.

Some of the recent opposition to European integration, especially from the left, extends from a concern about 'Fortress Europe'. The term was initially developed to describe the economic and trading identity of the European Union but, as is appropriate for a project built of the freedoms of goods, services and people, the term has been used in connection with the issues of immigration and borders. These fears have been compounded by the Maastricht Treaty's incorporation of the Schengen Agreement and the creation of the Third Pillar of Justice and Home Affairs incorporating asylum and migration policies. Such opposition highlights the degree to which the free movement within the Union implies heavy restrictions on movement into the Union thus promoting an exclusive and exclusionary policy that is odds with the development of a truly multicultural Europe. Indeed, as den Boer and Wallace (2000: 497) suggest, elite concern in developing JHA has been as much with security for European citizens as it was for concerns with justice and freedom within the Union.

On the other side of the political spectrum concern with too much internal mobility afforded by the free movement of labour have exercised others in a different direction but with same effect of increasing Euroscepticism. Important sources of Euroscepticism in Germany and Austria have come from concern about how the free movement of labour would have on their economies and particularly on their labour markets and the openness of their borders to Russian mafiosi (*Finacncial Times* August 26 1998). Even in applicant states such as Poland social groups who feel themselves to be threatened by free movement of labour (mainly blue-collar workers) are among the most Eurosceptical (Gerszewska and Kucharczyk, 1998).

In terms of geography, identity and policy, the European integration project as at the heart of the new Europe, is a challenge to those that base their political values on an explicit or implicit heartland. Making Europe multi-level, complex, and 'larger' makes for populist concern. It is difficult to reconcile and essentially future-oriented

project with the values derived from a past-oriented and rather vague notion of the heartland. And yet it is exactly that disjuncture that lies at the heart of the populists' ability to mobilise the constituencies that they do.

Empty Heart
The lack of core values across the three examples of populist mobilisation in contemporary Europe is key to understanding both what links and what limits the collective populist potential in Europe. Not sharing a set of core values limits the capacity or propensity to build coalitions.

It is clearest to see that there is a very diffuse set of values when we look at the new populists. In many ways we can identify clusters of new populist parties around which issues they identify as key. There are those parties such as Le Pen's Front National which see immigration as the binding issue. Other parties such as Vlams Block in Belgium or the Northern Leagues in Italy see regional assertion aginast central rule as their strongest card. The final set are those mainly in Northern Europe that see critique of the welfare state and taxation as a key issue. This includes the Danish People's Party and Progress Party in Norway. Into the mix we can add the spectacular rise (and fall) of the List Pim Fortyn in the Netherlands. The anti-immigration stance on the basis of a defence of multiculturalism nicely illustrates how the populism of these parties does not fit definitively on the left or the right. These parties may be united in critiquing contemporary politics but they are divided by what they see as the most important issues.

The difference is again apparent in the sorts of forces that can be characterised as Eurosceptic. This means that the sorts of arguments used, or values referred to, in support of Eurosceptic positions can be extremely different. On the new left we have the argument of some Greens that the EU is insufficently inclusive. Contrasted with this is the argument of the far right that it is too inclusive and allows for too much migration and immigration. Communist Eurosceptics see the European project as a capitalist plot, while the right-wing equivalent portrays the project as a socialist plot. These are illustrative of the fact that populist Euroscepticism is a very broad umbrella covering a most unusual set of political adversaries. The values that lead to Euroscepticism are derived from some very different sources.

The examples of social movement mobilisation also demonstrate the same phenomenon that we see with the Eurosceptics. Anti-globalisation movements bring together the anti-capitalist left, such as seen in May Day protests in the UK, with traditionally more right-wing agricultural interests as exemplified in the direct action of Jose Bové the French farmer against MacDonalds. Similarly the fuel protests brought together both the specific action of truckers with the more diffuse interests of domestic car drivers. The arguments against fuel prices best exemplify the lack of shared core values. High prices can be blamed by those on the right as the result of excessive government regulation and specifically taxation. The left can take a different position seeing high prices as the result of corporate cartels of major oil companies who might also collude with governments to secure these levels by 'allowing' high rates of taxation on the product. Uniting all thse positions are distrust of elites and politics - although the particular distrusted elites may be different. Populism has a diffuse similarity: it rejects existing politics and practices, but it critiques from some very different value sets. The context that gives rise to populism

often plays a crucial role in providing core values – and this reveals how populism feeds fundamentally off contextually-specific sources of discontent.

Chameleonic Politics

The idea that populism is chameleonic is another way of expressing a simple statement that populism is neither the preserve of the left or the right. Contemporary Europe certainly appears to provide more examples of right-wing populism but taking a longer sweep of history we can produce examples of left-wing populism and taking a broad view of populism, as we have already seen, means seeing a wide range of ideological positions that can be interpreted at populist.

One of the most notable features of Euroscepticism is that it draws from a range of ideological sources across the left-right spectrum. Parties of the far right, of neo-fascism, express disquiet at the inclusiveness of the European integration project with its associated free movement of people, and also are uneasy at the challenge to national sovereignty. Parties of the far left sometimes portray the European integration project as essentially an elitist capitalist-driven process that works against the interests of workers. Parties of the new left, such as Green parties see European integration as too exclusionary and representing only one part of potential global community at the expense of the other Southern part. New populist forces express a profound distrust of the bureaucratic politics of the EU and at the democratic deficiences of the EU.

Gary Marks and Marco Steenbergen (2002a) have recently edited a special edition of *Comparative Political Studies* that is devoted to exploring how positions on European integration relate to the left-right dimension of politics across the range of citizens, social movements, European Parliamentary parties and national political parties. Drawing the themes together in their introductory article Marks and Steenbergen (2002b) suggest that there are a number of ways in which the issue of European integration maps onto the left-right perspective. They argue that there are four possible patterns: (1) where the left-right dimension is unrelated to the anti- or pro-integration dimension and where all conflict is along that dimension; (2) where the dimensions are unrelated; (3) where the two dimensions collapse into one dimension; and (4) where the two dimensions are related but not fused (Marks & Steenbergen, 2002b: 882).

Taking the overall themes from the contributions to the special issue, Marks and Steenbergen2002b: 889-90) suggest three conclusions. First they suggest that EU positions on the part of actors are structured rather than random; Second they suggest that different actors converge in how they structure the EU issue and that a Left/Right dimension 'appears to underlie the opinions, stances, behavior of citizens, social movements and political parties' (2002b: 889), but that this is not comprehensive and that a new politics dimension, not collapsible to the Left-Right dimension is also related to positions on European integration. And third they argue that left-right ideas are related to an authoritarian-libertarian dimension (2002b: 980).

An alternative possible explanation is the way in the European issue serves as a 'carrier' for other issues. In theory, this could mean that the European issue is used to express other policy-specific issues. But in practice the European issue is much more

amenable to the expression of more diffuse sentiments. This reflects both the complexity of the European issue and its 'second-order' status.

We can summarise by saying that there is some relationship of Euroscepticism to the left-right dimension but that different types of Euroscepticism come from different parts of that spectrum. Marks and Steenbergen's special issue shows that the multiplicity of position is not only related to left-right positions but to other dimensions of ideology. In short populist ideology is not anchored in any one part f any of the ideological dimensions that we can see.

Populism and the Sense of Crisis

The idea of living at a turning point in history is an important one for populist ideas. The populist mobilisation comes about when there is a perceived discrepancy between the ideals of the 'heartland' and the practice of contemporary politics. Because populists are only reluctantly political, this discrepancy has to be substantial enough to engender a sense of crisis. Only this sense of urgency can justify the transformation of 'ordinary' citizens into politicians. It is also the core of the appeal of populist politicians to their constituencies.

Some have talked of a crisis of legitimacy in Western European democracies. Citing evidence of declining turnout and declining participation, the suggestion has been made that politics as usual is undergoing a crisis. In fact, the evidence on this macro assertion is far more ambiguous and differentiated between national contexts. In general 'there is no evidence of a general trend towards lower levels of electoral turnout' (Topf, 1995: 50). Fuchs and Klingemann (1995) argue, in summarising the results of their Beliefs in Government studies, that representative democracy has been transformed by the increase in non-institutional inputs on the part of citizens into the political system and into the increasing importance of elite performance for maintaining public support. In his summary of his findings Russell Dalton (1995: 75-6) puts the situation rather differently. He suggests that while there is widespread support for the ideals and norms of democracy, the institutions of representative democracy have become much more problematic for citizens. This fits much more closely with what would be grist to the populist mill. While representative politics has become almost universal at domestic levels across Europe, so there has been disquiet at public levels about the practices of representative politics.

What is clearer than a legitimacy crisis is that in many European states, political parties have become less taken for granted, less supported and transformed. This means that discourses of distrust of parties have become common currencies in some countries such as Germany with talk of *partietvedrossenheit*. The new populist mobilisation has often drawn heavily on this specific mistrust of parties. In Italy the distrust of the political parties lead to both constitutional reform and a wholesale transformation of the party system engendered at least partially by forces such as Lega Nord and Silvio Berlusconi's *Forza Italia*. These parties were explicit in their rejection of the existing parties and party systems and, in the case of *Forza Italia*, were organised around models other than those of the traditional political party.

All three cases of contemporary European populist mobilisation are underlaid by a sense that larger, even sinister, forces are quietly effecting a revolution and therefore creating a sense of crisis for those seeking to defend the values of the heartland. The

critique of the EU, more particularly from those within the member states, is often based on the idea that European integration either contains its own inexorable logic of deepening integration or that elites are consciously seeking deeper integration or designing institutions that embody that logic. The populist version of Euroscepticism (and we do need to bear in mind that not all Euroscepticism is necessary populist) is more liable to see the 'dangerous' deepening of integration as the consequence of the agency of elites. Anti-globalisation arguments are similarly structured around the sense of either a process-driven or an elite-driven move to economic and political globalisation, at the expense of more local (heartland?) values. For the new populists the process of post-war politics in Western Europe has seen the inexorable rise of bureaucratism and elite-dominance.

Self-Limiting Mobilisation

The spectacular nature of populism is due to the fact that it tends to favour non-conventional forms of mobilisation. The 'reluctance' that populists express about being involved in politics means that, when they do mobilise, they tend to use forms that differentiate themselves from traditional political forms. This has the consequence that even marginal effectiveness in getting support will be likely to be more visible than more traditional modes of mobilisation. But it also has the effect of limiting their political 'shelf-life'. Unconventional forms of mobilisation, if successful, come into conflict with institutions that are designed around conventional forms of mobilisation. This lack of fit makes for visibility but it also makes for longer-term difficulties. The other dilemma is that long-term unconventional mobilisation becomes, in effect, conventional and therefore undermines part of the appeal of populists to their constituencies.

The self-limiting quality of populism in Europe can be seen in the adaptation of new populist forces at domestic levels. Parties like the FPO or Forza Italia have become enmeshed in conventional political structures and have moved, by necessity, away from being portraying themselves as spontaneous movements. They have become, after all, parties of government. Even those new populist parties that have not made it to government have faced the pressure to 'conventionalise' and to institutionalise. The difficulties with the leadership succession issue and break-away parties that the French Front National are testimony to these pressures.

At EU levels the non-conventionality strategy is even more limiting. The structures of the EU are both complex and, as John Peterson (2001) notes, not structured in a way to allow an 'opposition' to have a place. These factors mean that, in EU politics terms, populist mobilisation is limited in how and where it can manifest itself. As Giacomo Benedetto (2002) shows Euroscepticism in the European Parliament is limited partly by the nature of the institution and the rules of party group formation and also by the lack of inclination of Eurosceptics to co-operate with each other. The multi-level governance structure of European politics does not simply add new mobilisation opportunities for populists because the 'new' layers are diffuse, complex and difficult arenas for populist mobilisation.

Conclusion

I have argued that populism has three particular manifestations in contemporary Europe. First we can see it in the social movement mobilisation of the fuel protests of 2000 or in the anti-globalisation movement. Secondly, we can see it in some of the

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Euroscepticism that is being expressed by political forces across EU member and candidate states. And thirdly, we can see it in the rise of new populist parties of the right who have entrenched themselves in many (mainly West) European states. I then examine some of the literature on populism and present and alternative conceptualisation of populism emphasizing six identifying features. Then, taking these as the cases I have identified how they illustrate six features of populism in contemporary Europe.

What does this all add up to? It might be thought that by identifying a disparate grouping political movements as populist, I am suggesting that there is a much greater potential for populism than has previously been identified. But, in many ways, I want to suggest the opposite. Populism in contemporary Europe is less than the sum of its parts. The fragmentary nature of European populist mobilisation, the attachment to different values and the self-limiting nature of populist mobilisation in general means that populism will be episodic if spectacular and diffuse if deeply-held. European populis has, whatever its short-term spectacular nature, a limited potential.

One reason for the limited potential for populism is that the different manifestations are collectively and individually ideologically heterogeneous. I have attempted to demonstrate that populist social movement mobilization, Euroscepticism and new populism are all disparate in terms of the values they aspire to. In fact this is a consequence of the heartland. The idea of the heartland has to be something that is drawn from an experience close at hand and therefore closely felt. A politics derived from the heartland is therefore likely to be specific to its context, and the context of all these populisms is very different. Populism can be widespread because it can attach to different ideologies, positions and issues. But this limits its capacity to integrate its component elements.

The second reason for the limited potential for populism lies in their status. The marginality of all three types of European populism means that none of them can claim to speak fro anything like a majority. Euroscepcticism remains on the fringes of party systems and with only one or two exceptions, is absent from the major parties of government. Populist social movement activity is also a minority concern. In the case of anti-globalisation protesters the overlap with anti-capitalist ideology illustrates this. Where populist social movement concerns have th potential to appeal to a wider base, as is the case with the fuel protests there is an intrinsic diversity that means that any coaltion built over this issue is unlikely to be extended to other contiguous issues. The new populist parties of the right have had success in getting into government in three countries (Austria, Netherlands and Italy). In all three of those the problems of maintaining populist postures in government have not been easily resolved. And in all these cases these parties have gained office not by virtue of being majority parties but as parts of coalitions. All other new populist parties have remained marginal to their respective party systems.

The final reason for the limited potential of European populism lies in the nature of the new Europe. At the heart of the new Europe is the project of European integration. This does not mean that the boundaries of the new Europe are prescribed by the EU but it is to say that European integration is a key project and point of reference for EU members and non-members alike. The nature of the European project is one that has not either created or been created by representative politics. This is not to make a

normative point but merely to note that European integration has for much of its history been an elite-led and technical project (in the way it has been portrayed). In the post-Maastricht era this might have changed but the architecture of the European project remains rooted in its history. These institutional arrangements do not provide for much opportunity for populist mobilization. The representative components of the EU are either the weaker institutions (European Parliament) or built on the idea of indirect representation and both facets make for weak incentives for populist mobilization.

It is the nature of contemporary European politics that there is a both a unique international project and a collection of more mundane but no less important domestic developments of political disquiet. European project of integration that has fashioned a unique institutional architecture for co-operation and integration. Domestically new populist parties have become an established part of many party systems and there is evidence of more widespread popular ambivalence and alienation from politics. On the one hand we are witnessing a construction of complex structures designed to facilitate the sorts of representative politics that occur at domestic levels. On the other hand, the sorts of politics thrown up at domestic levels are often sceptical or quizzical concerning the process of representative politics. This is fertile soil for populism but it will be a disparate and heterogenous collections of populist mobilization.

Anyone focusing on any one particular political phenomenon is liable to begin to see it everywhere and to accord it is a pre-eminent status. Populism is neither ubiquitous nor is it pre-eminent. It is a secondary concept that, once clearly delineated, provides one of the keys to understanding wider and more substantial phenomena. So, only if we understand populism can we begin to fully comprehend the rise of the far right and the nature of contemporary neo-fascism, the nature of (some) European social movement mobilization and nature of (some) critiques of the European project.

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