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EUROPE FROM A POLITICAL SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Jean Monnet Chair Online Textbook 2022

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Introduction: thinking about populism

“A spectre is haunting the world”. It is with these words that Ghita Ionescu and Ernest Gellner describe Populism, by paraphrasing Marx and Engel’s famous line (1969, p. 1). Populism is a central concept for the understanding of contemporary politics and constitutes a global structuring fact of contemporary democracies. It is an extremely complex phenomenon, widely debated in political theory and political discourse but characterized by widespread disagreement and a lack of full definitional consensus over its essence (Weyland 2001). “Populism is a ‘chameleonic’ concept that adapts itself to circumstance and context and which has become so ubiquitous in politics that some talk of a populist *Zeitgeist*” (March 2007, p. 65)¹. As Pierre Rosanvallon wrote “si le mot est partout, la théorie du phénomène n’est en effet nulle part” (Rosanvallon 2020). Because of its nature, which could be defined as almost chameleonic, some scholars have come to say that there is no populism but only the set of its various manifestations (Werz 2003), considering it as an essentially unreliable concept (Taggart 2000, p. 1). Although it represents a central category for current political thought, populism is not a new phenomenon, despite the growing interest in the various forms and types established worldwide is (relatively) recent. Historically, populism made its appearance on the political scene in the nineteenth century, initially in Russia with the term «narodničestvo» then with the foundation of the People’s Party in the United States; it gradually took specific forms in Latin America and others in Europe.

The question of populism is closely related to that of democracy, being a phenomenon that arises and develops in contexts of crisis: “It is both the symptom of a real difficulty and the expression

¹ On the reference to the *Zeitgeist* see also Taggart (2000); Mudde (2004).

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of an illusion. All it does is express an intrinsic evil. This is where political disenchantment meets - due to poor representation, the dysfunctions of the democratic regime, and reinforced by the confluence of the same disenchantment with the collective bewilderment linked to the lack of solution of today's social question - and the twofold feeling of powerlessness, of the absence of alternatives and of the opacity of the world that ensues" (Rosanvallon 2017). Understanding populism is therefore necessary to understand democracies and societies. The theoretical debate has been proposed different ways of considering the populist phenomenon. Some scholars, for example, speak of populism as "thin-centered ideology" because of the inherent ambiguities of the phenomenon (Albertazzi & McDonnell 2008; Mudde 2004; Stanley 2008), as a political style (Moffitt 2016), as a rhetorical style (Canovan 1981) or as a series of discursive practices which create the concept of "people" (Laclau 2005). Nadia Urbinati has written that "the term 'populism' itself is ambiguous and is difficult to define in a sharp and uncontested way. This is because it is not an ideology or a specific political regime but rather a representative process, through which a collective subject is constructed so that it can achieve power" (2019, p. 5). Regardless of how it is conceived, it represents an element to understand the unfolding political, social and economic dynamics of our time (Bonansinga 2020). How must we therefore consider the phenomenon? How is it possible to speak of populism to qualify extremely different contexts and movements? What is needed is first of all to rethink the populist phenomenon looking at its real nature by analyzing its characteristics in order to understand and differentiate a whole series of contemporary political changes whose complexity must be grasped. While keeping in mind the peculiarities of the various populist manifestations and thinking of it as multiform and diversified phenomenon, there are common elements that characterize the practices, words and strategies of these movements.

In an attempt to propose a theory capable of "thinking populism" and to develop a relevant and constructive criticism, Pierre Rosanvallon traces an anatomy of populism. Through a description of this anatomy, the French intellectual constructs a kind of ideal type by identifying the constitutive traits of the phenomenon. According to his vision there would be five constitutive elements: a conception of the "people", a theory of democracy, a mode of representation, a politics and a philosophy of economics, a regime of passions and emotions (Rosanvallon 2020). One element in particular seems to have attracted much interest in recent years, that is the recognition of an emotional-passional component. How do populist movements connect

emotional dimension and political dimension? What role does this regime of passions and emotions play?

The affective dimension of the populist phenomenon

“It is now commonplace to observe that the last decade [...] cannot be understood without taking into account the bursting of political emotions” (Maldonado, 2019, p. 15). Since the second half of the 1990s there has been a growing increase in the study of emotions, passions, affect, etc., with the affirmation of what has been defined Affective or Emotional Turn (Clough & Halley, 2007; Thompson & Hoggett, 2012). These elements, which were traditionally conceived in a negative sense and linked to the sphere of irrationality, instead begin to be considered fundamental for the understanding of socio-political phenomena and human behaviour. Thanks to this cultural turn, the belief that emotions play a much greater role than expected in how individuals perceive public affairs, evaluate them, and make political decisions is becoming more and more solid (Forgas 2000).

Studies of emotion have challenged the standard accounts of politics, shedding light on different forms of political action, dynamics of identity formation, and multi-dimensional aspects of civil engagement and political legitimacy. [...] Over the last decades, we have witnessed an Affective turn within social and political sciences. [...] This onto-epistemological turn has triggered a variety of normative consequences, one of which is the questioning of beliefs around democratic politics as essentially –when not exclusively – based on human rationality” (Cossarini & Vallespín, 2019, pp. 2-4).

In contrast to the traditional essentially rationalist view of politics many fields of research begin to highlight the connection between emotions and politics. Amongst them, many are focused on the role emotional aspects play in democratic politics and in the populist phenomenon (Clarke, Hoggett and Thompson 2006; Demertzis 2006; Maldonado 2017; Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017; Demertzis 2019).

Coming back to the populism’s anatomy theorized by Rosanvallon, also here the importance that emotions play in the unfolding of populist culture and strategies is recognized. In this context a rehabilitation of emotions occurs; the latter become decisive for decision-making and are motives of human action. There are different ways in which populism exploits the emotional and affective elements, as well as the emotions that come into play in these dynamics. Rosanvallon

distinguishes three categories of emotions, depending on their nature and the political consequences to which they lead: *positional emotions*, *intellectual emotion* and *emotions of action*. The first express a sense of anger at being abandoned, not recognized, a contempt that is translated into democratic resentment; the second bring with them feelings of opacity distorting the surrounding reality (for example, distortion that occurs through conspiracy theories or fake news); the third include all those emotional states that lead to action and to act against institutions whose legitimacy and morality are not recognized (Rosanvallon 2020).

So, in the construction of the populist scheme, which creates a duality in society based on the distinction between sovereign people and immoral elites, or the distinction inside-outside, affective and emotional factors seem to come into play. According to these theories an *affective investment* (Stavrakakis, in De Cleen and Stavrakakis 2017, p. 7) is inserted in populist strategy and “to understand the (populist) movement is to discover the feelings which moved people” (Minogue 1969, p. 197). This affective investment can intervene at different levels, both in the social bonds and common affects that hold the members of a group together, in the motivations that lead individuals to act, both in the link between citizens and leaders (central figure in the populist scheme).

Emotions contribute to identity formation, along with other factors such as shared values, worldviews, attitudes, rituals, and performances, and they clearly take part in the creation of social bonds and the promotion of social cohesion. Emotions are also an essential component of any form of collective action: building or reproducing identities is one of the processes by which individuals and groups give meaning to their experiences and contribute to collective action and political participation (Cossarini & Vallespín 2019, p. 4).

In the link with populism the so-called political emotions or social emotions acquire extreme relevance (Demertzis 2013; Nussbaum 2015)². What are these emotions? What are the sentiments behind these "libidinal bonds", to quote Freud, which feed populist politics?

² This is how Nicolas Demertzis describes the political emotions that intervene in the populist dynamics: “Here are some of their principal characteristics: (a) They should not necessarily be consciously felt; one may be thoroughly proud of one’s country while at the same time hating unconsciously other nationalities or one’s conscious anger against a political opponent or group may be symptomatic of suppressed shame (Scheff 1994). (b) They work out as high order ‘programmatic emotions’ (Barbalet 2006). (c) A political emotion may be ‘self-targeted’ or ‘introjected’ (e.g. shame, pride, fear, anxiety) or ‘other-targeted’ or ‘extrojected’ (e.g. admiration, compassion, anger). (d) As there are no exclusively political emotions but only figurations of the politics-emotions nexus any emotion may acquire political significance. (e) They are individual as well as collective or shared emotions. (f) Political emotions proper or ‘salient political emotions’ (Sokolon 2006, 181), should be differentiated from the ‘politically relevant

Nostalgia

The literature on populism shows how in different national political contexts it is possible to identify a wide range of feelings and emotions. Among these, those that are most associated with populist movements generally are anger, fear, indignation, shame but also emotions like hope or confidence. In this study, however, it was decided to focus on one aspect in particular which combines the populist logic not only with the emotional dimension but also with the temporal one: nostalgia. The *New Oxford Dictionary of English* (Pearsall, 1998) defines it as “a sentimental longing or wistful affection for the past” (p. 1266). In her studies, Svetlana Boym (2002; 2007) talks about it as the symptom emotion par excellence of our age, *le mal du siècle*, a historical emotion that

is not merely an expression of local longing, but the result of a new understanding of time and space that made the division into “local” and “universal” possible. [...] Is a rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress. [...] Unlike melancholia, which confines itself to the planes of individual consciousness, nostalgia is about the relationship between individual biography and the biography of groups or nations, between personal and collective memory (Boym 2011)³.

Thanks to recent studies that have become interested in topics such as memory or time, nostalgia has been recognized as an important driver of populism (Kenny 2017). The etymology of the word, which derives from the Greek *nostos* “return home” and *algia* “a painful condition”, led to define it as “a painful yearning to return home” (Davis 1979, p. 1)⁴. Research in social and political psychology shows how nostalgia is an extremely complex emotional condition which can contain in itself a set of mixed emotions. It is not a negative or positive emotion in an absolute sense, but it acquires different connotations according to the contexts and depending on how it is used (Boym 2001). For a more complete definition the description given by Stauth and Turner (1988) can be useful: it recognize four main components of nostalgia: “the view of history as decline and loss, being a departure from some golden age of ‘homefulness’ [...] a sense of the loss of

emotions’, i.e. urges, reflex and highly transient affective experiences which in general play a marginal role in the longue durée of political realities and processes, like nationalism, populism, political participation, and the like” (2019, p. 37).

³ This text in the *Atlas of Transformation* is an adoption and elaboration from her previous work, Boym 2001.

⁴ The term was coined in 1688 by the Swiss doctor Johannes Hofer who, starting from the Greek etymology, translated into a scientific notion the German concept of *Heimweh* (homesickness), which was used to refer to a medical malaise reported by Swiss mercenaries, brought on by a profound desire for their home.

wholeness and moral certainty [...] history is seen to be a collapse of values which had once provided the unity of social relations and personal experience [...] the loss of individual autonomy and the collapse of genuine social relationships [...] the sense of a loss of simplicity, spontaneity, and authenticity' (pp. 30–32). This emotion gained wider usage becoming part of the political discourse so much so that a kind of epidemic of “global nostalgia” in our democracies has been described.

Generically, the concept expresses the reference and the desire of a past still alive that is both idealized and regretted. Nostalgia can usually appear in times of crisis, in moments when the present time appears unsatisfactory and the future seems uncertain and threatening. This relationship with time, such tales of the past and perceptions of the future, has several implications in the political field. Indeed, the nostalgic feeling is involved in identity processes, both individually and collectively. From this perspective, nostalgia can take on positive or negative values depending on how the feelings are channeled and on the political stance of those who employ it (Bonnett, 2010). It is one of the fundamental connections between personal identity and the processes of collective identification, that is, between the psychological and the political level. For this reason, it is important to mention the conceptual differentiation that has been made between “personal nostalgia” and “collective nostalgia”. The first takes place through a direct experience linked to the past (Holbrook 1993; Schindler & Holbrook, 2003) and is linked by more subjective traits and evaluations. The second, on the contrary, comes from a group experience and looks at the elements and feelings shared by members of that same group; in this sense, the collective dimension is central in the development of identity dynamics making every single individual feel like part of a larger whole. These experiences, whether individual or collective, have profound political consequences and make nostalgia an important element endowed with a strong political appeal. In such a framework that combines emotions, time and politics, recent studies of political theory and not only, have focused on the relationship between nostalgia and populism.

Overall, for example, it was Wiles who wrote that populism does not like “the present and the immediate future” and seeks “to mold the further future in accordance with its vision of the past” (1969, 170). The narrative of populist movements is based on a vision of past times as glorious times gone. In the face of an uncertain, corrupt and problematic present the populist message

promises a kind of liberation through the dismantling of the status quo. The past is presented as a “Golden Age” and this triggers in citizens and in those to whom the movements are addressed collective feelings and emotions able to mobilize and lead to action. To explain this feeling, it is useful to recall the notion of “heartland”⁵ coined by Taggart, used to better reflect the populists’ rhetoric.

The heartland is a territory of the imagination. Its explicit invocation occurs only at times of difficulty, and the process yields a notion that is unfocused and yet very powerful as an evocation of that life and those qualities worth defending, thereby stirring populists into political action. The heartland is that place, embodying the positive aspects of everyday life (Taggart 2000, p. 95).

Or at least, “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 that is constructed as the embodiment of values and which is something not yet existing” (Taggart 2004, p. 278). In this way a very strong sense of belonging and identity comes to settle, and nostalgia acts as a powerful means. Populist policies use it as a tool of persuasion (Lammers & Baldwin, 2020) by exploiting its emotional potential. This kind of narrative is able to unite and give birth to emotions evoked when citizens remember the past. The past, especially the national past, is invoked by populist leaders in their messages in order to counter conventional politics and the predominantly transnational logics. Several studies have associated this sense of nostalgia, or to put it another way also melancholy, to a reaction to the values of globalization, to the weakening of borders and the logic of national sovereignty. Obviously, populist movements differ the same way emotional investment differs. It has been said that nostalgia is not a negative or positive emotional state in an absolute sense, but how must we assign one of these two meanings based on the way it relates to the populist strategy? How can it be used in populist movements? What are the differences?

Nostalgia’s Political Appeal in populist movements

The emergence of new populisms, which made their appearance on the European political scene in the 1980s and 1990s, has contributed to enriching and rendering the study of the phenomenon even more complex. These new movements have become increasingly numerous in the world and especially in Europe, overturning the traditional party organization and rewriting the

⁵ See also March 2007.

foundations of our democracies. Populism actually proposes a new idea of democracy; the idea of direct democracy is promoted as an alternative form to the liberal (Plattner, 2010) and representative forms that are supposed to be overcome. Looking at the different strategies and the different ways of living and addressing the conflict and the oppositional logic that characterizes these movements, the different reference values, a distinction has been traced between right-wing populism (Mudde 2007) and left-wing populism (March 2011; Mouffe 2018). In addition to the common points, such as the controversy against the political establishment (Rooduijn & Akkerman 2017) and the creation of conflictual dynamics in society and among individuals, it seems that it is above all “the specific ideology behind targeting an ‘elite’ and calling upon a ‘people’ that defines a populist movement’s essence and orientation” (Katsambekis 2017, p. 205). Literature on the subject tends to consider left-wing populist parties as being more inclusive than the mostly exclusive view of those of the right (Katsambekis 2017; Mudde & Kaltwasser 2013). Indeed, leftists, which in Europe could be represented by SYRIZA in Greece, Podemos in Spain or also la France Insoumise, start from a conception of the people as a pluralist and heterogeneous collective subject open to the possibility of inclusion of minorities, of other social classes or other categories. Criticizing the status quo, they propose to be more egalitarian and inclusionary and more attentive to social and economic issues (Katsambekis 2017). On the contrary, right-wing populism bases its vision of the people on “nativism” (Mudde 2007), on ethnic and territorial ties; consequently, everything that is different, everything that is outside the national sphere is presented as a danger to the unity and homogeneity of the sovereign people (we may think mostly of immigrants, foreigners, persons of other religious faith, etc.). This creates radically exclusive dynamics in which the “other” is presented as an enemy, thus increasing antagonism and conflict. Among these differences there is a different way of experiencing emotions, and a different way of employing them on the political and social scene. Returning to the emotion this analysis focuses on, nostalgia, according to Boym (2002; 2007) two types of nostalgia must be distinguished: the reflective one and the restorative one, that can be associated with the use that is made of this emotion by right-wing populism and left-wing populism. Reflective nostalgia “dwells in *algia*, in longing and loss, the imperfect process of remembrance. [...] (It) is more concerned with historical and individual time, with the irrevocability of the past and human finitude (Boym 2002, p. 41; 49); it accepts that the past cannot be restored but learns from those experiences and acts in a progressive and optimistic way towards the future. Restorative nostalgia “puts emphasis on *nostos* and proposes to rebuild

the lost home and patch up the memory gaps” (Boym 2002, p. 41); it leads to the idealization of the past as a glorious time, evokes national past with the desire to return to the old symbols, values, against the inadequate present. At the level of theoretical-political reflection, these two different types of nostalgia have been associated with left and right strategies, reflective nostalgia with the left, restorative with the right. They differ precisely in the way they relate to the past and in the attitude taken towards collective experiences. Today, nostalgia is employed more in the rhetoric of the nationalist right and uses the “disparagement of the present” (Lasch 1990). Restorative nostalgia interprets the sense of discomfort and distance from the present more convincingly, and precisely because of its attachment to the origins and idealization of national feelings (in an exclusive sense) has become a powerful tool of contemporary nationalisms and right-wing cultural movements. In this sense, nostalgia seems to be compatible with a conservative politics in defense of traditions against progress and change (Bourke 2018, p. 453; Tannock 1995, p. 455). An emblematic example of this attitude can be found in the figure and message of Donald Trump whose campaign slogan, "Make America Great Again", best expresses the sense of nostalgia for the United States that no longer exist but could return following his actions. To analyze the link between right-wing populism and nostalgia does not necessarily require to look overseas, since the European landscape also offers a lot of food for thought and analysis.

“Restorative nostalgia” of right-wing populism

Several right-wing populist movements have been very successful in recent years as in Italy, France, Germany, in Britain’s experience of Brexit, and especially in Poland and Hungary. They act by feeding dissatisfaction with the political system and distrust of traditional political elites. The populist right presents many varieties, proposing different approaches to the national economy, social problems and democracy in general. An attitude that seems to have changed from previous years, is the consideration of Europe; while they remain critical of the work of the European Union, the idea of an exit no longer seems to be taken into account. “European populists are now more interested in influencing EU policy and institutions from within, as many stated in a joint declaration instigated by the Hungarians in July 2020” (Lazar 2021).

How is nostalgia used by these parties and movements? How does the populist right use it in its rhetoric and narrative? Among the elements that most characterize these new populisms there

is the creation of myths and nostalgia for a glorious past that is built around the triad “culture, ethnicity and nationhood (De Cesari & Kaya, 2020; Elgenius & Rydgren, 2019). This nostalgic attitude so far described appears as the hallmark of our time more than a simple attitude, a time that is shaped around the utopia of the past or what Zygmunt Bauman has defined as *Retrotopia*, “visions located in the lost/stolen/abandoned but undead past, instead of being tied to the not-yet-unborn and so inexistent future” (2017). This perception of time tends to strengthen the value of tradition and to justify “the entitlement of the group (called ‘nation’) to territorially delineated political sovereignty – which in turn is the principal aspiration and objective of nationalism” (Bauman 2017). All these elements are essential for the construction of identities, for the opposition between ‘us’ and ‘them’ and to feed the anger of the people, a recipe for the global success of populism. In the European context, especially after the Brexit referendum, which, according to several scholars was the first important example of populist politics that was based on the nostalgic image of the past of the British nation before it joined the European Community in 1973, there are several leaders of political forces who present themselves as strenuous defenders of national history and values, and that characterize their discursive strategies with a powerful use of the “politics of memory” (Art, 2012; Audretsch & Gartzka, 2020; Bar-On, 2013; Couperus & Tortola, 2019; De Cesari & Kaya, 2020; Elgenius & Rydgren, 2019; Harper, 2018; Jensen, 2022; Korhonen, 2020; Bernhard & Kubik, 2014; Taş, 2020).

A more recent example is provided by the action of the German far-right party Alternative für Deutschland that refers to emotions and nostalgia in eastern Germany. Indeed, especially on the occasion of the Thuringia federal state election in 2019, nostalgic references to a time considered glorious were numerous and significant. We may think of the use of slogans from the peaceful revolution in 1989 such as “*Wir sind das Volk!*” (We are the people!), or the narrative of “*Wende_2.0*” in relation to the change promoted and carried out by AfD (Menke and Wulf 2021). The AfD has built its political manifesto on traditional values and appeals to voters with a nostalgic view of Germany, expressing the discontent of all those German citizens who do not believe in a modern Western society, and placing at the center of its political agenda themes such as anti-immigration, family values or criticism of the euro.

The tale of the past and the reliance on the emotions it arouses is also clearly visible in the French populist right. On the one hand we have the Rassemblement National of Marine Le Pen, who

uses the notion of “resurgentism” to present France as a nation that once was great but that has now entered a period of decay (Rueda 2022). According to Le Pen it is first necessary to reaffirm the Christian religious roots of the nation, the strong republican values as the sources of France’s *grandeur*. Once again, all this is in contrast with a certain idea of globalization or multiculturalism, in favour of an exasperated and discriminatory nationalism. On the other hand, again in France, in recent years another personality belonging to the populist and nationalist right has appeared on the political scene: Éric Zemmour, who in a 2018 interview defined himself as “nostalgique et réactionnaire”. Indeed, the leader of the Reconquête, presents himself as the one who tells and wants to carry on “the true history of France in light of today’s ‘Great Replacement’ of the French people” (Couperus, Tortola & Rensmann 2022; Trippenbach 2021), stating that “depuis 1815, la nostalgie de la grandeur française est le propre de la France”⁶, and pivoting on the strong pessimistic attitudes of most of the French⁷.

In the same vein the Spanish party VOX which presents itself as the main agent of “*La Reconquista*” (The Reconquest) (Esteve-Del-Valle and Costa López 2022). This party has often referred to episodes of the Spanish medieval past and other events in the country’s history. Recent studies link Vox’s political discourse and political style with that of the Spanish extreme right of the 1930s, which in turn were inspired precisely by ideological elements linked to the Reconquista (Fernández and Segovia, 2019). This type of narrative constitutes a conservatism especially focused on religious and radical values, and presents Spain as being indissolubly linked to the Catholic faith threatened by internal and external enemies. The strategy adopted has been defined by Bull and Hansen (2016) as “antagonistic memory” against the cosmopolitan memories “with an attempt to (re)construct a particularistic national identity through a reimagining of ‘territory in exclusionary terms” (Esteve-Del-Valle and Costa López 2022, p. 5). The use of this type of memory was well highlighted also by those who focused on the most used slogans of the party such as “Hacer España grande otra vez” (general election June 26, 2016), in which the reference to a historical past of the country is clear.

⁶ Interview with Éric Zemmour on RTL, September 10, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3f_zZnV85MA.

⁷ According to a survey carried out for the Fondation Jean-Jaurès, in September 2021, about 75% of French people think that France is in decline. Seven out of ten French people (69%) agree that France, before was better. The same proportion claims to be inspired by the values of the past. Finally, only a minority of French (43%) think that the future of France is full of new opportunities (see <https://www.jean-jaures.org/publication/fractures-francaises-2021-lenvironnement-un-enjeu-majeur-mais-concurrence/>).

Many other examples could be reported in this analysis; it is becoming increasingly evident how especially the right-wing parties use the past, the nostalgia for a certain past of their own nation, as the main strategic tool of their political action. They “use history in their language, reference and symbols as a way to consolidate popular support” (Couperus & Tortola, 2019, p. 106). They exploit a strong emotional involvement, basing their communication and discursive strategies on the importance of tradition and on the idea of “what we once were”. It is precisely this emotional involvement, the emotional force of these narratives that come to play a role in populist politics.

This relatively short account does not claim that nostalgia is an emotion employed only in right-wing populisms; rather, it has attempted to show how nostalgia is increasingly used as a tool to strengthen the political presence of these populisms. On the basis of the relevant studies, it seems the strategy of “emotional narratives” is much more effective in this political arena thanks to what has been defined as “restorative nostalgia”. As mentioned before, nostalgia is not a negative or positive emotion per se but rather a complex emotional state within which many different emotions can be experienced. In this sense nostalgia could also be viewed as a kind of emotional container through which political leaders, and in particular populists, try to win the confidence and support of the people and the electorate. All of this only confirms the importance that the emotional dimension assumes in politics; it also confirms the presence of some affective component in populism and “it becomes clear that current accounts of emotions also have important theoretical and practical repercussions for the study of democratic politics” (Cossarini & Vallespín, 2019, p. 3). It is therefore important to take these aspects into account in order to understand which emotional elements are more likely to be channeled as instruments supporting populist strategies, and which are more able to contrast them. Similarly, also nostalgia “is invariably open to different kinds of interpretation and response, by those to whom it is directed” (Kenny 2017, p. 15).

Analyzing in depth the relation between populist politics and the logic of emotions offers interesting points of research; it offers tools to understand the pathologies of contemporary democratic contexts and can help to better decipher the complex phenomenon that populism is.

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