# FATIGUE

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## Introduction

In a chapter written one year after the EU eastward enlargement, Chantal Mouffe described the rise of right-wing populist parties in Western Europe as a consequence of the post-political consensus that had dampened the political cleavage between left and right parties (Mouffe 2005). In the same year, Law and Justice (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS*) won the parliamentary elections and, one year later, formed a coalition government with the nationalist-conservative League of Polish Families (LPR) and the populist Self-Defence (SRP). Just one year after the enlargement, the Polish shift to the right came unexpectedly after an unchallenged period of convergence towards a liberal model of politics. To some extent, Mouffe's account of the rise of right-wing populism in Western Europe could similarly be transposed to the new member-states. Convergence toward a single centrist platform and the depoliticization of the integration process played a significant role in providing room to right-wing populist parties. However, when Mouffe denies "a return of the archaic and irrational forces" (Mouffe 2005: 51), she overlooks a critical aspect that has been overly neglected by the existing literature both on Western and Central-Eastern Europe.

Right-wing populist discourses are often seen as an invention by right-wing populist actors based on the creation of fear. This politics of fear uses scapegoats, and the 'arrogance of ignorance' as a political strategy. It appeals to an anti-intellectual and pre-modernist common-sense (Wodak 2015). Scapegoating and self-victimization are considered as the toolkit of right-wing populist discourse. These rhetorical tools serve as a conduit for feeding the perception of a non-existing reality. For example, the threat posed by globalization is rather a political construction than an actual sentiment shared by some individuals or groups (Pelinka 2013). Is, then, right-wing populism just a rhetoric construction? While this approach accounts for the reactivation of a conservative or nationalist narrative, it also risks overlooking democratic demands. Indeed, these irrational forces (that I would more neutrally name as 'traditionalist thinking') did not return simply because they never left. They have been dormant for decades as a counter-reaction to the post-materialist revolution of 1968 (Ignazi 1992) and surfaced in the void produced by a crisis of hegemony. Thus, this article will look at how "the displacement of the political", which Mouffe identifies as the main cause of the rise of populism, has been accompanied by another (and connected) crucial phenomenon that may explain this counter-reaction in Europe and, even more so, in the case of Poland. It is argued that, during the transition, a new liberal narrative forced people to abandon their beliefs to embrace a new world view. Or, at least, this is the dilemma they had to face. This process has been named here as 'cultural displacement' and has created a more favorable terrain for a counter-hegemonic reaction. As, arguably, one of the most conservative countries in the EU, Poland is an illustrative case to test this hypothesis.

The paper is divided into three sections. The first part explains the theoretical framework used by the author. In particular, it focuses on the concepts of hegemony and its relation with populism based on the works of Antonio Gramsci and Ernesto Laclau. The second part, mainly descriptive, deals with the concept of 'political displacement' as a consequence of EU integration. As the most original contribution of this article, special attention will be given to the last part. This section is related to neo-traditionalism: first, from a theoretical perspective and, then, in relation to the analysis of PiS counter-hegemonic discourse in Poland.

**Theoretical Framework**

*Disclaimer: this is not another article on 'populistness'*

The term 'populism' has become a central concept for many recent academic works and has triggered a sort of race to define it. The vagueness and inaccuracy in using this word have also hampered the quality of the debate and, more importantly, have provided the term with a pejorative connotation. Outside academia, politicians, especially those belonging to liberal parties, use the label 'populist' to delegitimize all those parties outside the mainstream political debate in a moralistic fashion (Mouffe 2005). The main challenge, rather than defining populism, is to describe a political phenomenon (which may be ascribed to the populist category) devoid of any prejudice. In addition, the current rise of right-wing parties in Europe is often considered of a populist nature (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2013, Albertazzi and McDonnell 2015, Wodak 2015). Sometimes, there is also a tendency in confusing 'new right' and 'populism' as the same phenomenon (Van Kessel 2015, Stavrakakis et al. 2017), a view that would leave outside of the populist container many left-wing populist parties. In no case anti-immigration positions or nationalism should be used interchangeably with the word populism. Only a poor and biased analysis of populism would lead to confusing left-wing populism and right-wing populism as a political phenomenon sharing the same illiberal character.

The confusion around the term 'populism' originates from the tendency of defining populism only empirically (Laclau 2005a). The vast diversity within the populist family has led to an incredibly high amount of definitions that, though often at least partially correct, are mainly descriptive and can be easily dismissed when two different geographical, political, or historical contexts are compared. This article does not intend to enter the perennial debate over the definition of populism and the unnecessary exercise of measuring the 'populistness' of a political actor. To achieve the ultimate goal of the paper, the word populism can also be considered somehow superfluous. Indeed, the article focuses more specifically on the concept of hegemony (and counter-hegemony) and, by using the theoretical framework set out by Ernesto Laclau, on its link with a populist logic of articulation. 'Populism' will only serve as a tool to understand the counter-hegemonic discourse in Poland, its functioning, and its consequences rather than simply defining it.[1] Thus, criticisms on the very issue of the populist character of the conservative discourse in Poland, if any, are of scarce relevance since my interest lies in the hegemonic function of this discourse, may that be defined or not as a populist discourse. In the next paragraph, I will discuss the link between hegemony and the populist logic and, in this paper, the adjective populist should be read only in this sense.


*(Counter-)Hegemony and populism*

Ernesto Laclau (2005a, 2005b) defined populism as a logic of articulation of unfulfilled democratic demands. When there is a failure of representation, different demands are reorganized as a single instance around a central nodal point. This process is named by Laclau 'logic of equivalence'. Though democratic demands differ among them, the frustration generated by the lack of representation creates a single internal frontier. In this case, the logic of equivalence between different demands prevails over their differential nature. To provide coherence between the different (but equivalent) demands, it is necessary to link all these demands around a nodal point, 'the people'. The construction of 'the people' serves as a point of reference that keeps all the social demands together in contrast with the unresponsive ruling class. This articulatory practice between democratic demands around the nodal point of 'the people' is what Laclau defines as populism. While 'the people' is the main nodal point, more empty signifiers are created, aiming at filling the lack created by the unresponsiveness of 'the elite'. The capacity of an empty signifier (including the nodal point 'the people') of transforming a particularity into an (impossible) attempt of universal signification (while retaining its particular meaning) is exactly a hegemonic practice (Laclau 2005b). The last element to be underlined here is the anti-institutional character of the populist logic. The popular subject can only emerge with the creation of a political frontier (the underdog versus the power). Indeed, there can be no populism without the construction of an enemy. Thus, any form of antagonistic politics includes a certain degree of populism (Laclau 2005a). In brief, populism can be described as the articulation between separated democratic demands into a single popular subject. These demands are held together by the nodal point of 'the people' and other empty signifiers. Finally, they are directed against 'the power' and form a dichotomic frontier between 'the underdog' ('the people', 'the nation', or

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[1]  A necessary clarification: with discourse I refer to "systems of meaningful practices" – linguistic and non-linguistic – "that form the identities of subjects and objects" (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000: 3-4).

'the silent majority'. Laclau 2005b: 87) and 'the establishment' along a vertical us/them axis. Trying to link the 20 years between *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (written by Laclau with Chantal Mouffe in 1985) and *On the Populist Reason,* it is possible to understand populism as a peculiar hegemonic practice. Hegemonic, because it tries to hegemonize a political void; peculiar because it has a strictly bottom/up character (and, in this sense, I will talk later of counter-hegemony).

Before moving to the hypothesis formulated in this paper, it is necessary to look back to Antonio Gramsci and his work on hegemony. Although Gramsci never provided a clear definition of hegemony, his writings have played a great influence on many post-Marxist authors. Using Judith Butler's words

Hegemony emphasizes the ways in which power operates to form our everyday understanding of social relations, and to orchestrate the ways in which we consent to (and reproduce) those tacit and covert relations of power. Power is not stable or static, but is remade at various junctures within everyday life; it constitutes our tenuous sense of common sense, and is ensconced as the prevailing epistemes of a culture (Butler in Butler, Laclau and Žižek 2000: 14).

Writing during the Fascist *Ventennio*, Gramsci noted a detachment of social groups from traditional parties in a given period. These crises, that Gramsci named the 'hegemonic crisis of the ruling class' (*crisi di egemonia della classe dirigente*), create room for new political and organizational solutions (Gramsci 1975). An organic crisis opens up the possibility of both disrupting the previous order and constructing an alternative narration (similarly, in *New Reflections,* Laclau writes about the disrupting and productive character of dislocation). Quoting Gramsci, "democracy between the ruling class and the ruled groups exists in a hegemonic system to the extent that legislation fosters a flux from ruled groups to the ruling class" (Gramsci 1975: 1056). When the organic flux is interrupted, a populist moment emerges. A hegemonic discourse which is effective in suturing a dislocated space through the constitution of a new space of representation and the formation of new objectivity becomes a *myth* (Laclau 1990).[2]

An organic crisis can happen either because the elite has politically failed to deliver either because it has imposed consensus by force (Gramsci 1975). The hypothesis is that both circumstances are in function in the crisis of our case, where 'by force' means a linguistic and hegemonic imposition of liberal values. They are linked with the two phenomena central in this article, respectively political (failure to deliver) and cultural displacement (imposition). Significantly, I refer to a *counter* hegemonic project in order to stress the reactionary and alternative character of the populist discourse in Poland. The prefix counter- also implies that a *mythical* hegemony has been firmly established in Europe and that it must be considered as a negative identity *vis-à-vis* a conservative discourse. It follows that before analyzing the actual reaction, it is necessary to examine what has triggered this reaction.

**The Displacement of the Political**

*The triumph of liberal democracy*

The first culprit for the conservative reaction relates to the post-political thesis. This argument states that the success of the neo-liberal myth has reduced the political options available for the voter since traditional parties are not able to provide a different narrative to increasing popular demands but a neo-liberal one. Mouffe (2000) argues that liberal democracy results from the articulation between two different traditions of democracy: a liberal tradition that stresses the importance of the rule of law and individual rights, and a democratic tradition of popular sovereignty. The tension between these two traditions has contributed to keeping an equilibrium between the will of the majority and pluralism. However, in the recent past, the liberal tradition of democracy has eroded people's sovereignty. Democracy, today, results in free elections and the defense of human rights, whilst the possibility of choosing different platforms has vanished as parties converged toward a political center (Mouffe 2018). Consequently, parliaments have been progressively marginalized by the increasing political clout of non-governmental actors. In this scenario equality and popular sovereignty count less and less and a new post-democratic regime has taken over (Crouch 2004).

The triumph of liberal democracy and pluralism over the democratic tradition of democracy is a critical conduit of populism and explain populism as a response to the displacement of the political. Coming from an openly leftist point

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[2]   A myth that is successful in the long-term and is able to include a wider range of social demands is transformed into a social imaginary, for example the Enlightenment (Howarth 2000).

of view, Mouffe's post-political thesis focuses mostly on economic matters. However, the ideological rapprochement of center-left and center-right parties has occurred through a shift to the right in the economic sphere, and, also, a shift to the left in cultural terms.[3] This rapprochement between 'progressivism' from the left and 'economic liberalism' from the right, that achieved its final form in the 1990s, has led to a new hegemonic bloc that has been defined as 'progressive neoliberalism' (Fraser 2017). While this new hegemony has been observed first in the United States, personified by Bill Clinton, it has quickly spread to Europe (in this case Tony Blair is considered its main advocate) until it became the dominant discourse. Significantly, Margaret Thatcher defined Tony Blair and New Labour as her greatest achievement.

The convergence to the center accounts for the first explanation of the crisis. Though this is a simplification, when popular demands for conservative values have arisen, mainstream liberal parties ignored them, leaving room for a right-wing populist answer. However, this is not a sufficient condition for generating a reaction from those outside the mainstream. In addition to the horizontal rapprochement between left and right, it is necessary to add another vertical dimension to Mouffe's model. The appeal to the people does not only seek to repoliticize the political debate by re-widening the political spectrum. As populists address their discourse against the elite (or the hegemony), they also question the established structure of power and the dominant ideas and values of the society (Canovan 1999). Thus, the current liberal tradition of democracy also implies a majoritarian understanding of itself. PiS MEP, Ryszard Legutko, maintains that liberal democracy guarantees pluralism as long as political actors act within the framework of the liberal majority. Those actors outside the mainstream center are named with the pejorative label of "fascist", "populist", "socialist", depending on the context and on their grievances, and must meet with moral condemnation (Stavrakakis 2014, Legutko 2016). Therefore, according to its critics, the liberal model guarantees pluralism while flirting with majoritarian (or even totalitarian) arguments.

In the next paragraph, the article shows how the process of EU integration has been put forward in a depoliticized manner. The lack of the 'political' in the discussions toward EU membership has been characterized by an extensive agreement among mainstream parties and a 'technocratization' of the political debate based on neo-liberal underpinnings. EU integration is nor the only neither, necessarily, the main driver of the triumph of neo-liberalism. However, the process of EU integration is undoubtedly the most visible neo-liberal hegemonic practice that took place during the transition in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989. It is worth noticing that the emphasis put in this paper on depoliticization and culture does not aim at playing down the role of economics. Surely, rising inequality and the deepening of the cleavage between rural areas and cities can be ascribed among the factors that have fostered the rise of the right in Poland. However, this article focuses only on the neo-traditional counter-reaction as a specific phenomenon challenging the mainstream neo-liberal discourse.

### EU Integration: technocratic approach and depoliticization

A molecular social transformation aiming at the creation of a new progressive 'common sense' has been observed in Poland since the late 1980s, first by co-opting 'the elite' and, second, by infiltrating within society (Shields 2012). 'Returning to the West' was considered as a natural goal for Poland since the collapse of the communist regime. Polish elite was convinced that democracy, capitalism, and liberal values were strictly interconnected (Balcerowicz 1995). Adopting a market economy and promoting new liberal values were a fundamental step toward democracy. The European Union would have been a guarantee for achieving this goal. Nevertheless, the integration process was characterized by an inherent contradiction. Though one of the main aims was to democratize the former communist countries, EU integration was pursued in a rather undemocratic way. The EU and the candidate members negotiated the accession in a situation of asymmetric interdependence. The mechanism of conditionality, based on compliance and reward, left little room for political maneuvering to the CEECs. Aspirant members were left in a weak position *vis-à-vis* the EU and were compelled to accept EU requirements with no possibility to opt-out (Moravcsik and Vachudova 2003). Three main elements have been identified as the leading factors for the depoliticization of the public sphere

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[3] This shift has been examined by both rightist and leftist observers from different perspectives. David Harvey (2007) notes how the neo-liberal hegemonic project coopted the demands for equality put forward by the 1968 generation to spread its right-wing ideology in economics. Conversely, Legutko (2016) argues that the 1968 revolution won the hearts and minds of right-wing parties and created a leftist/liberal cultural monopoly.

and the convergence to a liberal center: a sharp preponderance of the executive power over national parliaments in conducting the negotiations, the lack of a political debate about EU accession, and the exclusion of non-aligned political actors from the policy-making process.

The first aspect refers to the technocratic approach adopted by the European Commission. Executive agencies played a major role in the implementation of the *acquis* while national legislative bodies were reduced to "rubber stamp" parliaments (Ekiert 2008). As a result, the prestige of the already weak parliamentary oversight has dropped sharply and the *acquis* took on the shape of an imposed foreign legislation (Holmes 2003). The official rhetoric about the integration process emphasized 'speed' as a crucial feature to join the EU in order 'catch up' with the West and all the candidate members introduced a fast-track procedure in order to adopt EU legislation more quickly (Grabbe 2001).

The technocratic approach limited the involvement of national parliaments. As a consequence, and moving to the second point, the political debate about the accession has been of little relevance. Notwithstanding the historical salience of the issue, political parties relegated EU integration to a secondary matter. The administrative approach shrank the political spectrum to a single technical center. Grzegorz Ekiert (2008: 17) noted that "this massive and pre-determined policy implementation forestalled public debate concerning policy alternatives and distorted party competition". There were no political alternatives to the objectives of the EU and political parties competed mainly on the *modus operandi* rather than on different ideological commitments (Grzymała-Busse and Innes 2003). Szczerbiak and Bil (2009) show that European Union policies were barely mentioned even in the manifestos of euro-sceptic parties. PiS dedicated one paragraph to EU policies, the LPR two sentences, and Self-Defence none at all.

Finally, the convergence of all mainstream parties toward the same positions led to a marginalization of those outside 'the center'. Anti-system and euro-reject parties were excluded from government positions so that the integration process became gradually irreversible. Indeed, since elections were considered as a random factor, EU integration would have been possible only where a liberal party constellation had dominated the political arena (Schimmelfennig 2007). Those parties that were skeptical or critical of EU membership (PiS, the LPR, SRP) were left outside the "Pact for European Integration". Significantly, these same parties had great electoral success in 2005.

This brief historical analysis shows how the political (as an agonistic confrontation between different political views) played virtually no role during the transition, matching with the abovementioned post-political thesis. Constitutionalism took precedence over political participation and the creation of 'neutral' and independent institutions was deemed more important of the will of the majority (Rupnik 2007). Popular sovereignty was, therefore, sacrificed in the name of pluralism and institutionalism; the process of democratization visibly leaned toward the liberal tradition of democracy. Popular control and government accountability became limited mainly to elections (Malová and Dolný 2011). As parliaments played a little role, the political debate became useless and political parties conformed to similar 'centrist' position while anti-system parties were excluded. Rather than affecting parties, EU integration shaped the domestic political environment in which parties operated (Ladrech 2009). All these elements caused the displacement of the political. The European Union fostered depoliticization and disengagement (Mair 2007) and, eventually, made attractive a new, different, populist narrative.


**The Neo-traditional Counter-hegemonic Discourse in Poland**

*Back to tradition*

Although for analytical reasons I kept separated the convergence to the center and the imposition of an alien ideology as two distinct phenomena, they can actually be considered as two sides of the same coin. A counter-intuitive corollary of the notion of post-political consensus is that this consensus is, indeed, highly politicized. While political agonism has faded away in the last 30 years (before the recent 'populist moment'), politics has been built around a neo-liberal discourse. The technocratic approach can be considered as such inasmuch as its technical underpinnings are treated as the only game in town. Similarly, conservatives often point out that liberal values are hardly questionable in public spaces because of the barrier of the 'politically correct' (Lalonde et al. 2000, Worth 2002).

A crucial difference between liberalism and traditionalism is their opposite understanding of time. While traditionalism looks back at the past to give meaning to the world, liberalism is a 'modernizing ideology'. That means that it is based on the contrast old/new. Anything belonging to the past must be removed while symbols of modernity and progress

are to be praised. Accordingly, words like 'backward', 'medieval', or 'anachronistic' assume a negative connotation while the adjective 'modern' is always ameliorative (Legutko 2016). Two effects originate from this perspective. First, I take a cue from a leftist philosopher. Herbert Marcuse (1964) described the bourgeois society (from our perspective we can name it as 'modern society') as all-pervasive. Those values that belonged to a certain class have become natural facts and, in a totalitarian fashion, anything which lies outside the bourgeois society must be dismissed. In this respect, Marcuse talks about a one-dimensional man. Any alternative dimension is liquidated.

> Remembrance of the past may give rise to dangerous insights, and the established society seems to be apprehensive of the subversive contents of memory. Remembrance is a mode of dissociation from the given facts, a mode of "mediation" which breaks, for short moments, the omnipresent power of the given facts. (Marcuse 1964: 101,102)

Irrational forces of the past are liquated as incompatible with the rational forces of the established reality. Individuals that look at the past do not fit in the progressive view of time of modern society. Similarly, Adorno (1960) indicates "Memory, Time, Recollection as irrational leftovers of the past", incompatible with the "principle of progress in bourgeois society". Traditions are not dismissed only as obscurantist and backward forces but, also, as a threat to the established mainstream order. This first stance explains how the convergence toward a single platform encompasses also culture. The uniformity generated by the lack of a political debate over values may trigger opposite reactions.

The second point relates to the historicist concept of time. During the process of EU integration of the CEECs, it was often used a competitive vocabulary. The former-communist countries had to 'race' to gain the accession and needed to 'catch up' with the West. This vision implied that Poland and the other candidate members were considered backward compared to the states on the other side of the Iron Curtain and were asked to comply with the modern values and norms of liberal democracy. 'Catching up with the West' is still a powerful thrust in the current political debate in Poland even though, as it will be shown later, it may take on an opposite meaning. Therefore, the hypothesis is that EU integration and the transition have, first, reduced the possible political options to a single liberal choice, as already seen. Second, they have provoked a modernization of values and social institutions, which has generated a sense of loss in the conservative segment of society.

The reaction against these modernizing forces, perceived as an alien imposition, has taken the shape of a phenomenon that in this paper has been referred to as neo-traditionalism. Edward Shils (1958) considered traditionalism as a reaction against antitraditions and the oppression of obscurantist and dogmatic traditions. In modern society, *substantive traditions* (e.g. patriotism, Christian beliefs, or traditional family) are threatened by the modernizing thrust of progressive *antitraditions* (Shils 1981). In other words, substantive traditions are those customs and values of the past that contribute to the formation of identities. Family, schools, and religion form a triptych of institutions deemed to be custodians of substantive traditions. As something belonging to the past, these institutions are under attack in order to achieve the rationalization and modernization of society.

Substantive traditions help to find a path in modern society when individuals perceive society itself, permeated by relativist values, unable to provide a clear direction. Traditions, in the meaning provided by one of the fathers of traditionalist thought, Edmund Burke, serve as points of reference in people's life. While Burke maintained that there is no discovery in morality, modern society breaks traditions (prejudice in Burke's words) in pieces and provides a (sometimes undesired) freedom of choice to individuals. Relativist values create room for individual liberty (Burke 2003). As prejudice has been swiped off by the rational revolution and by a relativization of values, the man of modern society is lost when there is a lack of clarity of direction and he looks back at traditions to make sense out of the world.

Neo-traditionalism is that reactionary sentiment generated by the liberal modernization and relativization of values and that has been used by certain right-wing populist parties to promote an alternative discourse. More precisely, neo-traditionalism related to cultural illiberalism, authoritarianism, and conservatism. The adherents of neo-traditionalism are more interested in outcomes rather than procedures of the political processes; cherish the protection of a (national) collective rather than an individual; are determined to cultivate 'traditional' social roles, particularly when it comes to gender and sexual orientation; and are always vigilant to protect the purity of the (national) community against the perceived threats of cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism. In some places, such as Poland, they also play the role of guardians of the public space that they see as inevitably defined by Roman Catholic values, themes and concerns (Kubik 2018).

This definition underlines the importance of community over individualistic and cosmopolitan modern values; the stress on 'traditional' social roles against relativism and emancipation; the antagonism between a multicultural society and a national community. There are two things to be observed here. First, we can explain this phenomenon as a counter-reaction. Pushed by an all-pervasive dominant discourse emphasizing individualism and relativism, some people look back at the conservative discourse as a counter-reaction. They tend to resist the dilemma of facing new situations by holding their old values and ties to old institutions. For example, the meaning of the signifier family as the defender of a secure space has become questionable and today 'family' can mean several different things. As a consequence, and this is the second point, individualistic and relativist values have undermined, in some countries, the ontological security of some people (or, using the vocabulary of the next section, their enjoyment). Where individuals struggle to cope with the innovations of modern society, a neo-traditional adherent, in search of the lost 'prejudice', looks for a strong leader that shows the path to follow, and at new forms of security based on 'the old': traditions (old institutions), religion (God), and nationalism (community).[4] This would explain why right-wing populist parties are on the rise in some countries. All these unfulfilled demands, notwithstanding their different nature, are unified by the need for a traditionalist form of order.

### The logic of hegemony and the theft of enjoyment

Any populist reaction fits, today, in a critical historical conjuncture; the Western world is affected by a crisis which is far from being a purely sectoral crisis and which involves economy, values, and politics. The sum of all these strands that question the existing common sense over a wide set of issues has led to a general crisis of society that, in political terms, has been identified as a crisis of hegemony (Rehmann 2016, Fraser 2017). The inability to provide an answer by the current political class (failure to deliver) and the majoritarian understanding of the neo-liberal discourse (imposition by force) has transformed the political arena in a battlefield where different blocs contest meanings and struggle for hegemony.

If on the one hand, the post-structuralist approach to populism has the merit of dealing with this populist reaction in a neutral fashion (if not positive), on the other hand, populist demands from the right are often dismantled simply as nationalistic or even xenophobic stances, underlining their horizontal character (De Cleen and Stavrakakis 2017, Stavrakakis et al. 2017). While this approach clears the definition of populism from counter-productive prejudices, the same prejudices shift over right-wing parties and, more importantly, on the (non-)populist demands that sustain their discourse. The horizontal orientation is clearly visible on the surface of their discourse and, accordingly, its populist nature is denied (and, as a consequence, its verticality). This article seeks to emphasize the existence of a vertical dimension which is often neglected. Thus, it is argued here that the current populist moment not only does lead to a return of the political, but also to a revival of a *Kulturkampf*. Accordingly, the rise of a counter-hegemonic populism cannot be conceived only as a response to the technocratic approach to political questions, as described above, to the reduction of national sovereignty in economic matters, or to a racist resurgence. A fundamental role is also played by the clash between two different world views and a cultural turn in the political debate (Rensmann 2017). Besides new economic models, there is also a traditionalist world view that questions the individualistic and relativist liberal values (those values that are shifting to the left) and that is a major factor in explaining right-wing populism.

The consequence of an organic crisis is the opening of a struggle for dominating floating signifiers. As we have seen, a hegemonic practice is possible, indeed, only in the presence of an antagonistic frontier between different discourses and the instability of this frontier due to a crisis and a subsequent dislocation. Thus, a hegemonic discourse aims at dominating the field of discursivity by creating a center that functions as a nodal point that partially fixes floating meanings (Laclau and Mouffe 1985). The incompleteness of this process is due to the impossibility of creating a totality; the social is "always surrounded by an 'excess of meaning' which it is unable to master" and, therefore, objects and their meanings will always be contested. Hence, Laclau talks of the impossibility of society as a unitary and intelligible object (Laclau 1990: 90). The paradoxical essence of a hegemonic project lies in its goal of representing the whole society in a totality and the impossibility of doing so. This impossibility stems from the fact that the limits of

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[4]  The definition of neo-traditionalism has been constructed thanks to informal talks with Zdzisław Mach and Jan Kubik.

discourse are internal the discourse itself and this barrier is ontologically constitutive (Glynos and Stavrakakis 2004). There can be no discourse without difference.

At this point, it is necessary to introduce the Lacanian concepts of *reality* and *the real.* While reality is what can be represented, thought, and talked about (Fink 1995), the real remains impossible to symbolize. The real is exactly what is beyond the space of representation, an unachievable object beyond the horizon and yet, it stimulates our desire to catch it. In political terms, it is what a hegemonic discourse longs to colonize and always escapes. The impossibility to represent the whole society in a discourse (Glynos and Stavrakakis 2004). How can we then talk about something which is, by definition, undefinable? Here we can find the link between psychoanalysis and Laclau's Discourse Theory and why the real plays a crucial role in analyzing a hegemonic project. I have already mentioned the two different sides of the crisis, disruptive and productive. The real or, in Laclau's terms, the limits of discourse, can be identified through their negative (disruption) and positive dimension (production). A dislocatory experience shows the constitutive inability to represent the real. Therefore, the real will only be visible through its lack. The lack of symbolic resources is exactly the lack of the real and, in particular, "the lack of *jouissance* of a pre-symbolic real enjoyment or satisfaction which is always posited as lost" and animates human desire (Glynos and Stavrakakis 2004: 206). Disruptive dislocation becomes a threat to identities. Žižek (1993) shows how a nationalist narrative, for example, is based on the assumption that a lost *jouissance* is under threat by the Other. The Other is a threat as he wants to steal our enjoyment by ruining "our way of life" and because he has a different and perverse way of enjoying. "What we conceal by imputing to the Other the theft of enjoyment is the traumatic fact that we never possessed what was allegedly stolen from us" (Žižek 1993: 203). As a consequence, the attempt of filling this void feeds itself in a constant desiring mechanism – the positivization of the real through a fantasy, in Lacanian's terms, the *objet petit a,* the object-cause of desire*.* The *objet petit a* represents the lack of our impossible *jouissance* and the promise to fulfill the lack.

The aspiration to that fullness or wholeness does not, however, simply disappear; it is transferred to partial objects which are the objects of the drives. In political terms, that is exactly what I have called a hegemonic relation: a certain particularity which assumes the role of an impossible universality. […] No social fullness is achievable except through hegemony; and hegemony is nothing more than the investment, in a partial object, of a fullness which will always evade us because it is purely mythical (in our terms: it is merely the positive reverse of a situation experienced as 'deficient being'). The logic of the *objet petit a* and the hegemonic logic are not just similar: they are simply identical (Laclau 2005b: 115-116)

It follows that the *objet petit a* is the link between the disruptive and productive dimension of dislocation. It "is simultaneously the pure lack, the void around which the desire turns and which, as such, causes the desire, and the imaginary element which conceals this void, renders it invisible by filling it out" (Žižek 1994: 178).

This leads us to the productive dimension of dislocation, which should serve as a mean of representation of the missing real (foundation of identities). The symbolic positivization of the real is expressed through the production of an identity that functions as the center of the hegemonic discourse. Empty signifiers aim at filling the void produced by the disruptive crisis.

In a situation of radical disorder "order" is present as that which is absent; it becomes an empty signifier, as the signifier of this absence. In this sense, various political forces can compete in their efforts to present their particular objectives as those which carry out the filling of that lack. To hegemonize something is exactly to carry out this filling function (Laclau, 1996: 44).

Finally, in a hegemonic practice, empty signifiers are bound in a chain of equivalence. Identities are created by using the logic of equivalence, namely, as we have seen, the dilution of differences in a unifying symbol.

From this theoretical framework, it follows the concept of cultural displacement and counter-hegemony. In brief, modern values are deemed to have stolen the traditionalist way of 'enjoyment' (disruptive phase) and led to a counter-reaction that took the shape of a neo-traditional hegemonic project (productive phase). Since the main goal of this article is to show the conservative reaction against the neo-liberal model, the following analysis will mainly look at the disruptive and reactionary phase of the project. Three main elements have been taken into account. First, the reactionary character of the hegemonic practice. Unlike other hegemonic analyses based on offensive hegemony (Nonhoff 2019), the reaction against *the myth* makes peculiar this kind of hegemonic practice. Rather than just trying to establish a new hegemonic order, the neo-traditional and conservative counter-hegemonic project is, first of all, a

reaction that refuses the cultural neo-liberal hegemony. Thus, the enemy is not only the Other that impedes *us* to be a totality. It is also the establishment. The hegemonic project is not simply offensive; it is also revolutionary (meaning that it aims at revolutionizing the established system, by looking at the past.). Quoting one of the slogans of the nationalist youth organization, *Młodzież Wszechpolska* (MW), "Tradition is Revolution".

Second, the negative (disruptive) dimension of dislocation. It points to the lack of representation of the real. Functioning as a black hole, this is only visible through the shadow produced by the lack itself, which, as a lacking object, cannot actually be seen. Therefore, what we can observe is the enemy that steals *our* enjoyment, their perverse way of enjoying, the dualism between *us* and *them*, an opposite chain of equivalence to *our* identity.

The third point relates to the foundation of identities and the production of those symbols that, by showing what we do not have, try to represent the real. 'Tradition' becomes an empty signifier because of its absence and the desire to get it back. We have therefore the production of empty signifiers, nodal points and their articulation in a positive chain of equivalence.

### *Challenging liberal values: an analysis of PiS neo-traditional discourse*

The analysis of the neo-traditional discourse in Poland suggested a somewhat provoking conclusion that has already been hinted and that I would state from the beginning. Unlike most of the narrative about conservative far right-wing groups, often defined as racist, nationalist, or homophobic, this analysis showed that 'the enemy', in the first place, should not be identified in a particular social group or ethnicity. The enemy in the neo-traditional discourse in Poland is the liberal modernization of values. Therefore, the orientation of relation between the conservative discourse and the constitutive outside is not only horizontal, as in a nationalist discourse (De Cleen and Stavrakakis 2017) but, first of all, vertical. Those enemies that are from time to time created at the horizontal level are a consequence of the mainstream hegemonic discourse and would require further studies. In this respect, and so we can finally see the link with the first part of the article, the counter-hegemonic discourse in Poland is of a populist nature. The following analysis will serve to sustain this conclusion.

The analysis has focused mainly on the book written by Ryszard Legutko, *The Demon in Democracy.*[5] The book revolves around a parallel between communism and liberal democracy as two similar all-unifying regimes that have been able to control several aspects of society through language, ideology, and practices. The book provided a theoretical understanding of PiS discourse in Poland which has been used as a further tool to study speeches, practices, and images. Even if this paper mostly concentrates on PiS narrative, other actors were taken into consideration.

The analysis has been partially based on the model developed by De Cleen and Stavrakakis (2017) and Nonhoff (2019) in addition to the own interpretation of the author of the theoretical framework presented so far. Regarding the former, I looked for the following points.

- Nodal point of the chain of equivalence
- Constitutive outside
- Orientation of relation between discourse and its outside
- Articulation of equivalence and contrariety in a hegemonic strategy (Nonhoff 2019)

On top of this, the research also investigated the source of enjoyment and, more importantly, 'the theft of enjoyment'. Thus, the analysis has sought to identify what is 'the lack' in neo-traditionalism and who is 'the thief' of the Thing or, in easier words, of '*our* way of life'. As the investigation has focused on the reaction, it often took the shape of mirroring research. Therefore, for example, the nodal point of the neo-liberal discourse represents also the constitutive outside of neo-traditionalism and *vice versa.*

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[5] Significantly, the title of the Polish version is '*Triumph of the Common Man'.*

The reaction against the mainstream and the imposition of an alien system of values is often visible in Legutko's book. The similarities stressed by the author between the communist dictatorship and the liberal democratic hegemony show the same antagonistic divide between the modernizing character of the formers and the conservative features of traditionalism. Modernity is, indeed, the nodal point of liberal democracy; and modernity is throughout the book the opposite of tradition (in the meaning given by Shills, as previously explained). It is clearly visible a 'clash of civilizations' between the modernizing force of liberal democracy and the conservative resilience of traditionalism. A clash that takes the shape of a hegemonic struggle that aims at colonizing 'the real', what is missing in both discourses: freedom. Freedom to be *us,* freedom to make society a totality. A vain attempt, as Laclau teaches us, that is always frustrated by a blocking other.
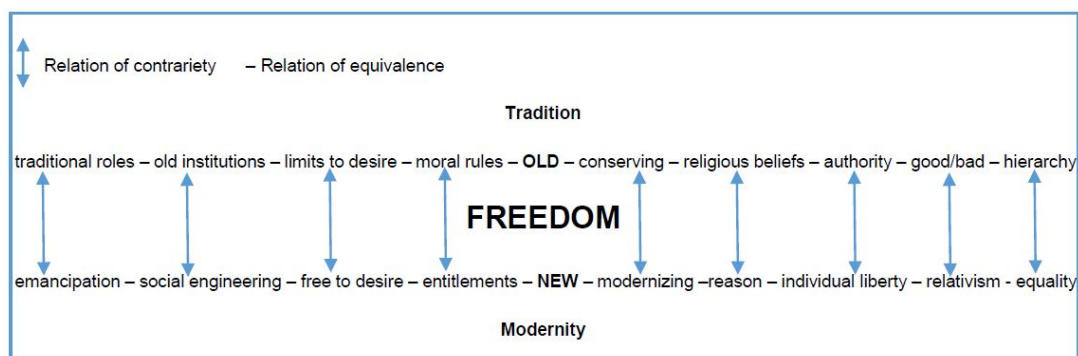


Figure 1. Neo-traditional vs liberal democratic chain of equivalence.

Modernity and tradition are the center of, respectively, the neo-liberal and neo-traditional discourses. Everything in liberal democracy, Legutko says, points to modernization: costumes, habits, roles, institutions; they all need to be modernized. On the other side, traditions function as a bastion that has to defend the old institutions, the old way of life. The hegemonic strategy has been observed by using the model of articulation of equivalence and contrariety, developed by Martin Nonhoff, which is "the core of an offensive-hegemonic strategy" (Nonhoff 2019: 89). The model assumes the existence of two antagonistic chains of equivalence. A chain of equivalence is constituted by equivalent demands that aim at overcoming a lacking universal. In this case, the lacking universal, the real, is freedom. This struggle seeks to dominate its meaning. Depending on the discourse, freedom takes on a different meaning. The difference with the example developed by Nonhoff is that the traditionalist demands mirror the liberal ones. Liberal democracy becomes the constitutive outside of traditionalism. Thus, the relation of contrariety between opposite elements is always direct between two elements and indirect with *all* the other elements. In addition, there is a relation of causality as the notion of disruption will later show. Similarly, all the demands, in both chains, are equivalent. This is one aspect of the counter-hegemonic character of the confrontation. To provide an example, the demand for 'traditional roles' is directly opposed to the demand for 'emancipation' and indirectly opposed to any other opposite demand as all the other opposite demands point to the modernization of values, and the other way around. Figure 1 shows an example of the two chains of equivalence and their relationship.[6] The contrariety between two elements means that one demand is frustrated by the existence of its opposite which tries to overcome. As, according to Legutko, liberal democracy has been victorious after 1989, traditionalist demands remain unfulfilled. On the other hand, liberal democracy keeps looking for a further liberalization from old bounds.

A first example is provided by the antagonistic relationship between a 'traditional school' and a 'modern school'. In *Polska naszych marzeń,* PiS leader Jarosław Kaczyński (2011) stresses the need to limit teacher's freedom and fight the anarchy of school programs in order to positively affirm the importance of the Polish nation. The fight over the meaning of freedom is already visible. In this respect, the case of Solidarność is also explicative. Ernesto Laclau (2005a) defined the Polish trade union as a typical populist example where the demands of a particular working class group in Gdansk became the signifier of the oppressed popular subject in a dichotomic discourse. Even though he comes from an opposite tradition, Legutko seems to put forward the same argument, in his interpretation. In 1980-81, besides demands for fair distribution of wealth, increases in wages and benefits, and workers' guarantees, Solidarność stood

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6    Only a few discursive elements are shown in this figure.

up in defense of human dignity (in its original and not the corrupted sense), access to    culture, respect for truth in science and for nobility in art, and a proper role given to Christian heritage and Christian religion (Legutko 2016: 42).

Under the communist dictatorship, all these demands were considered demands for freedom since communists limited these claims. However, in 1989, when communism was defeated, the same demands remained unfulfilled and Poland adopted a different perspective of freedom to conform with Western liberal democracy.

Before discussing what is at stake with the signifier freedom, which at this point should be intuitive, I would introduce the category of disruption. According to a conservative perspective, 1989 meant the end of the communist hegemony and the "imposition" of a new, liberal, system of values.

Poland lost its previous exotic charm as a country in which workers, intellectuals, and priests defied communism, prayed to God, and risked their freedom in defense of truth, good, and beauty. The liberal-democratic world did not want such exoticism in their midst, and would have been embarrassed if the Poles had persisted in their initial ambitions. It expected a different Poland, the one that was indistinguishable from other nations, following this or that pattern of liberal-democratic order, provided it covered all areas of social life. The Poles grasped this quickly and the majority of them adapted to the expectations without protest and without regret (Legutko 2016: 42).

In 1989, 'freedom' was stolen from the Poles in name of a liberal democratic uniformity (displacement of the political) and the disruption of old institutions (cultural displacement). As it happened during communism, liberal democracy aimed at disrupting all the loyalties and commitments to old institutions and conforming to a neo-liberal myth. Society, Legutko writes, had to liberate itself from the chains of the past and embrace modernity. In this light, we can read the evocative words of the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Witold Waszczykowski:

> [PiS] only wants to cure our country of a few illnesses. A new mixture of cultures and races, a world made up of cyclists and vegetarians, who only use renewable energy and who battle all signs of religion. It has little in common with traditional Polish values (Waszczykowski 2016).

Clearly, this discourse cannot be considered hipster-phobic. Cyclists, vegetarians, and renewable energies are simply signs of a uniform liberal modernity that tries to break up with the past, i.e. traditional Polish values. All elements that could easily fit in the chain of equivalence previously showed. Identities, therefore, are disrupted as they have to face new modern values.

In this light, freedom does not mean individual freedom or liberty, as liberalism claims. Freedom is the right of a community to have its own rules, even though they may have an authoritarian character. This is best shown by the antinomies in the chains of equivalence between *authority/individual liberty* and *hierarchy/equality*. Freedom in a liberal democratic discourse means freedom for the individual from oppression and authority. Where oppression is, Legutko explains, the tutelage of religion or the bonds of belonging to a traditional family. Freedom, in the neo-traditional discourse in Poland, relates to an opposite perspective. What is freedom in Polish neo-traditional discourse, is well explained in this section of a speech that Jarosław Kaczyński held in 2019 in Stalowa Wola at the so-called 'family picnic'.

> [LGBT ideology] must be rejected. If we want to live much better in 5-10 years, living in freedom and not being subject to what is happening in the West, where freedom is liquidated, where people are punished for saying what they think, it should not be allowed to come to our country. Poland must be an island of freedom. And Polish freedom is the right to have our sacred values respected. Family is at the center of everything. We must defend this family, the normal family Polish Constitution talks about (Kaczyński: 2019).

Two aspects are to be underlined here. First, the opposite understanding of freedom. As already discussed, freedom in Poland is understood by Kaczyński as the right of the national community to decide its own values, even though they contrast with individual liberty. Second, it is the role of the West as the corruptor and stealer of Polish freedom. This brings us back to EU rhetoric during the integration: 'Poland needs to catch up the West'. While this image is still used when the economy is discussed (even by PiS politicians), in terms of values it has taken on an opposite meaning. Values in the West have been modernized and relativized. Catching the West, in this case, would mean for Polish conservatives to abandon true Polish values. By looking again at the chains of equivalence, we can observe the opposition between *conserving/modernizing*, *old institutions* (e.g. traditional family)/*social engineering* (e.g. new

models of family). Moving forward 'to the West' is not anymore an improvement; it is a threat to "our sacred values". This last aspect shows the verticality of the orientation of relations between the conservative discourse and its constitutive outside.

This limitation to *our* freedom, the one that impedes *us* to be a totality, the 'thief' of *our* enjoyment, is not the LGBT community as such but the West, corruptor of Polish values. Similarly, the harsh electoral campaign against immigrants in 2015 conducted by PiS can be read as a rejection of multiculturalism, another liberal value that Legutko indicates as a mean that liberal democracy uses to impose its egalitarian creed. Egalitarian, because each person is entitled to pursue their liberal, individual, freedom.

> This grand design, its supporters say, should be implemented at all cost because it is believed to bring with itself freedom, autonomy, tolerance, pluralism, and all other liberal-democratic treasures. Therefore, all barriers that block its coming can and must be broken down, also for the benefit of those who put up these barriers. If abortion means freedom, then we should raise the consciousness of those who think differently; force doctors to support this freedom and silence priests so they do not interfere with it. If same-sex marriage means freedom, we should then compel its opponents to accept it and silence fools who may have doubts about it. […] Today, those who write and speak not only face more limitations than they used to, but all the institutions and communities that traditionally stood in the way of this "coercion to freedom" are being dismantled. As in all utopias, so in a liberal democracy it is believed that the irrational residues of the past should be removed (Legutko 2016: 65)

The 'theft of enjoyment' is, therefore, perpetrated sometimes by the LGBT community, sometimes by Islam, sometimes by the *Układ*.[7] However, in general, they who have stolen the *jouissance,* are those modernizing discourses that threat old values. The thieves are those who want to dismantle all the institutions and communities that defend the traditional way of life. In this respect, the European Union, a main actor during the transition, is seen as a major culprit. The previous analysis showed how EU integration was carried on regardless of any possible alternative. The accession led to standardization and uniformity with the Western liberal model and, indeed, "the European Union reflects the order and the spirit of liberal democracy in its most degenerate version" (Legutko 2016: 82) where there is no space for those who deviate from the mainstream. A claim well represented by the picture shared on a social network by PiS MEP Patryk Jaki showing an LGBT activist clubbing an opponent that, significantly, wears a t-shirt which refers to the freedom of speech. Once again, this shows the vertical orientation between the two discourses. One discourse negates the other and frustrates its demands.

Liberal and traditionalist *jouissance* mirror each other. In liberal democracy, enjoyment would come from the rupture of any obstacle to individual liberty. People can enjoy as long as they are free to desire anything they wish, may that be a product or a new individual right. Old institutions and their restrictions impede the liberal society to become a totality. By the same token, traditionalism sees complete freedom of costumes as the stealer of their enjoyment. The clash generated by this incompatibility is the main cause of the reaction. As liberalism needs old institutions to be dismantled in order to hegemonize society, those who see old institutions as the defenders of their way of enjoying feels under attack. Thus, and this is the productive side of the real, the neo-traditional discourse in Poland represents all those demands of the chain of equivalence that would make Polish society a totality and that were, first, stolen by the communist regime and, today, by the neo-liberal hegemony.

> The crucial fact that has been widely ignored is that what gave the antiregime movements the strongest impetus to resist the seemingly irresistible communist power, and what the communists had tried to eradicate from the very beginning but, to their doom, failed, had little to do with liberal democracy. These were patriotism, a reawakened eternal desire for truth and justice, loyalty to the imponderables of the national tradition, and—a factor of paramount importance—religion. People rebelled because the regime deprived them of what they held the most precious […] To have freedom meant for the Poles not to have a government that would subject these institutions, laws, norms, and social mores to thoughtless social engineering. But this is precisely what happened when the communist regime was replaced by the liberal-democratic one (Legutko 2016: 132).

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7   *Układ,* literally 'network', is the appellative used by PiS to name the elite that had been part of the Round Table Agreement with the communist establishment in 1989, and that defined the following transition to democracy.

Patriotism, justice, traditions, and religion are all empty signifiers that function as the signifier of their absence, as communism and liberal democracy deprived Poles of them. They all seek to symbolize the real and constitute the basis to founding identities. The hegemonic discourse uses these empty signifiers as the symbols that would be needed to colonize the real, namely to achieve freedom. They represent the lost *jouissance* (or the lost 'prejudice') stolen by the communists and, now, by liberals. In the words of the Archbishop of Krakow, Marek Jędraszewski (2019), Poland has freed itself from the 'red plague' but, now, a new 'rainbow plague' is trying to conquer souls, hearts, and minds of the Poles, to ruin *our* way of life. A statement that has been defended by PiS. In the same speech in Stalowa Wola Kaczyński stated that:

> There are some in our country who want to encroach into our families, schools, kindergartens, into our lives; who want to steal our culture, freedom, rights; they attack our sacred values, they attack the Church. They want what is normal for us to become contested (Kaczyński 2019).

However, the threat to *our* way of life not only does come from something that threats identities. Enjoyment is under threat also by those that have "a different and perverse way of enjoying". This is well represented by the liberalization of sex as the ultimate stage of individual liberty. According to Legutko, liberalization of sex is just the culmination of growing consumerism, the exaltation of instant pleasure. The sex revolution was set as the last step to overthrow repressive power structures, like marriage and family. The quest for pleasure, for enjoyment, became the essence of life itself to the point that happiness, once a condition to be achieved throughout the entire life, has become synonym with pleasure. The liberal way of enjoyment, therefore, is episodic, best shown by the new interpretation of Horace's *Carpe Diem;* once praise of simplicity, today an invitation to enjoy the moment. *Just do it,* as a famous slogan would suggest. It is a form of enjoyment which is constantly frustrated and fed by its renewal (Glynos and Stavrakakis 2004). Sex becomes, therefore, the ephemeral pleasure for the individual *par excellence*, freed from any constraint and domination, including those established by old ties.

> Women, homosexuals, lesbians, polygamists, advocates of sexual communes all wanted to have their claims recognized and to contribute to the making of a new society. Sex became both the weapon to destroy the old order and the instrument to forge a new one (Legutko 2016: 103).

From another perspective, this way of getting pleasure, without any constrain and as a private matter, is a threat to *our* way of getting pleasure. Traditionalist way of *jouissance* is, on the contrary, linked to Shills' triptych of institutions: school, family and religion. In other words, the contrast between these two world view is best exemplified by the opposition between *community/individual* and *moral rules/entitlements.* Communities, with their ties and rules, are at odds with liberalization. We have seen already the role of traditional schools or the centrality of the traditional family. But this clash between different forms of enjoyment is constantly exemplified in neo-traditionalism. It is clear when MW invites its followers to reject hedonism and embrace traditions. It is clear when Legia Warszawa hooligans display the banner 'Warsaw *free* from faggotry'. Or when Kaczyński warns against the risk that immigrants (and so multiculturalism) will transform churches into toilets. And while these examples show the threat to identities and the degeneration of the neo-traditional discourse to a racist dimension, symbols and empty signifiers are created to hegemonize this void. It is the case of the traditional family protected by PiS umbrella against the rainbow storm. Or the rainbow of God, which has nothing to do with the LGBT rainbow of death, as the professor (and priest) Henryk Witczyk (2019) underlined. The list may continue. Probably, the most evocative picture of this clash is the one of a 15-years old boy that holds a cross in front of a *Marsz Równości* (a LGBT parade, literally 'march of equality') in Płock. The rainbow flag, the disruptive force and the thief. And the cross, elevated to an *objet petit a.*

## Concluding Remarks

The article has tried to offer an original perspective on right-wing populism. The use of the concepts of neo-traditionalism and cultural displacement, rather than justifying some illiberal political views, aims to create a framework to understand the rise of reactionary populism in Europe in this historical period and, accordingly, could potentially be used for future research on other cases. If studies on the rhetorical tools of far right-wing parties account for the reactivation of certain needs, this approach provides a critical understanding of the causes that triggered this phenomenon in the first place. Special focus has been given to the cultural disruption provoked by the spreading of modern values in Poland. This phase has created an identitarian void, readily filled by a neo-traditional narrative. PiS

discourse, as it resulted from its analysis, fits perfectly in the definition provided in the article. By redefining the meaning of freedom, PiS, and other conservative actors, put forward a discourse based on authority, hierarchy, and well defined moral rules. The stress on those elements, shown in the chain of equivalence, supports the hypothesis of their neo-traditional character. It follows that the importance placed on outcomes rather than procedures is proved by the role of authority over those liberties that pluralism guarantees. Traditional roles are defended against equality and entitlements. In this respect, they emphasize the role of hierarchy and moral rules. The national community is considered the sacred space of freedom where national values can be exercised. Therefore, it must be protected against the attempt of social engineering (for instance, multiculturalism) that liberalism and the EU endeavor to apply. Finally, the importance of Christianity; the safe place of *jouissance* which reason and the enjoyment of the Other aim to destroy. The entire analysis is based on this duality between two different world views. In this respect, the results relate mostly to the disruptive phase and the reaction. Further research will be needed to better enlighten the production of symbols and empty signifiers that are supposed to hegemonize society and put forward an all-encompassing hegemonic project.

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