



Starlight in Poland

Finding the Roots of Neo-traditional Populism in Poland. 'Cultural Displacement' and European Integration

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Panel 314 'Populist Rebellion Against Modernity in 21st Century'



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FATIGUE

- **Post-political Consensus or Displacement of the Political**

The lack of an effective democratic debate about possible alternatives has led in many countries to the success of political parties claiming to be the 'voice of the people' (Mouffe 2005)

- **Cultural Displacement**

During the transition, people were forced to abandon their beliefs to embrace a new liberal narrative. Or, at least, this is the dilemma they had to face.

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)

Hypothesis

1. Reduction of political options to a single liberal choice → Uniformity
2. Modernization of values → Historicism

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)

3. Counter-hegemonic reaction → Neo-traditionalism

- Importance of communities over individualistic and cosmopolitan modern values
- Traditional social roles against relativism and emancipation
- Antagonism between national community and a multicultural society



Crisis (Gramsci 1975)

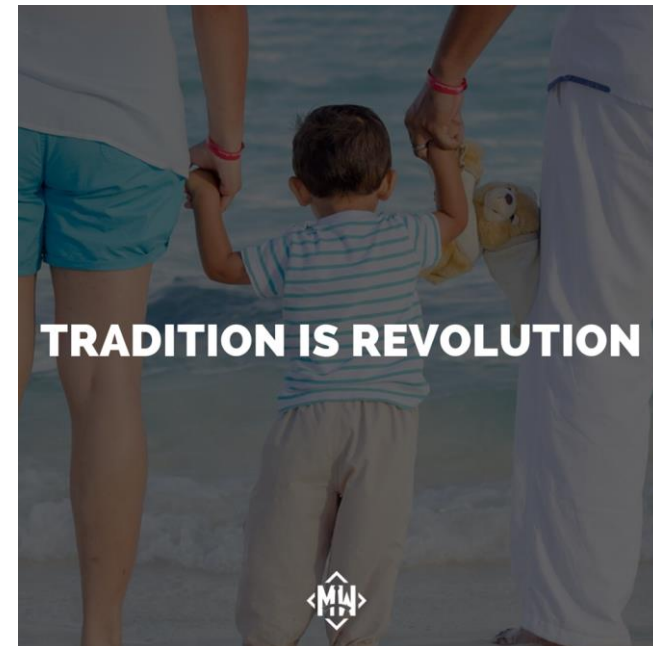
- Failure to deliver (displacement of the political)
- Imposition (cultural displacement)
- Disruptive and productive

Populism (Laclau 2005)

- Unfulfilled demands
- Logic of equivalence
- Vertical us/them axis

(Counter-)Hegemony

- Construction of an alternative narrative
- Filling of a political void



Disruptive phase of the crisis → Threat to identities and theft of enjoyment

The real as the lack of *jouissance* (Glynos and Stavrakakis 2004) and the impossibility of society (Laclau 1990)



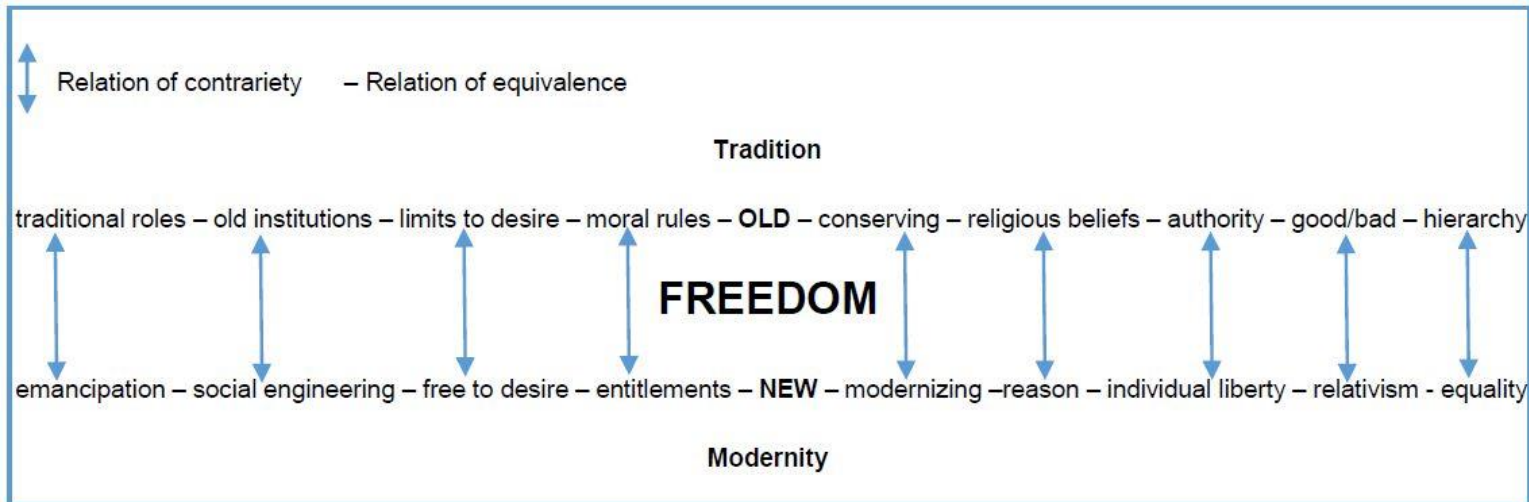
Productive phase → Foundation of identities

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 (Laclau 2005: 115).

Analysis of the neo-traditional counter-hegemonic discourse in Poland

- Nodal point of the chain of equivalence
- Constitutive outside
- Orientation of relation between discourse and its outside (De Cleen and Stavrakakis 2017)
- Articulation of equivalence and contrariety in a hegemonic strategy (Nonhoff 2019)
- Theft of enjoyment

The fight for freedom



*[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** (Kaczyński 2019).*

Modernity is the enemy

[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 (Witold Waszczykowski, PiS)



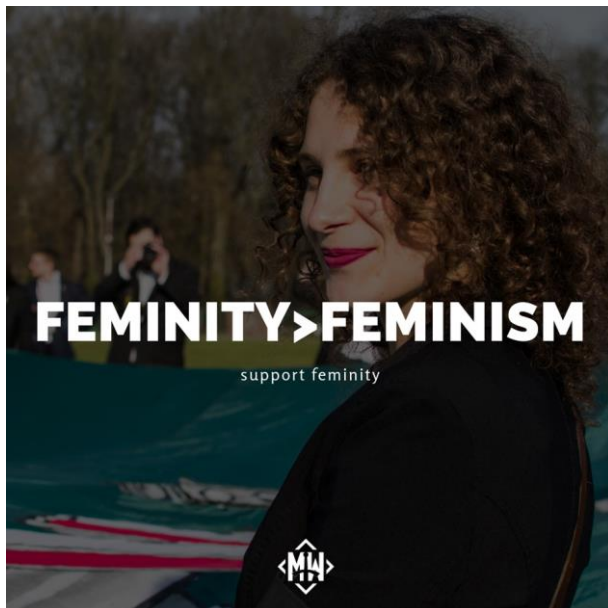
Theft of enjoyment

*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).*



The perverse way of enjoying of the Other

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).





Thank you.