POPREBEL

Populist rebellion against modernity in 21st-century Eastern Europe: neo-traditionalism and neo-feudalism

Working Paper no. 3

Glossary of basic concepts in socio-cultural studies of populism

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POPREBEL (Populist rebellion against modernity in 21st-century Eastern Europe: neo-traditionalism and neo-feudalism) is a large Horizon 2020-funded research project on the rise of populism in Central and Eastern Europe. The aim of the project is to describe the phenomenon, create a typology of its various manifestations, reconstruct trajectories of its growth and decline, investigate its causes, interpret its meanings, diagnose its consequences and propose policy solutions.

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The POPREBEL consortium comprises six universities – UCL (co-ordinating institution), University of Belgrade, Charles University, Corvinus University of Budapest, Jagiellonian University and University of Tartu – and Edgeryders, a social enterprise.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Culture and populism. Theoretical inspirations

Even though populist movements and parties often refer to various cultural concepts, shape cultural discourses and root their claims in contemporary cultural phenomena, existing studies of populism do not seem to focus sufficiently on the cultural dimensions of populism (Dunkel et al., 2018; Caiani and Padoan, 2020). Populism has predominantly been studied and analyzed through the prism of political science, which by definition focuses on political processes and actors, 'leaving aside highly important developments within non-party organizations and subcultures' (Mudde 2007:5). Work Package 3 - Culture, the largest in the POPREBEL project, is tasked with addressing the socio-cultural phenomena driving and strengthening populism, as well as those generated by populist actors.

Understood as a matrix within which political action takes place (Chabal and Daloz, 2006), the political is inherently rooted in the cultural. Jan Kubik identifies two main approaches in the cultural study of political phenomena (Kubik and Aronoff, 2013). The first, the **social psychological**, focuses primarily on **attitudes** (see, for instance, Almond and Verba, 1963, and Inglehart et al., 1988). The second one, the **semiotic**, focuses on the study of **meanings** and, as a result, is based on the interpretation of texts, actions, discourses etc. The semiotic approach is frequently used in anthropology, sociology, cultural studies and history, but it is also adopted by several political scientists (see: Aronoff 1989; Chabal and Daloz 2006; Johnson 2003: 93; Wedeen 1999, 2002; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea 2006). A way to connect these two approaches is to see culture as the communication of meaning, based on the sender-message-receiver schema. 'We need to focus on all three elements to describe and explain how meanings are generated, transmitted, and internalized to become motivators of (political) actions' (Kubik, 2019:85). This introduction to the first deliverable of WP3, the Glossary of key terms, aims at positioning our research within the existing studies on the cultural aspects of populism, articulating POPREBEL's own take on this issue and then establishing the key terms used in WP3, and providing a starting point for the specific research tasks in WP3. The glossary does not include terms used in the entire project, although it may be expanded at a later stage.

Existing research on the cultural dimension in political studies focuses on several issues, in particular on how cultural difference underlies the division between the people and the elite ('good people from the heartland' vs corrupt elites; Taggart, 2000) and between the in-group ('ordinary people') and out-group ('culprit others') (Mudde, 2004). Culture is also a space of contention where Manichean divisions can be introduced and 'culture wars' against ideological enemies can be waged (Furedi, 2017). Through the constant introduction of various new cultural antagonisms on the agenda, populism thickens (in reference to Cas Mudde's division into thin and thick populism) and makes use of new cultural resources, referring to gender, religion, ethnicity, etc. The frequent use of such value-laden issues leading to antagonisms and polarisation could be seen as part of the so-called 'new politics', in which questions of identity and recognition become central (Betz & Johson, 2004: 313).

Since culture is frequently a space of polarization, it is linked to the issue of emotions in politics. On the one hand, certain collective emotions lead to **demand** for populism – for instance, frustration, dissatisfaction, insecurity and rebellion against the existing social order (Inglehart & Norris, 2016; Zielonka, 2018). On the other hand, populist discourses **supply** highly emotional, polarizing messages, constantly creating new Others (Lazaridis & Campani, 2017). As Pierre Ostiguy notices, however, populism is a two-way, relational phenomenon, with a strong performative component, that can be defined as 'the antagonistic, mobilizational flaunting in politics of the culturally popular and native and of personalism as a mode of decision-making' (2017:117). Ostiguy encapsulates this phenomenon on the high and low scale, in which populists 'flaunt the low', which is emblematic of what has been 'disregarded' in politics: the authentic, the native, the popular, the coarse and the uninhibited, as opposed to the high – the polished, well-behaved and stiff world of the elites (idem 2017). In this vision, the daring and 'ballsy' populist leader, representing the 'true' and the 'pure' people, defies the 'refined elites' (idem). Such defiance, or even backlash against liberal values is another important strand in studies on the cultural dimension of populism. Bustikova and Guasti refer to this phenomenon as the 'illiberal turn' (2017), Inglehart and Norris consider the rise of populism as a backlash against post-materialist, liberal values (2019), while Zielonka understands rising populism as counterrevolutionary, in reference to the 1989 peaceful revolutions that sealed the liberal capitalist world order after the fall of communism (2018).

The research in WP3 makes reference to these various strands of academic work on the cultural dimension of populism, primarily adopting the ideational approach to populism but enriching it with insights from Moffit's (2016) and

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Moffitt and Tormey's (2014) political style approach. In a nutshell, while the ideational approach concentrates on the content of populist discourse or ideology, the political style approach urges us to pay equal attention to its form. For example, we want to study populist aesthetics and its emotional appeal.

Moffitt and Tormey write:

> … we define the concept of political style as the repertoires of performance that are used to create political relations. There are a wide range of political styles within the contemporary political landscape, including populist, technocratic, authoritarian and post-representative styles, all of which have their own specific performative repertoires and tropes that create and affect political relations. Key examples of practitioners of these respective political styles are Hugo Chávez, Angela Merkel, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Subcomandante Marcos (2014:387).

In this approach researchers are asked to focus their attention on the manner in which populist (particularly right-wing) performances (marches, rallies, demonstrations, etc.) are staged and thus can be seen as a specific form of political theatre. Two dimensions of this theatre need to be observed and analysed: the form and content of symbolic displays and performative styles.

Another inspiration for WP3 researchers is Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony that 'man is not ruled by force alone, but also by ideas' (Bates, 1975:351). We aim at investigating the ideas and rationales which populist organizations and their promoters (within certain subcultural circles) use to mobilize individuals. We will explore the narrative structure and the key structural notions that chart major 'frames' and cognitive schemes that offer the rationale for political action and/or advocating certain political ideas. However, while we follow the mainstream direction of Gramsci's ideas, we apply them to dramatically changed social circumstances in that the main agents of social and political change are no longer opposing classes but defragmented individuals and subcultural groups that tend to recognize the relevance of a problem only if it is related to their particular (individual and/or subcultural) life experiences. Hence, various discourses of power are identified, and much attention is paid to mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, where rules of the cultural-political game are defined by the hegemonic actors.

1.2. Methodological approaches and inspirations

Taking into account the diversity of cases in WP3, we can divide them in line with the two basic approaches to studying culture mentioned above and corresponding to its three principal 'locations:'

- In the 'heads' of the creator(s) in the form of their attitudes, intentions/plans, etc.
- In the public space in the form of texts (signs, symbols, images, performances, etc.)
- In 'heads' of receivers, the public, whose attitudes (or predispositions) are formed by the myriad processes of communication that together constitute the whole field of culture.

Following this tradition, data will be collected via both methodologies: social-psychological (on attitudes) and semiotic (on texts).

Five features of populism	**Culture: semiotic dimension (images, rhetorical figures, performances, etc.)**	**Culture: socio-psychological dimension**
	Examples	Examples
Vertical polarization	Symbolism of anti-hierarchy. Discourses of 'elevation' vs 'equalization'	Rejection of (any) hierarchy and anti-expert attitudes. Anti-science sentiments.
Antagonism	Discourse(s) (also visual) of enmity/antagonism (refugees as enemies)	Attitudinal data on the societal-cultural polarization
Manicheism	Discourses on the 'divine'/moral legitimation of vertical polarization (Gender ideology, LGBTQ people – and their elite	Evidence of strongly moralistic convictions/attitudes underpinning *vertical polarization*.

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	supporters - as an existential threat to the 'moral order')	
Popular sovereignty	Discourses rejecting/mocking 'formalism' of politics (for example the necessity of checks and balances).	Anti-democratic attitudes. The rise of authoritarianism (as a personality trait).
Horizontal polarization	Discourses of rejection of 'others' (refugees, LGBTQ people, 'alien' nationals, etc.). Discourses construing and legitimating horizontal polarization.	Attitudes of rejection of 'others.' Evidence of strongly moralistic convictions/attitudes underpinning *horizontal polarization*.

1.3. Aim and scope

The main aim of the glossary is to provide functional definitions of the key ideas for the analysis of cultures of populism for WP3 research on the cultural aspects of populism. Those are not encyclopaedia entries, as the glossary neither encompasses all of the functional language concepts used for the study of populism, nor are the entries intended to provide exhaustive definitions. The key principle is to propose common understanding of key terms, allowing for more linguistic and research cohesion of WP3 tasks and enhance communication across all POPREBEL research activities. The glossary maps the concepts that are central to the various tasks that are part of the Work Package. The concepts have been grouped into five categories: general concepts, identity & values, discourses of Othering, strategies and communication of ideas and mental maps. Each category is preceded by a short introduction. Furthermore, if a concepts listed in the glossary reappears in a different entry, it has been marked in bold.

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2. Categories and concepts

2.1. General concepts

This section includes concepts that we consider as crucial in researching the socio-cultural dimension of populism in Work Package 3. These are:

- Cultural Populism
- Neo-Populism from above (from below)
- Populist and radical right
- Legitimacy
- Traditionalism & Neo-traditionalism
- The people
- Elites
- Sovereignty

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- Common sense
- Common good

2.2. Identity / Values

The fundamental distinction between **the people** and **elites**, which constitutes the populist ideology and worldview, has a strong cultural dimension of values and identity building. Right-wing populism uses the concept of nation understood as a community of culture, cultural tradition, a community of people who think alike and who identify with the same core set of values rooted in tradition. **Traditional religiosity**, national identity based on ethnic culture, the sense of belonging to a community based on solid foundations of ethnic tradition, give a sense of ontological security to people who experience trauma of rapid social change and who feel lost in the plurality of values and ideas which come from the liberal world. Traditional values may serve as an instrument of boundary building to create order in the social world and exclude those who are identified with the alien, liberal ideas and ways of life proposed and imposed by the globalized world. Equal rights for sexual minorities, the LGBT movement and 'gender ideology' as it is called in the populist discourse are examples of populist exclusion of those who are described as enemies of tradition, national identity, religion and traditional family. Among the concepts in this category are:

- Nativism
- Ethnonationalism
- Mental (ontological) security
- Traditional religiosity
- Hegemonic Masculinity
- Homonationalism

2.3. Discourses of Othering

One of the key strategies of populists in the socio-cultural dimension is polarization, often resulting in constructing homogenous categories, positioned in direct opposition to one another. This is directly related to the process of strengthening identity boundaries, separating the collective 'us' from the collective 'them'. This process of gradual distancing, alienation, enemisation, or discrimination, particularly visible in the analysis of discourses, can be encapsulated in the term 'Othering'. It may be based on ideological and identity-related grounds, and it may appear in various intensity and emotional charge. The entries below attempt at showcasing various forms of Othering that will be explored across WP3 research tasks:

- Othering
- Gender ideology
- Gender regime
- Homophobia
- Heteronormativity / Homonormativity
- Cultural Marxism
- Victimisation

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2.4. Strategies, tools and communication of ideas

A constitutive element of populism relies in the rhetoric and the language used. The effective communication, being of outmost importance for populists, requires that they resort to a set discursive techniques to reach the audience and achieve intended effects. The Manichean division between the 'good' people and the 'corrupt' **elites**, and the internal and external polarization through the processes of **Othering**, which are fundamental for populism, originate, in fact, in the sphere of discourse. The importance of discourse in populism has been emphasized in various studies, making this issue either cental to defining what populism is, or at least equally important as the populist ideas themselves. This section is intended to introduce some of the key strategies and tools which are functional for populists in the processes of communication:

- Politics of memory
- Mythologisation
- Euroscepticism
- Conspiracy theories
- Fake news
- Populist art

2.5. Mental Maps & Imagined Spaces

Spatial dimension is very important in populist narratives and its discursive structuring. All populist narratives are embedded into particular factual and/or fictional geographical, spatial, local, regional or global locations that are perceived as places of origin either the People, to whom these narratives are addressing or the Others, against who these narratives strive to mobilize the People. These spaces delimit the boundaries of anticipated and/or desired past, present and future political conflicts of the communities they address (the People) and those against they seek to mobilize the followers of their ideologies (the Others). The dynamics of interpretative context and rhetorical organization of every particular narrative (Tonkiss, 1996: 249-250) discovers internal tensions, imagined enemies and dilatations, reinterpretations or misstatements of historical facts in order to provoke desirable emotional reaction among People and an appropriate political response. All these spaces are just constructs invented in particular political, economic, cultural and societal - local, regional and global circumstances under which they are structured and revive. In the following section we try to chart some of these spaces:

- Mental maps
- Western Balkans
- Central Europe

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3. Glossary

3.1. General Concepts

3.1.1 Cultural Populism

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Cultural populism is not a rigorous analytical category. Social scientists and cultural critics addressed the issue from the standpoint of histories of cultural populism (Ryle, 1996) rather than from a single conceptual angle. Since populism is not only an economic-political programme but also a 'cultural mission', the concept of 'cultural populism' should be scrutinised in the framework of the 'emotional backlash' (Galston, 2018) against the **elites**. Starting with Richard Hofstadter's Pulitzer prize-winning book *Age of Reform* (Hofstadter, 1955) – where populism is framed as a 'provincial' and 'folkloric' form of politics – the concept of 'cultural populism' was employed in academic literature as an umbrella term, denoting a variety of cultural practices, behaviours, speeches and products that displayed political demagogy. Often, the employment of the term 'cultural populism' was reserved to pejorative usages both in academia and beyond. Against these common-sensical, negative connotations, cultural theorist and sociologist Jim McGuigan defined 'cultural populism' neutrally. According to his view, 'cultural populism' is a descriptive term that came to denote the analysis of cultural discourses that reflect upon the various combinations and meanings of the two separate terms: 'culture' and 'populism'. McGuigan's theorises 'cultural populism' as 'the intellectual assumption made by some students of popular culture, that the symbolic experiences and practices of ordinary people are more important analytically and politically than Culture with capital C.' (McGuigan, 1992, p. 4). Thus, in order to understand 'cultural populism', cultural studies must re-evaluate 'the popular' from the concept of 'popular culture'.

Ryle posits that intellectuals' encounters with popular culture 'have carried implicit, and sometimes unacknowledged, personal and cultural meanings' (Ryle, 1996). In this light, popular culture is rather embraced by them, not dismissed. By the same token, the re-evaluation of the popular is what Ryle calls 'a new self-positioning of intellectuals: vis-à-vis the popular 'other' against which they find themselves placed within an economically and culturally divided society'. (Ryle, 1996). As McGuigan admitted, 'cultural populism is not a unitary phenomenon' (McGuigan, 1992, p. 5). Therefore, cultural populism can be understood in a variety of ways. One of the common understandings refers to cultural practice formats that seek 'to constitute the people often around a frontier of polarization' (Palonen, 2018, 237) that sets the border between 'us' versus 'them' and 'friends' versus 'enemies'. Hence, cultural populism can work both ways: either as the culture of 'the People' that puts forth the disdain in the **elites**' taste and values, or as the **elites** persuading the people that their values are worth pursuing. In both instances, the emphasis is put of 'values'.

An inverted format of cultural populism reveals that it is not always the culture of the people that displays the disdain in the **elites**' taste and values, but rather the **elites** are mainstreaming high culture to the people with nationalist arguments. To mention just one example of an inverted format of cultural populism, one can scrutinise the 2016 national campaign that aimed to persuade Romanians to donate 6 million euros to 'save' modernist sculptor Constantin Brancusi's *Wisdom of the Earth* from becoming an artwork indexed in a private collection. The media campaign's strategy rested on the cultural **elites** trying to convince 'the people' that 'Brancusi is theirs', exactly like 'Romania is theirs' (this was one of the campaign notorious slogan uttered by Romanian actors, philosophers, musicians, etc.). Thus, what these campaigns reveal is not the culture of the people that displays disdain in the **elites**' values – as cultural populism is customarily understood – but rather the cultural **elites** are mainstreaming high culture (e.g. Brancusi's high modernism) to the people through nationalistic rhetoric. Thus, the discursive construction of 'the people' is not necessarily directed against the '**elites**' but against an enemy, that impersonates 'the other' of the national culture and ethos. Within the POPREBEL's tasks, we will explore both understandings of cultural populism.

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3.1.2. Neo-Populism from Above (from Below)

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'Neo-populism from above (from below)' refers to populist policies and initiatives employed by political and cultural actors with the purpose of increasing support for the preservation of their power (Shafir, 2008). Correspondingly, neo-populism from above uses different strategies and techniques than neo-populism from below. Because the POPREBEL project investigates populist rebellion against modernity in 21st-century Eastern Europe, the concept of neo-populism (both from above and from below) will be employed to illuminate the systemic nature of populisms in post-communist Eastern Europe as well as the ways it is disseminated via popular culture and arts. In this perspective, post-communist neo-populism differs from historical populism in the anti-systemic nature of the later (Shafir 2012, p. 537).

Neo-populism (from above/from below) is a cultural and political movement of the early 21st century, originating mostly in Latin America (Knight 1998). Neo-populism is also understood as media populism and it is distinct from 20th century populisms. Kurt Weyland advances the argument according to which there are compatibilities and synergies between neo-populism and neoliberalism. Grounded in empirical observation of Latin America he claims, 'There are some underlying affinities that make neoliberalism and contemporary populism coincide in important, inherent ways.' (Weyland 2003, p. 2) Consistently, he puts forth the example of Latin America to demonstrate that neoliberalism and neo-populism are inherently compatible in what regards: the 'anti-organizational bent' (materialised in insignificant levels of institutionalisation), as well as the prioritisation of numbers over the weight of political resources, 'anti-status-quo orientation, an anti-elite discourse, and a transformatory stance' (Weyland 2003, p. 3). Michael Shafir also elaborates on what 'neo' might connote in post-communist/socialist Central and Eastern Europe and points out that neo-populism in this region does not reject market economy. Actually, in Central and Eastern Europe proponents of neo-populism are both corrupt and virtuous capitalists who '[U]nlike their predecessors, no longer denounce the 'evils' of capitalism [but] only the 'rapaciousness' of capitalists who allegedly forgot where they came from.' (Shafir 2008, p. 431)

It is crucial to mention that the label 'neo-populism' (from above/from below) refers to the use of the media as one of the primary tools of populism (Mazzoleni et al., 2003). Populist entrepreneurs speak to 'the people' directly via the media. Umberto Eco (2007) also elaborated on how media is a mouthpiece for both neo-populists from above and below. Specifically, for some tasks within the POPREBEL project, the focus will be on popular culture and art's ambivalence in both disseminating and resisting the neo-populist's kit of visual rhetoric displayed and disseminated through various media channels. The fact that some initiatives are not originating in the political programmes of **radical right** parties does not make them less populist. The dividing line between populism from above and populism from below is still fluid and might occasion a dialectical exchange. Neo-populism 'is not an 'in-power' or 'out-power' function. It may be found in both government and in opposition' (Shafir 2008, p. 84). Moreover, post-communist neo-populists are at least superficially 'systemic' in the sense that their main claim is not that they want to dismantle the 'system' (as their predecessors claimed) but rather that 'they do so in order to safeguard democracy' (Shafir, 2012, p. 538).

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3.1.3. Populist and Radical Right

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We rely upon the work of Cas Mudde (2007) when categorising this party family. A **populist radical right** (PRR) party is any party which combines populism, **nativism** and authoritarianism (i.e. a strict law and order approach). While populism is a broadly defined concept, we approach this as a thin-centred ideology which divides society into two homogenous and antagonistic groups: the people and the elite (Mudde, 2007; Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017). Although one of the core components of the PRR party family, populism is not limited to the far right. While this party-family can be classified by the aforementioned three components, it should be firmly noted that the PRR is heterogenous. Mudde (2019) contends that diversity has increased even further in the fourth wave of the **radical right**, which began at roughly the turn of the century. Indeed, the **populist radical right** party family includes such diverse parties as the National Rally (formerly the National Front) in France, The Party for Freedom in the Netherlands as well as parties such as the Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik), Alternative for Germany, the Latvian National Alliance (the NA) and the Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE).

Our approach to this party family vis-à-vis Mudde's three components is that **nativism** (together with ethno-nationalism) is the host ideology, meaning that this plays a larger role in both party ideology and the demand side for voters. **Nativism** manifests in an opposition to anything that is perceived as an 'external threat' to the titular nation, whether it be people (on bio-political grounds), political groups, or ideological currents (Mudde, 2007; Minkenberg, 2017). We differentiate here between xenophobia and **nativism** in two distinct ways. First, that **nativism** relies upon concrete ideas and concepts, whereas xenophobia centres on ethno-cultural or religious 'others' in a more 'loose' and less coherent fashion (Minkenberg 2017). Secondly, and of crucial importance to our cases and argument, is that **nativism** is distinct to each specific nation, evident in the context of specific titular nations, although as the transnationalism of the PRR party family accelerates, the shared commonalities are becoming more enhanced - especially the notion of a Europe or European peoples under threat (Wierenga, 2017).

While extensive research has been conducted on this party-family, the lion's share in the literature has been devoted to Western Europe. However, there is a growing literature on the PRR in Central and Eastern Europe which notes the primary difference between the traditional targets and the difference in ideological extremes. Minkenberg (2017a & 2017b) outlines the primary distinctions between PRR political parties and other organisations in the West and the East: notably, that the PRR in Central and Eastern Europe is ideologically more extreme (as well as organisationally fluid) due to the nature of the transition processes, traditions of nationalism, political culture and new cleavages and party systems (ibid).

Both Latvia's National Alliance and the Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE) have been identified in the existing academic literature as belonging to this party-family. We also consider, in line-with Mudde (2019), that populism is a part of the political make-up of these two parties, but that the host ideology is **nativism** in addition to ethno-nationalism (Rydgren, 2017). We situate the PRR in Latvia and Estonia inside the broader context of Central and Eastern Europe but underline some significant differences. For instance, while grass-roots organisations are of pivotal importance for the political engagement of the far right, as broadly defined, both organisations under study are by now solidly structured and operate as full-fledged parties, not movements. This differentiates EKRE and National Alliance from radical right-wing parties in, say, the Visegrad Four group of states that have evolved out of 'bottom-up'

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formation processes and considerably rely on mass mobilisation coordinated by grass-roots groupings (e.g. Jobbik in Hungary and Naše Slovensko/'Our Slovakia').

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3.1.4. Legitimacy

In politics, legitimacy is generally understood as the broad acceptance by society of an individual's, government's or regime's right to rule. As Jan Kubik (2013, p. 77) puts it, 'legitimation is the process that transforms power resting ultimately on coercion into authority based on a modicum of consent, if not consensus'. However, there is no agreement as to the source of legitimacy, i.e. why any one individual, government or political regime should be more legitimate than any other. German sociologist Max Weber identified three ideal types of 'legitimate authority'. With the first, *traditional authority*, legitimacy to rule is derived from respect for long-established patterns of social relations, such as hereditary monarchies. *Charismatic authority*, the second ideal type, confers legitimacy to those charismatic individuals who are believed to possess extraordinary personal qualities, as is often the case with nationalist leaders. In the modern era, Weber argued, traditional and charismatic forms of political legitimacy gave way to *legal-rational authority*, where power is legitimised through laws and regulations, upheld by bureaucracies and governments. The latter are themselves legitimised by popular **sovereignty**, the idea that governments are created and sustained by the consent of the people.

While, in liberal democracies, the people whose consent confers legitimacy to rule are the citizens, populists define 'the people' in a more restrictive manner – in Central and Eastern Europe it is usually in ethno-national and/or religious terms – so as to draw a narrower boundary around those whose views are considered legitimate and, at the same time, delegitimise those who fall outside this narrow definition. This more restrictive definition of 'the people' away from the citizenry as a whole also determines the legitimacy of political leaders, which, as Erik Ringmar (1998, p. 545) argues with reference to ethno-national definitions of 'the people', undermines a key principle of democracy: 'While the principle of democracy makes those political leaders legitimate who represent what the people want, the principle of nationalism makes those political leaders legitimate who represent what the people is.' In POPREBEL we will seek to understand the various means by which populists seek to legitimise their view of the world, their claims to power and their policies but with a particular focus on the ways in which they seek to define 'the people'.

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3.1.5.Traditionalism & Neo-traditionalism

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If mental, or 'ontological' security seems to be a desired state of mind, and since rapid and radical change disturbs it, then return to tradition may be a solution. Freedom may be a burden, especially since it is connected to responsibility. People who for various reasons do not feel fit to respond individually to the challenge of change, look for a remedy in a form of collective identity based on tradition. Tradition appears in this process of escape from freedom of choice and responsibility as a source of values and norms, often legitimized by religion, it defines 'us' as a community, answers questions regarding our collective identity, and provides a sense of belonging to the world where everything and everybody have their place – it may also help to understand 'the others', who represent dangerous alternative to the traditional system – for example **elites**, immigrants, or liberals.

Tradition has been a popular subject of philosophical and sociological reflection. Already at the beginning of modernity conservative philosophers spoke of tradition which represented everything which was important and valuable as being threatened by the French Revolution and its negative consequences (for instBurke 1790). In contrast to this conservative view, Karl Marx saw tradition as a burden to our minds (Marx 1852). In general, tradition and modernity were seen as mutually opposite, while the development of modernity was believed to gradually eliminate tradition from social life. This view was challenged when tradition appeared to be an important point of reference in identity construction, including national and ethnic, which refer to tradition in search for their identity deeply rooted in the past. Two main lines of argument were developed: according to one tradition was an oppressive burden to society, making it more difficult for people to choose their own way of life independently of the legacy of the past. The second argument, developed mainly in the period of Romanticism, went in the opposite direction: tradition is for us a rich treasury from which we may get useful and valuable inspiration. Gadamer followed this point of view with the argument that we never take tradition for granted; we interpret it and are in a kind of dialogue with it. In this way tradition has influence on us, while we at the same time influence it by re-interpreting its message (Gadamer 1989).

With the development of empirical sociology, tradition became an important subject of research, not only of premodern societies but also in the context of reflection of the significance of heritage and importance of the past for the present developments. Jerzy Szacki (1971) and Edward Shils (1981) devoted comprehensive studies to the concept of tradition as the presence of the past in the contemporary society. It became clear that tradition is a very useful and powerful instrument which may be used in attempts to construct political and ideological images and to become an essential part of collective identity. The very influential book on Invention of Tradition (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983) shows some example of such manipulation.

Traditionalism is a kind of policy aiming at return to tradition in order to find roots of culture, get rid of unwanted elements of way of life which were borrowed from or imposed by modern society. This movement is well known in the post-colonial world, where efforts are made to replace the imposed, western values and ways by the society's own, traditional ones, suppressed and forgotten, but now revived (see for example Braginsky 2004). In Europe similar processes are taking place, with tradition becoming a point of reference in search of authenticity of culture, while the political agenda behind it is to emphasize the contrast between the original, authentic culture of 'the people' and artificial westernization imposed by those who had power to do it. For the clarity of concepts, it may be advisable to make a distinction between traditionalism, which means choosing traditional culture and values rather than their modern alternatives represented by globalization and western-oriented modernization, and neo-traditionalism, which refers to conscious, often politicized, return to tradition and rejection of modern cultural patterns and values already widely present in the society.

In this context neo-traditionalism appears in post-communist Europe as a strategy to escape from the unknown, alien and dangerous new values and ways of life which came from the EU to Eastern Europe. To protect themselves from this danger, Eastern European societies should recreate their own tradition and with it the people's healthy and moral way of life and ontological security.

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This return to tradition does not of course mean that people move to a kind of pre-modern agrarian community. Neo-traditionalism is rather a kind of collective identity – an image and meaningful actions, which refer to tradition as a source of stable and legitimate values which explain the world in simple terms, describe problems in simple categories connected with value judgements, and restore the feeling of belonging to a stable and secure community. Neo-traditionalism is also a political strategy against those who propose deeper integration with the western world, and in particular with the EU, in the name of modernization. Traditional values and ways of life are thus presented as a healthy alternative to liberal individualism, which restores security and dignity based on tradition and builds a more authentic collective identity rooted in tradition, ethnicity and sound moral principles. As such, neo-traditionalism may be a strategy chosen by populists who propose strengthening of healthy, culture-based nation and moving away from decadent, liberal West, which has been chosen by the corrupt cosmopolitan **elites**.

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3.1.6. The people

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'The people' is a broad societal category that typically refers to a group of average, ordinary people who do not possess any special privileges or power. It is a relatively plastic and capacious concept of high social and political relevance.

There are four crucial characteristics that define this notion socially. Firstly, 'the people' is by definition a collective category. Although composed of the multitude of individual persons, 'the people' is not a *collection of individuals* (there is no individuality involved) but a *collective unit.* The concept unites the plurality of its members, with a **notion of unity**, thus 'the people' typically appear as one. Secondly, 'the people' is a quite flexible and to a certain extent vague category. There is no one clear-cut criterion of inclusion, and in fact, 'the people' may include quite diverse sectors of the population. What defines 'the people' is not what they have or who they are, but what they are not, what they do not possess, and it is a rank or a special position within the society. To put it differently, the category of 'the people' is only definable **within the relations of power**: 'the people' are those members of the society, those citizens, who do not have special power, who are being governed; in other words all the ordinary people, not the government or the ruling classes/**elites**. Thirdly and seemingly paradoxically, 'the people' appear to be a relatively **homogenous group**. Although often quite diverse, they are typically portrayed as a community of those who share original values, culture and traditions. 'The people' are discursively located in the centre of the society, they include only its true members, who constitute the community and who uphold its values. Fourthly and finally, 'the people' is in fact the most spacious and thus the widest social group within a state. 'The people' are imagined as the majority; they are numerous, they are subordinate, they lead the normal life, they work, they preserve the communitarian values. In a sense, 'the people' is the contemporary version of what in feudal society was defined as **the masses**.

The political usefulness of this category derives from its interconnectedness with the concept of 'the nation' and 'the sovereign'. The association between 'the people' and 'the nation', stems from the centrality and supposed

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homogeneity of 'the people' (point 3 above) and its majoritarian character (point 4). Since 'the people' are imagined as a homogenous, original, value-preserving majority, they are indeed often seen as the epitome of 'the nation'. In political narratives, especially in populist discourse, 'the people' is simply equated with 'the nation'. The relationship between 'the people' and 'the sovereign', on the other hand, derives from power relations (point 2) and the majoritarian character of 'the people' (point 4). 'The people' are not only the ones who are being governed, but they are - at the same time - the ones who have the power to vote. In contemporary democracies, this very fact transforms them into a valuable resource; they become the key target of political appeal, and the source - once convinced to cast the vote - of political legitimisation. This is within 'the people' where the constituent power resides. This double political standing of 'the people', the interplay between subordination and legitimisation is what gives 'the people' the attributes of 'the sovereign'.

The most visible way in which the notion of 'the people' has been utilised for political gains is the populist narrative. For the populists 'the people' lay at the very centre of their rhetoric. It is the most fundamental concept in their discourse in terms of both content and narrative.

In POPREBEL project – following the populist discourse – the category of 'the people' will appear in the context of:

1. **The nation***.* 'The people' are imagined as living in the heartland of the country and upholding the true original communitarian values. Thus, very strong connection between 'the people' and traditions and **traditionalism**, folk culture and popular values. Not uncommonly, would 'the people' appear in the discourse with the adjective 'true' [e.g. true Poles, true Hungarians]
2. **The historical underdog**. 'The people' possess certain socioeconomic qualities (usually representing lower and middle strata, people without proper representation or voice, the oppressed). In the case of the CEE countries 'the people' are seen as those who were oppressed by the communist regime, and later marginalised by economic and political transformation, privatisation and democratisation, and further alienated by the forces of globalisation. 'The people' are portrayed as those who lost or – at best – did not win as much as they ought to have won.
3. **The sovereign.** 'The people' are imagined as marginalised and at the same time as those who need to get their power back. Their interests are to be represented by populist leaders, who present themselves as the spokespersons of 'the people'.
4. **The opposition to 'the elites'.** The adversarial relationship between both categories does not only refer to their social, cultural or economic qualities, but more importantly – it is a binary moral opposition between good and evil. While 'the people' are imagined as epitomising true values and virtuousness, **'the elites'** are associated with corruption, dishonesty and fraudulence. This opposition between **'the people'** and **'the elites'** operates both on national as well as international level. Thus – as is the case in CEE populist narratives – 'the people' are often portrayed as true nationals, marginalised in the past, but generality good and value preserving majority, while **'the elites'** are foreign, post-communist, liberal, pro-western, corrupt and spoiled.

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3.1.7. Elites

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The widely accepted and used understanding of populism includes the concept of the elite as its constitutive element. Populism is defined as an ideology (a thin-centred ideology, as Cas Mudde calls it) which focuses on the fundamental conflict between 'the people' and 'the elites'. In this construction 'the people' are always presented in a positive light, while 'the elites', in contrast, always in the negative. The people are seen as oppressed, powerless, impoverished, and morally pure, while 'the elite' is perceived as illegitimately powerful, corrupted, and possessing large material resources. The power of the elite is considered illegitimate because those who have it do not represent the people, even if they were given power legally. This is so because, in such logic, the rule of law does not necessarily correspond with the sense of justice of the people, and their collective will. The two groups, the elite and the people, are presented by populists as homogenous and antagonistic (Mudde 2007: 23, also 2004: 541). The concept of elites is often given not only political and economic but also cultural meaning (Moffit 2016, 53), and as such it is of interest in the glossary of terms pertaining to socio-cultural aspects of populism.

In the classic sociological literature, it is Vilfredo Pareto with whom the beginning of reflection on elites is associated. Pareto understood elites as small groups which occupy leading positions, holding power and privilege in many different groups in human society. There are many different elites, consisting of individuals who are skilled, talented, efficient more than others. Pareto distinguished governing (those who have political power) and non-governing elites. Elites can be replaced by other elites (circulation of elites). (Pareto, 1916). Italian sociologist Gaetano Mosca understood elites as organised minorities, and masses as the unorganized majority. In this vision, elites have intellectual and material superiority, enjoy social esteem and power (Mosca, 1896).

In his reflection of the American society, C. Wright Mills wrote about the power elite, holding power in three essential areas: economic, political and military, and thus constituting the ruling establishment (Mills, 1956). In his view, such power elites develop in modern societies through the process of concentration of control in the hands of a relatively small, corrupt group. This process also means that power in modern societies no longer lies in the hands of elective democratic representatives. A similar argument can be found in Putnam, who argues that in a modern society power is held by the elite of executives, specialists, and it is them who make decisions, rather than democratically elected representatives of the mass society. (Putnam 1976; see also Wasilewski, 1998).

The development of democratic political systems in those countries which were previously governed by authoritarian regimes gave a new dimension to the reflection on the role of elites in politics and social change. In many countries, the political and social transformation from authoritarianism to democracy was initiated or carried out in cooperation with elites. Here, the concept of elite united through consensus plays a role. This concept applies to such a situation where elites existing in a particular society share basic values and principles as well as procedures, and which cooperate in the process of transition irrespective of differences between them. They treat each other as opponents and competitors rather than as enemies. Philip Schmitter (O'Donnell, Schmitter, 1986) argues that the stronger involvement and the more leading role such elites - united through consensus - play in the systemic change, the more chance for a stable democracy. Schmitter believes that such a transformation 'from above' is better for democracy than transformation generated by mobilised masses, because elites act more pragmatically, based on negotiation and compromise, and not on coercion and violence. Post-communist transformation in Central and Eastern Europe may provide examples to support this interpretation.

The argument formulated by populist movements goes in the opposite direction. Populists believe that elites are by their very nature corrupt and egoistic and argue that the only real change may be executed by mobilised masses. It is exactly by pointing out that the consensus among elites was the original sin of the post-1989 transformation in Central and Eastern Europe, responsible for its failure, that the populists in the region call for a new revolution, this time done by masses which need finally to be liberated from the domination of elites (Zielonka, 2018).

The concept of elites and relation between elites and masses has also its strong cultural significance. Recent scholarship focuses on the combination of economic and cultural factors. According to Galston populistic narrations are typically displaying 'disappointment of economic frustration in connection with resentments against the rules and fear of threats to the physical and cultural security.' (2018:11) This situation produces a specific „cultural backlash' (Norris and Inglehart 2019) or „emotion-laden expression of disappointment' (Galston 2018) that supports the populists in elections and political campaigns. 'Real people' who eat hamburgers, listen to country and western music,' vs

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„globalist snobs' in the USA, „real Poles' vs „łże-elity, wykształciuchy i zdradzieckie mordy'[1] in Poland show not only a political strategy but also certain visions of the recent history, choice of value and notions of unity within the nation-state. Such a language and narratives have been described as the populist performative style based on „flaunting of the low' (Ostiguy 2017).

It seems that socio-cultural aspects of populistic anti-elitism become a crucial part of populist ideologies and political strategies, since they spread political debate to the realm of everyday life. It can be observed that populists link easily observable differences in lifestyle and everyday culture, which symbolise status and prestige, and use them as signs of belonging, opinion, and the general choice of values. They become a source of pride and dignity (these very words are very often used by the populist politicians) as a reversal of marginalisation and frustration. In such a manner, the basis of populist narrative contrasting moral and authentic people vs. corrupt and unreal elites (Mudde, Kaltwasser 2017, Moffit 2016) spreads from political agenda and case-specific debates to general public. It is present in media representations, language, identities and images of belonging, and becomes shared knowledge. These processes are crucial and anchored in the metaphorical populist repertoire which ground the symbolic sphere („culture') and politics in the divisions of social space such as economic class structure or ethnic or national belonging and defence of „our' values and culture. (see: Westheuser 2020). „Cognitive mobilization' (Inglehart) and „struggles over the classifications of social groups or symbolic class struggles' (Westheuser 2020:259) becomes therefore crucial for understanding the contemporary populism.

Contrasting 'the elites' from 'the people' is a typical feature of populism. Telling new stories and showing the indispensable difference between 'us- the people' and 'them-the elites' (whether metaphorical of explicit) is elaborated in political campaigns, speeches and media. It reflects not only political strategies and agendas of the parties but refers to current social experiences in the realm of economy, politics, and everyday social life. Defining elites embraces appeals to cultural identities, cultural practice, habits, ways of life, and uses them as signs of belonging and exclusion. One of the aims of the project is to observe these appeals on case studies and attempt to understand, interpret and describe patterns of these ongoing „symbolic struggles' taking place in contemporary, European societies.

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[1] These terms in Polish refer to several, semi-offensive terms addressed towards the elites: 'łże-elity' is a term translated loosely as 'fake-elites' or 'liar-elites'; 'wykształciuchy' is a pejorative term for the educated intelligentsia; and 'zdradzieckie mordy' - the most offensive out of these three terms – accuses the elites of being treacherous and similar to animals (Jarosław Kaczynski also used this 'animalistic' vocabulary when describing his political opponents). For more specific discussion on the rhetoric and linguistic dimension of Polish populism, see: Kłosińska, K. and M. Rusinek (2019). Dobra zmiana. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Otwarte.

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3.1.8 Sovereignty

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Defining sovereignty in the modern sense binds to the theory of Jean Bodin, who first defined national sovereignty as supreme power in the state (Bodin, 2014). Throughout the history of political philosophy, the concept of sovereignty has been changing and one of the major turning points has been Kant's idea of perpetual peace, which implies that republics will not go into the war with each other. With Kant's ideas the issue of sovereignty is shifted into the arena of international relations (Kant, 2006). Thanks to Kant's legacy, the issue of sovereignty remains an important part of international law. During World War I, Kant's idea was taken over and implemented by US President Woodrow Wilson (creation of the League of Nations in 1919) and after the Second World War, the United Nations assumed the role of a guarantor of peace in the international arena. The process of globalisation poses a great challenge to the question of national sovereignty and it becomes one of the main themes of modern times (Barkin, 2006).

The concept of nation-state sovereignty is based on the exclusive territorial principle and control of state policy and institutions that is devoid of foreign influence. During the last three centuries the dominant **elites** established more or less centralised rule and monopolised the political decision-making process, taxation and the provision of public goods. The population was mobilised in the general state policy and in the military. Political modernisation changed the nature of ties between members of the population at large and between the general population and political **elites**. The United Nations Charter, the Draft Declaration on Rights and Duties of States and the charters of regional international organisations claim that all states are equal and enjoy the same rights and duties based upon the mere fact of their existence as entities under international law. Populist movements revived the idea of a sovereign nation state rejecting the concept of a united Europe based on four European freedoms of movement for goods, services, capital and people. European Union has also built the institutions of sovereignty on supra-national level, including common security and foreign policy. After 1989, the national economies of sovereign nation-states were becoming difficult to regulate in the new reality of high capital mobility and the intensification of transnational economic and societal dynamics and exchanges. Western societies were loosening traditional identifications like religion and social class.

Most European populist policies are contesting the sovereignty of joint EU institutions. Political evolution and post-colonial and post-communist economic growth resulted in a growing population of 'losers of globalisation' and the new national state becomes a social and political refuge. Contemporary European populism is a set of responses to the emergence of the internationalised state, as the state **elites** have opted in favour the transnational policies and supranational institutions. From the nation-state **elites** emerged new cosmopolitan **elites** that have eluded the immediate control of their home countries and societies, as the governing has become detached from national representative processes. Referring to the idea of restoring the sovereignty of the nation-state, contemporary European populism is articulating social frustrations as the demands for political recognition and representation on the national level instead on the level of a national sovereignty delegated to common EU institutions. Populism on the extreme political right requires a return to nation-state sovereignty: the renewal of national border controls in order to manage the flow of migrants, financial autonomy, narrowing the domain of human rights, arrangements of sovereign national governments with Russia and China, etc. Populism on the extreme political left requires more economic nationalism, nationalisation, the review of close EU relations with the US, etc. Populist right and left both claim a certain rejection of EU supra-national political bodies.

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The visions of a contemporary sovereign state consider a nation constructed as a community mobilised against the internal and external enemies ranked within the modern liberal-democratic order. The sovereign nation-state possesses the exclusive right to decide without outside interference. The state and national sovereignty are established on the shared time, on the common past, present and future, and on the shared space, a territory with borders and certain characteristics as a shared language and laws.

The myths of a classical sovereignty are based on imaginary, fictitious events and symbols from the distant past. On the contrary, the myths of European Union are based on real facts, common decisions and clear institutional processes. The EU already owns national symbols as the flag, anthem, Europe Day (9 May), registration plates, the euro as the official currency of 19 of the 28 member states, common borders, etc. Integration is also being introduced into school systems. (Similar integrative processes were carried out at the national level in the 19th century, while the continental empires disappeared in 1918.)

The weakness of supranational European sovereignty is also seen in the 'symbolic deficit' of the European institutions. The common European national feeling is still weaker than connections with proto-national cores, although the shared, integrated European sovereignty is the fact, and is a reality that Europeans have been living for decades ago. EU residents mostly remember the time spent in peace, the undisturbed continuity of prosperity (until the 2008 financial crisis), and the time spent within the integrated Europe without borders and other barriers.

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3.1.9. Common Sense

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The notion of common sense is central in a variety of populist discourses, especially in their socio-cultural dimensions. It is used to legitimize populist ideologies as expressions of ‘will of the people’, based on the people’s ‘common sense’. It is inscribed in the contemporary ‘post-truth moment’ as a sort of a populist epistemological narrative (Rosenfeld 2017). Such narrative is characterized by simplistic categorizations, anti-pluralism of ideas as well as frequent reference to conspiracy theories (idem).

The concept of common sense has been used in the past in philosophical approaches, particularly in the school of Scottish Enlightenment, namely, in the thought of Thomas Reid (1764). Reid understood common sense to be universal, shared among all human beings, who form intuitive judgements and beliefs on the basis of empirical generalizations (Nichols & Yaffe, 2016). Italian thinkers of 18th century also expressed a rather positive view on common sense, in particular Giambattista Vico, who saw it as a ‘rich array of shared beliefs and feelings’, as well as Vincenzo Cuoco, perceiving it as a ‘complex texture of ideas, beliefs and prejudices deeply embedded in the language and traditions of society’ (Snir, p. 270). Cuoco believed that a political movement can only be successful if it appeals to the common sense of the masses. This idea reverberated in the views of political thinker of the American Revolution, Thomas Paine. His pamphlet *Common Sense* (1776) advocated for the separation of the American colonies from Britain. *Common Sense* praises the virtues of the society that allows an expression of collective interests, as opposed to government that is ‘even in its best state (..) a necessary evil; in its worst state an intolerable one.’ (Paine qt in: Mark, 2019).

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In this context, common sense is understood as a collective wisdom and maturity of a society that rejects a colonial rule because it is able to govern itself. More generally, the reflection on common sense became part of the reflection on 'how to think' and largely epistemology and phenomenology (e.g. in Wittgenstein, Austin, Ryle – philosophy of 'ordinary language'; or Husserl and his followers' considerations on 'natural predispositions').

A rather positive valuation of common sense can also be found in more contemporary form in the writings of Benedetto Croce, as well as of Antonio Gramsci. While Croce believed that common sense is a set of views expressed by the 'ordinary folk' and as such, is a source and content of each philosophical idea, Gramsci saw it as a chaotic and contradictory aggregate of perceptions of the 'ordinary worker' (Patnaik, p. 4). In Gramsci's view, common sense can be a mix of both the popular worldview of the masses, and the critical, anti-hegemonic theoretical approaches. His logic is continued by Laclau and Mouffe, who understand the construction of a new common sense, based on the principles of equality and democratic autonomy, as a way to build a bridge between the unavoidable tensions between interests of different social groups (Snir).

The concept of common sense has also received quite a lot of attention in sociology and anthropology (Fischer, 1980; Bloch, 1985; Geertz, 1983; Schutz & Luckmann, 1973). Clifford Geertz contends that '[r]eligion rests its case on revelation, science on method, ideology on moral passion; but commons sense rests its case on the assertion that it is not a case at all, just life in a nutshell. The world is its authority' (1983: 75)' For Geertz, common sense is 'as much an interpretation of the immediacies of experience, a gloss on them, as are myths, painting, epistemology, or whatever, than it is, like them, historically constructed and, like them, subjected to historically defined standards of judgment' (1983: 76). The purported authenticity or immediacy of experience, positions the common sense in contrast to elaborate structures, such as codified systems of knowledge, religions, or ideologies (Kubik, 2013, p. 245). Indeed, Bloch sees it as a 'defensive mechanism against ideological imposition' (idem, p. 246), or a weapon of resistance. Common sense can also be seen as a constitutive element of vernacular knowledge, which is often characterized as practical, local, authentic, evolving, internal to a given culture, and usually in a weaker position of power (idem, p. 244). While modernity championed institutionalized and centralized education and saw reason and scientific knowledge as a path to human freedom and happiness, the postmodern era questioned this belief. In the move towards deconstruction of power discourses, institutionalized knowledge and education were criticized, and more attention was awarded to vernacular knowledge (especially in post-colonial studies). The post-modern pluralism and relativism, while crucial in a critical reexamination of social and cultural phenomena and in challenging homogenous and hegemonic narratives to include more diversity and representations of previously marginalized voices, led to an increased popularity of common sense. In the post-truth world, in which a multitude of views and opinions overshadows truth and reality, common sense emerges as a way to find simple, practical and intuitive interpretations.

The concept of common sense has been used time and again to legitimize the rejection of expert knowledge, for instance during the presidency of Ronald Reagan and his 'common sense solutions', and to give support to different leaders, claiming to act in the name of the will of the people. Sophia Rosenfeld finds that the concept of common sense is at the foundation of populist epistemology, that has 'a conspiracy theory at its base and a utopian solution as its thelos' (2017). Hence, populism depends on the idea of conspiracy of 'people' being robbed by '**elites**' (sometimes in alliance with various outgroups) out of something that they once had, or should have had, and out of all the benefits of living in a world that accorded with their collective common sense (Rosenfeld 2017). Thus, the aim of populists is to reject the world created by self-serving experts, corrupt **elites**, complex and multi-level systems, and through an act of restoration and exposure of such conspiracy, return to the utopian unspecified earlier moment, when the people and their common sense were rightly sovereign (idem). In this idealized vision, common expresses the will and intuition of the 'authentic', pure people, who see it as something homely, practical, instinctive and truthful (idem). Cas Mudde also points to this dimension of common sense, as populists' simple answers to complex problems. Common sense is often claimed by populists as a source for simple and honest solutions, as opposed to the elite's special interests. Consequently, '[a]nyone who opposes common sense is, by definition, devious and part of the corrupt elite' (Mudde, 2017, p. 53). Furthermore, argues Muddes, if 'the people' are seen as one, homogenous category, any kind of social group is irrelevant or artificial, and its claims would be considered as 'special interest', as opposed to the 'genuine' voice of the people, supposedly represented by populists (idem).

The concept of common sense accompanies several research agendas in POPREBEL, as it is related to **neo-traditionalism**, in its collectivist understanding of society, whose members share a certain worldview based on common sense rather than science and expert knowledge. It is also linked to various discourses pertaining to the relations between

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majority and minority, or ingroup and outgroup, as well as mechanisms of **Othering**. This concept will also be useful in research on **conspiracy theories**, **fake news** and various anti-scientific claims, often supported, if not circulated, by populist discourses.

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3.1.10. Common Good

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The common good is a wide and capacious concept, frequently used in philosophy, economics, ethics and political science. It refers to the interests that the members of the community have in common, as well as the facilities (institutional, material or cultural) that are provided through their collective action with the intention to serve these interests (Hussain 2018, Finnis 1980, Rawls 1971). Typical examples of the common good include the road system and mass-transit, public schools, cultural institutions and museums, as well as more abstract conceptions of public safety, public health, freedom of speech, civil liberties, or rule of law.

Founded on the principle of non-rivalry and non-excludability, the category of the common good is close to public good, in the capacity that they both refer to the facilities and intangible goods that are attainable and open to all community members. What distinguishes the concept of common good, however, is the principle behind it: the common good is rooted in the communitarian interest, i.e. it is a derivate of social relations. This makes the common good a very normative and inherently moral category, the one that points towards what should be achieved and should be cared for by the community members in the virtue of the fact that they engage in social relations, and not because such a commitment would benefit them individually.

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The foundational assumption behind the concept of common good resides in the belief that certain goods can only be achieved through collective action of the community members, bringing benefits to all of them. The common good stems, therefore, from the relational obligation that individuals have towards each other and towards their community. As such, it is closely bound to civic notions of citizenship, public service and political action.

The category of common good has a longstanding tradition in history of political philosophy, dating back to the writings of Plato and Aristotle. From Aristotle's concept of koinei sympheron (common interest), the idea of common good has become a recurring theme in political writings, manifesting itself in - to name a few - Saint Thomas Acquinas's bonum commune, Niccolo Machiavelli's bene commune and commune utilitá, David Hume's social convensions or Jean-Jacques Rousseau's le bien commun. Whilst those conceptions differed in what concerns the substance of the common good, they all expressed the same idea that the existence of certain institutions and facilities that serve the interest of all the members of the community is important for the wellbeing of the society, and thus should be the end goal of good politics.

From those historical accounts, two distinct lines of argumentation of how to define the common interest can be driven. The first, inspired by Aristotle, and continued by the theorist in the Catholic tradition, understand common interest through the prism of common activities in which the members of the society engage . The second, rooted in liberal tradition and influenced by: John Locke, Jean Jacques Rousseau and Adam Smith, among others, focuses on the obligation that individuals have to care for the common good, which in turn would allow them to enjoy the individual rights of private citizens. (Hussain 2018)

The liberal and communitarian traditions in which the idea of common good is rooted, have converted it into a versatile and comprehensive category; the one that has not lost its appeal in contemporary politics. While the definition of the common and the shared may be more difficult in increasingly pluralistic societies, the moral and self-explanatory character of the category of the common good has converted it in one of the key concepts used by present-day politicians. It is of particular appeal to populists, who have been making ample use of this concept. The reason for this is the self-justification inherently embedded in the notion of the common good, i.e. whatever is defined as 'the common good' naturally becomes a goal of politics that does not need to be otherwise justified, since the realization of common good is a morally self-explanatory concept. What used to be essentially a civic category, has been hijacked by populism, in order to make claims that do not require another rationalization. In the populist narrative, the common good is presented to serve the people, not the corrupt **elites**, who in that narrative, are driven by self-interest (the term contraposed to the common good). This significantly redefines the otherwise non-excludable concept into in fact excludable category - the one that serves only the needs of one group (the people and not the **elites**). At the same time, the populist narratives of common good often deprive it of its liberal overtones (such as individual right, rule of law, freedom of expression), sharpening the contrast between individual and collective, personal and common. Finally, populism also simplifies this category, disposing of complexities and interdependence of goals and meanings. There is just one dominant master narrative: one common good, that is comprehensible to **common sense** (Müller 2015). Among the popular themes used by populists are security, (defense of) the traditional, i.e. ‚our' way of life, 'regaining of' normality, national welfare.

It is precisely within the sphere of populist narratives of the common good and the processes of the redefinition of what constitutes its essence, that this category is going to be used in Poprebel WP3 tasks. The aim is to find empirical links between common good, **common sense** and the people, as used in contemporary populist discourses.

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3.2. Identity / Values

3.2.1 Nativism

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Nativism holds that primacy must be granted to the political rights, the economic needs and the cultural identity of the ethnic/native members of titular nations (Pappas, 2018). Schematically, nativism can be conceptualised as a sub-branch of ethno-nationalism with a more powerful stress on anti-immigration. Rhetorically, nativism manifests in an opposition to anything that is interpreted as an 'external threat' to the titular nation, whether it be people (on bio-political grounds), political groups or ideological currents (Mudde, 2007; Minkenberg, 2017). Pappas provides a qualitative and elaborate overview of nativism, as employed in the agendas of political parties, and its distinct features. The most topical ones for the purposes of this project and study can be categorised as follows: (a) the predominantly (conservative) right-wing ideological orientation of these parties; (b) their programmatic insistence on concrete 'right-wing packages' with an emphasis on anti-immigration; (c) varying shades of **Euroscepticism**, especially as far as opposition to free movement of people within the EU space is concerned (Pappas, 2018).

Providing separate definitions of nativism and xenophobia, Minkenberg (2017) clarifies that whereas xenophobia is a defensive reaction against specific ethno-cultural 'others', nativism is a more distinct and concrete trend that tends to oppose influences perceived as 'alien' altogether. Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017) outline the conceptualisation of the nation in PRR (populist and radical right-wing) discourses. According to the authors, these discourses comprehend the concept of 'the people' in essentialist, ethno-cultural terms. Thereby, it is the ethnic/native members of the titular nations that constitute 'the people' as the ultimate repository of political **sovereignty**. This means that in Western Europe, immigrants and their descendants, as well as refugees, may not be regarded as constituents of 'the people'; in Central and Eastern Europe this may also apply to national minorities with a longstanding presence in the region. One noteworthy ambiguity of the situationally adaptive PRR party-family revolves around the binary of 'integration vs repatriation'. More recently, this translates into the programmatic preference of certain cohorts within the West European PRR to integration or, on certain occasions, cultural assimilation disguised as integration.

Currently, the anti-immigration rhetoric of the PRR across Central and Eastern Europe often seems to sideline more 'traditional' areas of discord in domestic ethnopolitics (e.g. minority issues) (Kluknavská and Smolik, 2016; Kovarek, Rona, Hunyadi and Kreko, 2017). Wierenga (2017) and Petsinis (2019) depict radical right-wing nativism in Estonia and Latvia as being opposed to both immigration and 'Western-imposed' multiculturalism. Auers and Kasekamp (2013) note that the nativism of the domestic PRR has been primarily directed toward the Russophone populations in Estonia and Latvia. However, there has also been observed a relative shift in discourse in the past few years because narratives of 'endangered whiteness' have been incorporated into the PRR agendas in these two countries - following the 2015 migration crisis (Kott, 2017). In the case of the Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE), there has been some acceptance of Russophones inside the frame of the 'endangered whiteness' discourse and in light of a new 'other' in the form of refugees and other migrants.

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3.2.2. Ethno-nationalism

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Ethno-nationalism is embedded into the key concept of *ethnos* or *ethnie*. An *ethnie* can be defined as: 'a named human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historic memories and one or more common elements of culture, including an association with a homeland and some degree of solidarity, at least among some of its members' (Smith, 1999, p. 13). Through its association with ancestral myths and symbols, ethno-nationalism possesses a powerful socio-psychological component which is crucial for mass mobilisation (Connor, 1993; Billig, 1995). The ethno-nationalist approach tends to perceive *ethnos/ethnie* as a historically evolved and externally demarcated cultural community, and, only to a secondary extent, as a biological or political collectivity. Inside this mode of interpretation, the ethno-cultural community per se becomes the ultimate source of political mobilisation and **legitimacy** (Conversi, 1999).

The primary objective of ancestral myths is to generate an overriding commitment and bond for the group. The most powerful ancestral myths are those referring to the linear continuity of the group through the ages. These myths acquire a poetic and mystical dimension when associated with an ancestral or 'sacred territory' (e.g. Kosovo and its symbolism in Serbian nationalism) - hence the importance attached to 'sacred territories' in all types of nationalist imagery. 'Sacred territories' are endowed with a poetic dimension: these are the territories where the group flourished during its 'golden age' and which must be defended by all means and at all costs. All myths of group-descent have as a focal point of reference an older 'golden age' (e.g. Periclean Athens in Modern Greek nationalism), which serves, or must serve, as the model for the regeneration of the community.

Cultural-ideological myths of descent stress the persistence of certain types of collective virtue (e.g. the 'heroic spirit') or other distinct cultural qualities such as language, religion and customs through the ages. By locating the present (or, occasionally, the future) inside the context of the past of the group, ancestral myths interpret social changes and collective aspirations in a way that satisfies the drive for meaning, by making up new identities that also seem to be very old. Ancestral myths are espoused through state rituals even in states with a pronounced 'civic' character (e.g. United Kingdom and the United States) or, nominally, Communist states (e.g. China) (Mach, 1989; Smolicz, 1998). Their mobilising potential revolves around the very fact that they pertain to the non-rational domain of the 'nation'. Ancestral myths endow the nation with a near universality through the employment of selected images and phrases (e.g. home, forefathers, brothers and mother) that aim at forging a subconscious bond of integrity among its members. This is of vital importance for political mobilisation because, as Walker Connor phrases it, 'people do not voluntarily die for things that are rational' (Connor, 1993, p. 206).

As part of this process the political engineering by parties and/or other organisations which claim to speak in the name of an *ethnie* is of paramount significance. Within certain contexts, the mobilising potential of ethno-nationalism can become subject to regional geopolitics and the triadic intersection among ethnic minorities, the state where they reside, and the kin-state (or 'external homeland') of the minority group (e.g. the case of the ethnic Hungarian

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minorities in Romania and Slovakia as well as the conflicts throughout the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s) (Brubaker, 1995; Smith, 2002).

Ethno-nationalism is highly topical for the study of the populist and radical right because, alongside populism and anti-establishment rhetoric, the host ideology of this party-family is **nativism** in addition to ethno-nationalism (Rydgren, 2017). This concept acquires a greater significance when viewed inside the context of the Baltic States where independent statehood has been largely interpreted within the frames of 'restoration' and 'decolonisation' nationalism (Annus, 2012; Peiker, 2016) and the model of 'ethnic democracy' (Smooha, 2001) has been implemented with the objective to manage the relations between the titular (national) majorities and the ethnic Russian minorities - namely, the cases of Estonia and Latvia. Wierenga (2017) and Braghiroli & Petsinis (2019) have observed that immigration and the variable of a new, ethnic 'other' potentially challenges the dynamic of how ethnic Russians are considered by Estonian and Latvian ethno-nationalists. However, the politicisation of the ethno-cultural divide, in combination with an emphasis on the securitization of the bilateral relations between Estonia/Latvia and Russia, remains highly relevant for the Baltic populist and radical right,s especially in Latvia.

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3.2.3. Mental (Ontological) Security

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This concept is based on the assumption that it is essential for all people to live in the world which they understand, which makes sense to them. Their culture provides them with instruments to describe, classify, systematise their world (natural, supernatural, social, cultural), so that they may live in the meaningful environment. This gives people a sense of security – mental security, the comfort of living in a world that is understood and makes sense. As Anthony Giddens (1991) points out, the alternative to everyday normality of our experience and existence is chaos, which causes a deep sense of insecurity. Ontological security is 'security of being', a sense of order and continuity, a biographical continuity and wholeness that is supported and recognised in and through their relations with others (Kinnvall, Mitzen, 2016). Such a sense of security is thus a key component of a person's identity, feeling that the world is meaningful and coherent, and 'I' have a secure place in it. I feel secure because the world produces narratives that I understand. It may be worth mentioning that ontological security is also discussed in reference not only to individuals but also to communities, including the EU (Della Salla, 2018; Steele, 2008). Steele also suggests that one of the results of ontological insecurity is shame. This is important, as shame may be experienced by individuals but also by communities which would take various measures to reduce it.

Rapid and radical change, such as migration, political transformation, change of the economic environment disturbs stability of the (natural, social and cultural) environment and deprives people of the sense of being part of a stable, meaningful world – this causes frustration, fear, and anxiety, and may lead to violence. To reduce these negative experiences, people tend to search for a chance to re-create the sense of security and stability (Bauman, 2006). They may do it individually or collectively, through their own autonomy and independence, forward-looking activity, entrepreneurial actions, but they may also escape behind secure boundaries of tradition, which give them simple and definite answers to all questions. The experience of social, cultural, political and economic transformation in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe provides us with a lot of empirical cases to study reactions to the loss of ontological security, and to the burden of choice, which is inseparably linked to responsibility. There may be many reasons why some people find it difficult to restore the sense of ontological, mental security through their own actions or in partnership with others. Much seems to depend here on subjective self-perception as well as 'objective' external conditions. Old age, unemployment, low education inadequate to the changed requirements of the labour market, a dogmatic approach to the world which may be linked to **traditional religiosity** – these and other factors seem likely to produce a passive reaction to the loss of security, an inability to cope with it individually and constructively, to take the future in one's own hands and to assume responsibility. Escape to tradition may be a solution. In such a situation, people may also choose to follow a strong leader, who guarantees security and who releases them from the need to make difficult decisions. Authoritarian and populist political parties take advantage of it and supply a political offer to such a demand.

In the POPREBEL project the link between ontological security and populism will be explored. The hypothesis here is that significant segments of Central and Eastern European societies, people who are, or consider themselves to be, losers of the post-1989 transformations, and who therefore suffer from the loss of ontological security are searching for ways in which security would be restored, and opt form authoritarian, strong political leadership, as well as hide from the changing world and the need to make difficult choices and bear responsibility behind secure borders of tradition, including religious fundamentalism and ethnic nationalism.

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3.2.4. Traditional Religiosity

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Traditional religiosity is the ideal type of religiosity, which continues the known and culturally sacred ways of life and perception of values. Characteristics of traditional religiosity embrace typical convictions and social practices referring to religion in a certain social world, which assures and demonstrate collective identity. Traditional religiosity is focused on these religious meanings and practices which are socially perceived as a continuation of tradition and representing the prestige and authority of the religious culture and its institutional framework, for example, national church.

Religiosity in a complex social phenomenon that encompasses individual and collective views and beliefs related to religion and the attitude and behaviour associated with it. The most popular way of scholarly description of religiosity focus on various dimensions of religiosity such as belief and experience, religious knowledge, religious rituals and practice, participation and belonging, as well as an individual and social consequence of the former (see Glock, Stark 1969, Loek et all. 2011). Religiosity may be observed through the lenses of declarations of individual religiosity, shared convictions, as well as through certain activities of *The Religious*. Therefore, religiosity may reflect not only the realm of religious life and religious communities (churches, religious rituals, festivals) but also shed light on the cultural meanings and values in broader contexts (social roles, values choices and preferences, collective identity representations).

In last decades scholarship on religion shows transformations of religiosity towards individualisation and hybridisation (Turner S.B. (ed.) 2016). Religiosity has been found declining in terms of institutional and collective practices (believing without belonging), however, it is vital in new forms of spirituality (detached from institutions), the social imagination of own culture and civilisation and popular beliefs about social and cultural differences and borders (Ammerman 2014, Schewel and Wilson (ed.) 2019). Religiously motivated beliefs or customs often turn out to be fundamental to determining the sense of community ('we'- sense) and social integration in the modern world (Dawson (ed.) 2016). As cultural and social phenomenon its manifestations may refer to general perceptions of sense of life, social order or meaning of values (concepts of „horizon of values' (Berger) or „invisible religion' Luckmann). It may also function as 'lived religion' (McGuire 2008, Ammerman 2014) which reveals in everyday understanding and following socio-cultural tradition (see: Tradition Glossary).

Studies on populism demonstrate that political actors and movements often refer to values anchored in religion, use religious language, symbols and claim to represent them (Possamai 2015, DeHanas, Shterin 2018, Arato 2019). Traditional religiosity is found in studies of populism as part of populistic strategies. In this interpretation 'populists hijack religion' and public actors recall religion pragmatically. (Marzouki, McDonnell, Roy (eds.) 2016). The scholarship on populism demonstrate also that religiosity is 'used to exclude' (Van Kessel 2016) and populistic rulers are 'co-opting religion' to 'sacralise the majority' (Yabanci, Taleski 2018). It is generally noticed that 'populists thorough Europe are unified in their rejection of Islam and Islamisation (Roy 2016, Wagenvoorde 2019). According to Wagenvoorde religion becomes 'the populistic self-conception', although 'level of religiosity that European populists assign to themselves and the people are somewhat fluid'(Wagenvoorde 2019:121).

According to research based on World Values Surveys about the assessment of democracy conducted by Norris and Inglehart (2004, 2018), religiosity is related to existential insecurity. This link was also shown by the thesis of „religious revival' in post-communist countries in the 90. (Borowik 2009), where sudden religiosity rise at the beginning of transformation was anchored in the shared experiences and quickly channelled by national or majority religious institutions (Curanovic 2013, Zrinscak 2014). Traditional or radical religiosity expressed in the 'return to sources' philosophy is associated with social perceptions of marginalisation and endanger to culture and lifestyle, which is present is studies of fundamentalism (Tibi 2001, Bruce 2008) and populism (Schnabel, Hjerm 2014, Laniel 2016).

Scholarship on religion shows also the importance of the public 'return' of faith, called also 're-publicisation' (Herbert, Fras 2009), which is linked both to globalization, economic crisis and politics of representation in term of democratic procedures and social perceptions of being represented (Davie, Wilson 2019). In this context, it is also important to notice that religious views are represented currently by 'myriad of non-state actors, including faith-based entities'

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(called FGOs) ‘which like their secular counterparts also seek to influence policy’ (Haynes 2019:107). These voices represent on the public stage and in media opinions and demands which refer to various aspects of social life and link it to processes and ideas which, in their view, undermine their tradition and identity. (Molle 2019)

For these reasons, traditional religiosity – in various forms it may take - play a role in democratic representation both in the political and social context, however, its influence is highly contextual. It is proofed that private, individual religiosity may correlate with political views and traditional religiosity may be an important symbolic and cultural basis in populistic narratives, campaigns, argumentations. (Pally 2020, Turska-Kawa 2019). As religion makes sense of cultural and social changes it roots the meaning of current situations and actions taken in a broader and meaningful symbolic context. The populists selectively use these meanings and practices. The practices of faith are treated as ancestral heritage, the core of a common culture, identity and a unique deposit for the future.

To describe the traditional religiosity it is essential to observe the case sensitive historical and cultural contexts of what is traditional religiosity in a certain society and populistic uses of this type of religious practice, value choices and social manifestations.

Traditional religiosity is manifested by the following factors.

- Cultural-religious reading of values (whether pride or **common good** is derived from religion)
- Religion is acknowledged as part of collective auto-identification (for example We are Christians)
- Religious language and custom as shared symbolic culture (typical rituals, community expressions, everyday culture)
- Religion as vital in boundaries narrations (we vs. them; ethnic, national identity)
- Religion as common socialization, present in individual and collective public life
- Religious tradition represented by institutionalised actors (with the authority of religious representatives) as well by non-state actors (representing topics and cases with link to religious identity).

The concept of traditional religiosity will be used in particular when studying the nexus between **neo-traditionalism** and religiosity in the context of Poland. The relations between the Catholic Church and the state in Poland are examined as part of POPREBEL research and particular emphasis is put on mutual processes of legalizing power. The focus on religiosity should help to understand more general visions of social world which are transferred and disseminated with the consent of populism. Especially the connections with **neo-traditionalism**, the popular faith in **common sense**, and various aspects of normative systems are being studied with questions regarding: role(s) of mythology in constructing collective identities; sorrow and hope as drivers for community making; the flow of everyday life and empowerment of the Ordinary as functional reference frameworks for **the People** as well as individuals. In order to cover these areas of interest the following objects are analysed: local devotion community; a network of radical catholic radio listeners; shrines of the Nation with their altars and the public discourse with its official messages as well as some forms of backlash against religion-centred acts of symbolic violence.

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3.2.5. Hegemonic Masculinity

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The concept of hegemonic masculinity, developed by Raewyn Connell, represents a male gender role that occupies the hegemonic position within a particular gender order the content of which changes in relation to the specific socio-cultural framework and to the time in which it is formulated. It is a specific configuration of gender practice, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women and thereby legitimises patriarchy (Connell, 1995, p. 77).

Hegemonic masculinity can be distinguished from other masculinities, especially those which are subordinated. It is important to emphasise that the concept of hegemonic masculinity is not assumed to represent the norm in the statistical sense, because only a minority of men might identify with or perform it. Rather, it is a normative notion. It embodies the currently most privileged form of masculinity, requiring other men to position themselves in relation to it and ideologically legitimating the global gender order that is based on the subordination of women to men. Hegemonic masculinity is not a fixed character type, always and everywhere the same. It is rather a position that is constantly endangered. According to Connell's research different masculinities are differentiated from one another in relation to the discourse which determines them and in relation to the discourses which they themselves constitute. In other words, different social contexts support the creation and promotion of different types of hegemonic masculinities. Depending on the actual/current social context, certain patterns of values and ensuing types of masculinities will impose themselves as hegemonic. Hegemony does not mean violence, although it could be supported by force; it means dominance achieved through culture, institutions, and persuasion.

In POPREBEL project the main research focus will, on the one hand, be on the different gender identities that are constructed within Serbian society and particular subcultural circles in it and, on the other, their relation to constructs of hegemonic masculinity and its counterpart notion of emphasised femininity frequently used in populist political discourses.

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3.2.6. Homonationalism

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Coined by Jasbir Puar (2007), homonationalism is the nationalist co-optation of sexual diversity. In this sense, it can refer to a number of related but distinct phenomena. Firstly, at the level of international politics, it highlights how 'lesbian and gay liberal rights discourses produce narratives of progress and modernity', creating moral hierarchies vis-à-vis national, racial and religious Others and justifying policy action against them (Puar, 2013: 25). In the 2016 US presidential campaigns both candidates used the terrorist attack against the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida, to justify military intervention in the Middle East and to restrict migration from Muslim-majority countries, despite the fact that the shooter was US-born (Meyer, 2019). With reference to the POPREBEL project, Western criticism of attacks on LGBT rights in the post-communist region is often critiqued as being homonationalist – both by East European governments and activists across Europe (Ammaturo, 2015).

At the level of the state, homonationalism constitutes 'a critique of how lesbian and gay liberal rights discourses produce narratives of progress and modernity that continue to accord some populations access to cultural and legal forms of citizenship at the expense of the partial and full expulsion from those rights of other populations' (Puar, 2013, p. 25). For example, queer critics of marriage equality have argued that same-sex marriage privileges a particular type of same-sex relationship, one that most closely resembles the heteronormative ideal of a monogamous couple, thereby creating a moral and legal hierarchy between the latter and, for example, polyamorous partnerships. → See also **homonormativity**.

Finally, at the level of the individual or group, it can be understood as the 'embracing of nationalist and often xenophobic and imperialist interests' by LGBT communities (Puar, 2013, p. 24). An increasing number of LGBT individuals in Europe are voting for far-right parties on the grounds that the latter are most likely to curb the influence of Islam, which is constructed as the greatest threat to LGBT rights (Mahdawi, 2017).

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3.3. Discourses of Othering

3.3.1. Othering

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Othering is a term denoting various processes of constructing difference between the Other and the defining subject. One of the key functions of this term is to provide a way of structuring difference by categorising it using the dichotomy of 'self' and 'other' or 'us' and 'them'. It is also understood here as a way of narrating social phenomena in exclusivist categories based on difference.

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The concept of Othering is used in a variety of disciplines: philosophy, psychoanalysis, post-colonial studies, gender studies and, more recently, in studies of the far-right and populist discourses. The term 'other' (written either with small 'o' or capital 'O') is derived from Jacques Lacan's writings, in which he emphasised the way in which the notion of the other is crucial in the construction of the self. Lacan likens the 'other' to the mirror reflection of the self, and the 'Other' – with a capital 'O' – to the symbolic, meaningful construct that provides the subject with identity (1966). Going beyond the individual level, on a cultural level, the encounter between the Self and the Other is a key challenge to Western philosophy and a question of ethics, according to Emmanuel Levinas (1961), and a defining process of creating meaning in the process of social interaction (as in George Herbert Mead's concept of symbolic interactionism, 1934). Zygmunt Bauman, in his analysis of the contemporary modern or postmodern condition, also defined this dichotomy as central to the contemporary processes of identity construction (2004).

Nevertheless, the relationship between Self and Other is often uneven, marked by tensions which became the focus of academic interest, whether in the context of hegemonies, hierarchies and power/knowledge structures (Foucault), gender (Beauvoir, 1949; Butler, 1990), race (bell hooks, 1992), or in the context of colonial and postcolonial relations. Postcolonial studies, in particular, critically investigate the binary divisions between the 'known' and the 'foreign', the 'coloniser' and 'the colonised' and the 'Self' and the 'Other' (Fabian, 2002; Said, 1978; Spivak, 1987; Ashcroft et al., 2000). In such dualistic constructions, it is the dominant discourse that defines who and what can be considered as Other and what are the Other's characteristics. Difference in such a relationship of power acquires a negative connotation. The Other becomes a passive subject that can only be defined and described, represented (or rather misrepresented) in a simplified and homogenised manner. Othering may thus be understood not only as a necessary element of identity construction, setting borders between 'us' and 'them', but also as a tool of discourse of domination, subordination, estrangement, stereotyping or fetishisation. Furthermore, the function of the process of Othering is the confirmation and delineation of the Self.

The concept of Othering is applied in the study of populist narratives (and, in particular, right-wing populist discourses), due to the fact that use of Othering is a useful tool to evoke fear, polarise, scapegoat or divert attention. Populist Othering can be linked with xenophobia, Islamophobia, anti-migrant discourses, ethnic, religious and cultural prejudices, but also **homophobia**, gender biases and anti-feminism. Various studies describe the different facets of how the image of a threatening Other is used in political and social discourses (Bunzl, 2007; Betz 2003, 2007, 2013; Reisigl and Wodak, 2001; Wodak, 2015; Lazaridis & Campani, eds. 2016, 2017; Kajta 2017; Krzyżanowski 2018; Kallis 2008; Taras 2009).

In the POPREBEL project, the notion of Othering will be used in two main ways. Firstly, as in existing literature linking Othering and populism, to denote a plethora of representations of the ideological 'enemy', constructed on the basis of various forms of cultural Otherness. However, these representations of Others may not always be constructed on the stereotypical categories of ethnic, religious or sexual difference but may also have their source in political or ideological differences (e.g. in Polish right-wing discourses, vegetarians or environmentalists could be considered as ideological 'enemies'). Secondly, the concept of Othering will be used to describe the way in which Europe – and the European Union – is presented in populist discourses of the CEE region. The strategies of distancing, delegitimisation, estrangement as well as denying rationality are part of a gradual shift in a distorted relation between Self-Other, as a result of which Europe starts to be positioned as the external, culturally foreign Other.

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3.3.2. Gender Ideology

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Initially used by Gender Studies scholars to describe the structures of power based on traditional gender norms which define appropriate forms of masculinity and femininity to condition and constrain the behaviour of men and women (see Durest-Lahti, 2008), 'gender ideology' has since been taken up by activists against the very same Gender Studies scholars to refer to any attempts to define sexuality and gender outside the narrow confines of **heteronormativity**. The re-appropriation of 'gender ideology' emerged as a result of the Vatican's opposition to the recognition of sexual and reproductive rights discussed at the 1994 United Nations conference on population and development in Cairo and the 1995 Beijing conference on women. The Vatican feared that these rights 'would become a vehicle for the international recognition of abortion, attacks on traditional motherhood and a legitimisation of homosexuality' (Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017, p. 9). Despite its Catholic provenance, anti-gender-ideology rhetoric has spread to encompass both the religious and secular, with anti-gender activists coming from both the right and left, united only by their opposition to what they see as attacks on traditional family values. As Kuhar and Paternotte (2017) explain, 'gender ideology' is an empty signifier, which taps into various fears and anxieties and can thus be shaped to fit a range of political projects.

While anti-gender-ideology activists are found across the political spectrum, in Central and Eastern Europe opposition to 'gender ideology' is most closely associated with right-wing populists. As support for the concept of 'gender' (in its original academic definition) and for recognition of sexual and reproductive rights comes primarily from international organisations such as the United Nations, it is easy for populists to construct an 'us' versus 'them' dichotomy, whereby

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international **elites** are forcing their corrupt ideas about 'gender' on the powerless national communities below. To emphasise the alien-ness of 'gender', it is rarely translated into local languages but usually left in English.

When instrumentalised by populist governments, as is the case in Poland and Russia, for example, 'gender ideology' is an effective means to consolidate state power by entrenching traditional values in the face of the spread of Western liberal ideas, thereby delegitimising actual and potential opponents and shoring up support among the conservative majority. In addition, scapegoating sexual minorities allows populist politicians to use homosexuality as a lightning rod to divert attention from political corruption and/or the weakening economy.

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3.3.3. Gender Regime

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A gender regime represents the totality of the structural relations between men and women, masculinity and femininity, in a specific institutional and/or subcultural context, on the level of both discourse and practice. It thereby defines the social position and obligations of an individual based on her/his belonging to particular gender group and on the content of the gender role. This structuration is externalised in different gender roles, different gender identities and different gender representations (including different gender performances) (Blagojevic, 2002, p. 17).

Gender relations are present in all types of structures of human relations and 'the state of play' of these relations in particular social context represents the latter's gender regime (Connell, 1987, p. 120). The relations between different gender regimes make the gender order. In some cases, these relations are additional or complementary[2] but the gender regimes of interacting institutions/social contexts are rarely so harmonious (Connell, 1987, pp. 134-135).[3]

The concept of gender regime is created in accordance with the acknowledgement of the asymmetrical position of masculinities and femininities in a patriarchal gender order, and the idea of gender as a relational concept. Research to date shows that women are central in many of the processes constructing masculinities, for example as: mothers, schoolmates, girlfriends, sexual partners, wives, workers in the gender division of labour, etc. The same is true the other way around. But it is important to stress that in spite of the fact that both concepts of emphasised femininity and **hegemonic masculinity** were originally focused on compliance with patriarchy, and this is still highly relevant in contemporary mass culture, for example, contemporary gender hierarchies are also affected by new configurations of women's and men's identities and practices, especially among younger women and men. These alternative identities create multiple practices of masculinity and femininity that reshape the coordinates of contemporary gender regimes that could, through the historical interplay of multiple constructs of femininities and masculinities, influence the future redesign of the global (albeit still predominantly patriarchal) gender order.

[2] As in the case of patterns of recruitment of married women for part-time jobs, particularly as this developed in the 1970s and 1980s, in the economic context of the recession. This case represents a practical accommodation between the institutions involved, as mentioned by Connell.

[3] For example, the conflict between the emotional relationships of the family and the demands of a state at war.

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The aim of the POPREBEL project is to analyse the shifts in the existing subcultural gender regimes and gender order that are the result of the populist political discourses and actions in concrete historical and societal circumstances.

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3.3.4. Homophobia

Richard Mole, University College London

Homophobia can be defined as the 'irrational fear or intolerance of homosexuality or homosexual persons' (Herek, 1986, p. 563). However, this definition is controversial. It is often criticised by same-sex activists in that it psychologises prejudice against homosexual people in the sense that 'an irrational fear' is not the fault of the person exhibiting the phobic reaction. While phobias are individual phenomena, homophobia can be promoted by groups and governments. For this reason, same-sex activists often prefer the terms 'prejudice' or 'intolerance'. Homophobia is frequently justified with reference to religion and nationalism.

Throughout the centuries, the words of St Paul (Romans I: 26–8) have been used to condemn same-sex practices. In general, social science research confirms that strength of religious belief is a strong predictor of negative attitudes to homosexuality, explained with reference to (i) conservatism, i.e. there is a strong correlation between **religiosity** and conservatism and between conservatism and homophobia, or (ii) irrationality, i.e. homophobia is an irrational thought process and Christians are more likely to believe what others would consider irrational. Even in nations with low levels of **religiosity**, negative attitudes towards homosexuality can be conditioned by discourses of religion in identity narratives, constructed as a norm to legitimise a particular understanding of national community.

Prejudice towards non-normative sexualities is also frequently justified with reference to nationalism. Outside of academia nations are understood to be natural phenomena, growing out of extended kin groups, united by shared biology, culture, history, norms and values, stretching back centuries if not millennia. To ensure the nation maintains its internal homogeneity and clear demarcation from the Other, nationalists put considerable effort into promoting its biological and cultural reproduction, a process that can be ensured only by naturalising the patriarchal family and associated public and private roles of men and women. Individuals performing non-normative sexualities 'are thought to threaten this national narrative by undermining the patriarchal family, failing to adhere to national stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, confusing the public/private roles of men and women, undermining the nation's internal homogeneity and deviating from its shared norms, especially those derived from religious teaching' (Mole, 2016, p. 109-110).

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3.3.5. Heteronormativity / Homonormativity

Richard Mole, University College London

Coined by Michael Warner in 1991, heteronormativity is the belief that heterosexuality, based on biological essentialism and the alignment of binary sex and gender, is the only acceptable sexual orientation. So pervasive that it is effectively invisible, heteronormativity operates as a structure of power in that, by defining heterosexuality as the norm against which other sexual orientations are judged, it creates hierarchies between 'good' and 'bad' sexualities, gender identities and sexual behaviours and legitimises discrimination and, in extreme cases, violence against those who act outside of the heterosexual norm.

Related to **homonationalism**, homonormativity is the belief that only specific types of non-normative sexual and gender subjectivities – predominantly, white, middle-class, straight-acting and cis-gendered – are acceptable, not only to the heterosexual majority but also within the LGBT community. Linking homonormativity to neoliberalism, Lisa Duggan defines it as a 'politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions but upholds and sustains them while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption' (2002, p. 179). Homonormativity can thus often result in prejudice within the LGBT community towards effeminate men, trans* men and women and LGBT people of colour, among others.

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3.3.6. Cultural Marxism

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Cultural Marxism traces its ideological origins in the thought of the Frankfurt School and Antonio Gramsci (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1951; Forgacs, 2000). From a theoretical angle, Cultural Marxism, especially as epitomised by the Frankfurt School, can be schematically conceptualised as an ideological current which combines selected elements from the thought of Karl Marx, Immanuel Kant, Georg Hegel, Sigmund Freud and Max Weber (Held, 1980). As part of the endeavour to fill in certain omissions of 19th-century classical Marxism, the Frankfurt School further added a considerable stress on the methodological approaches applied by currents such as existentialism and psychoanalysis (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2009).

Alongside class hierarchy, Cultural Marxism places equal emphasis on complementary power structures, such as gender, sexuality and race/ethnicity. In greater detail, without understating the centrality of class struggle, the representatives of this ideological current contend that the struggle for class equality must coincide, as a historical process, with the materialisation of gender equality and the combat against the stigmatisation of marginalised groups within society. Especially the latter objective emerged as an urgent necessity following the rise of Fascism and Nazism, during the interwar era, and the historical experience of the Holocaust during the Second World War (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1951). For the purposes of this entry, the lens is primarily cast on the systematic recasting and/or misinterpretation of Cultural Marxism in the discourses of the **populist and radical right (PRR)** – namely, the endeavour to portray thematic areas such as feminism, the international LGBTQI rights movement as well as the implementation of multicultural policies as tangible manifestations of a 'global project' built upon the ideological premises of Cultural Marxism.

Cas Mudde (2018) addresses a crucial aspect in the literature as to what motivates voters to opt for PRR parties – namely, the part played by economic anxieties. He contends that voters of PRR parties show their support at the ballot box in response to neoliberal globalisation (Mudde, 2019). This target group is also known as the 'losers of globalization', or the losers in economic modernisation theory (Betz, 1994; Mudde, 2019). In Central and Eastern Europe, a similar concept exists and is known as the 'losers of the transition', which produced both winners and losers of the transition process after the collapse of state Socialism (Mudde, 2007; Minkenberg, 2015 and 2017). Within both contexts, this can be expanded to a mutual sentiment of alienation from the **elites**, one which is widely known as a protest vote (Eatwell, 2000)

Yet, Ignazi (1992) made an early claim that, in addition to socioeconomic anxieties, the then 'new' PRR parties represented an embodiment of a silent and global counter-revolution against post-materialism and the New Left (Ignazi, 1992; Arzheimer, 2018). Amidst the context of the economic and migration crises, the current political climate in Europe (and beyond) hints at the persistence of ideological cleavages. The PRR has responded to and also driven these cleavages and so has the New Left. The latter has championed political positions which concentrate on socioeconomic issues and, at the same time, promote sociocultural equality (Bornschier, 2018). Bornschier, (2018) and also emphasise the non-economic cleavages which the PRR has addressed. This includes the systematic recasting and misinterpretation of Cultural Marxism which is employed as a catchphrase by the PRR, as well as the far-right non-party sector, to encompass all stances perceived as liberal or left-wing on debates of a sociocultural character (e.g. minority and LGBTQ rights as well as multiculturalism – broadly defined).

In line with Mudde (2007 and 2019), **nativism**, which is the host ideology of the PRR party-family, maintains that any non-native or 'alien' elements are potentially detrimental to the integrity of the titular nation. **Nativism** addresses ideological currents, as well as groups of people (on bio-political grounds) and individuals. If populism, **nativism** and authoritarianism make up the ideological cornerstone of the PRR party family, Cultural Marxism is the polar opposite. This renders opposition to 'Cultural Marxism' a key-theme for the PRR's alleged rebellion against modernity and/or the acculturation project, which is allegedly sponsored by the 'global elite' (e.g. in the educational system(s) and the media).

Although opposition to socially liberal (or left-wing) stances, such as same-sex partnerships or the enhanced role of women in politics and society, forms a commonplace theme, the **radical right** can also be situationally adaptive (Arzheimer, 2018). There have been examples of PRR parties being led by openly gay party-leaders or chairs, who claim to defend European secular values against Islam by arguing that the two are non-compatible. However, such instances are largely confined to PRR parties in Western Europe (e.g. the cases of the Netherlands and Denmark). The perceived

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threat of Cultural Marxism is a key-theme, named verbatim, in the text of the *Bauska Declaration* (signed jointly by the Estonian Conservative People's Party, Latvia's National Alliance, and their Lithuanian partners in 2013).

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3.3.7. Victimisation

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Victimisation is a term that has been used to describe the processes of discrimination, exclusion and humiliation of certain groups or individuals - in a narrow sense by lawyers and crime-prevention services, and in a broader sense by scholars of human rights and social sciences. It is often discussed as being motivated by gender or race and/or directed towards specific ethnic groups or minorities (Elias, 1986, Björgoand Witte, 1993, Winterdyk & Antonopoulos, 2008). Here, the term 'victimisation' is used to a large extent as a metaphor for 'oppression', understood in a larger, social, political and historical sense. As such, the discourse of victimisation may be part of the discursive narratives on national identity (Wodak et al., 2009), which aim at presenting the nation as an innocent victim of foreign powers or internal enemies. In populist discourses, victimisation is used liberally to denote the groups that have been oppressed – **the people**, the nation, the citizens – by either global powers, rival nations, historical enemies but also ideological foes (Lazaridis, 2016). A typical strategy in this process is what Ruth Wodak called 'turning tables' (1991) – those accused of violence or oppression present themselves as innocent victims. Victimisation may be a part of the process of imagining communities (Anderson, 1983), where a solid construct of the nation (or other group) is constituted in order to create relevant frameworks for social cohesion based on shared collective definition.

In populist discourses, narrating nations as victims of external powers may be regarded as an exemplification of a strategy used in propaganda (and any political P.R.) where – in the general vision of social world – certain groups are seen as homogenised and not diverse. As a result of such simplification, the storytelling about homogenous groups of victims and/or perpetrators (in populist's discourses perpetrators are not always strictly defined as creating the mere image, feeling and sense of being threatened and/or harmed may be more important for populists) becomes a way of

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constructing political **legitimacy**, which may also be supported with the elements or fragments of mythological narratives (especially within the processes of national identity building) and imagined threats to the whole normative system. Presenting a nation (or other group) as a collective victim supports the notion of homogenised 'people', who provide **legitimacy** to power. At the same time, victimisation supports the strengthening of images of heroes and heroism, accurately invented and tailored to fit the needs of current communication processes: mythology provides effective framework for the promotion of values defended and popularised in populist ideologies.

In structural anthropology the figure of victim is associated with the one of sacrifice (Leach, 1972). When monolithic constructs of nations are represented by martyrs, sacrifice may be seen as an added value to the narratives standing behind the nations and justify their collective efforts in completing vital tasks (for instance, in the Polish context, Poland presents itself as constantly saving Europe from evil). A figure of treason often accompanies victimisation emphasising good intentions and the **legitimacy** of power (for instance, Hungary betrayed in Trianon but allegedly aspiring to rule over Great Hungary).

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3.4. Strategies, tools and communication of ideas

3.4.1. Politics of memory

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The politics of memory (PoM) means 'a set of cultural and institutional practices [which] are designed to publicly commemorate and/or remember a single event, a relatively clearly delineated and interrelated set of events, or a distinguishable past process' (Bernhard & Kubik, 2014, p. 14). Their 'formulation and propagation involve the intensive participation of state institutions and/or political society' (Ibid, 16). And, as such, the objective of the PoM is the creation of a certain vision of the past which is wanted, expected and reached by social actors who usually have access to financial, organisational, administrative and/or bureaucratic means (Kowalski, Törnquist-Plewa, 2016, p. 17; see also Leggewie, Meyer, 2005, p. 5). In more general terms the PoM engages regulations of collective memory through public practices and norms and in consequence can also be defined as 'strategies the political actors employ to make others remember in certain specific ways and the effects of such mnemonic manipulations' (Bernhard & Kubik, 2014, p. 7, see as well Miller, 2010, p. 10; Sierp, 2014, pp. 18−19; Nijakowski, 2008, pp. 41–47).

The objective of varied forms of the PoM is to establish a socially shared representation of the past which stays in relation to collective identity/s. In concrete memorial practices social actors attempt to shape the collective memory as it has 'the capacity to unite a social group and become an effective marker of social differentiation' (Kowalski, Törnquist-Plewa, 2016, p. 17; see also: Olick, 2008, p. 159). The importance of collective memory also comes from the fact that it can contribute to the cohesiveness of a group. In other words, the PoM plays a role in the process of identity formation and anchors groups in a clearly demarcated past to which these groups feel the righteous and unique heirs. As a consequence of these actions, the past is comprehensible and socially shared, linked to the present, value laden and inscribed into the public space (Dicks, 2003).

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Although the PoM expresses a will to invent and finally control a socially shared representation of the past, its final product is never equally shared by all the members of a group (Olick, 2008, p. 159). In consequence, the constructed image of the past does not only unite groups but can lead as well to the fight for recognition of their own interpretations of the past. It happens as the PoM constantly balances between the remembrance and oblivion of the past (see: Ricoeur, 2004) and raises questions upon what, why, where and by whom it should be remembered.

It is important to separate the state politics of memory from its other types. In this respect, the state politics of memory takes the form of dominant practices dealing with the past, i.e. 'public commemoration rituals, constitution of museums, memorials and spaces for remembrance' (Rufer, 2012). On the other side, there exists a plethora of social actors who 'strive for the recognition and visibility of collective processes of underground remembrance, rarely perceived in the organic agenda of the state or the academy' (Rufer, 2012). This is how 'the political in memory' destabilises the state politics of memory by being 'a resistive force up against the stabilizing impulse of politics' (Rufer, 2012; for the distinction between 'the politics of memory' and 'the political in memory' see as De la Peza and Rufer, 2009). In other words, the multifaceted character of the PoM gives rise to the tension between the state/official/majority PoM (top-down processes), and its civic/unofficial/minority equivalent (bottom-up processes).

As a social practice the politics of memory has a discursive character and embraces the ways in which mnemonic actors invent/shape 'our' representation of the past. It is a process which identifies, classifies, legitimises and manages the past considered as 'ours'. By its nature this process is political (since it is connected with power and control over the past), selective and partial (as based on choice) and contested (as raising protests and controversies) (Smith 2006, p. 11). In general terms, one might say that although the PoM concerns the past, its aim is not only to define who 'we' are in the present, but rather to articulate who 'we' ought to be now and in the future.

For the needs of the POPREBEL project the concept of politics of memory has a crucial role as it enables to grasp, comprehend and describe memorial practices (and their discursive character) of different social actors operating in post-communist countries which have seen the rise of populism during the second decade of the 21st century. In other words, the POPREBEL project investigates how concrete memorial practices undertaken by state and civic actors (representing for instance NGOs and ethnic/sexual minorities etc.) legitimise constantly mutable political, social, cultural goals, and – finally – how they operate between (or lead to) social inclusion and exclusion.

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3.4.2. Mythologisation

Joanna Orzechowska-Wacławska, Jagiellonian University in Krakow

Mythologisation is a process of creating stories (myths) around selected elements from our past or present, through which those elements (people, events) gain new attributes, are portrayed and interpreted as magical, supernatural, legendary or extraordinary.

Mythologisation is a process that bears a number of important characteristics.

1. **It is selective**. 'Mythologisation' is about choosing from either past or present, from a variety of facts, events, people or places, only a few elements, which become narrated in a special way acquiring new meaning.
2. **It combines elements of truth and fiction**. It is about creation, about building on actual facts and adding new stories to them, which may or may not have factual justification.
3. Through those stories those elements attain new characteristics and **gain new meaning**.
4. Those new meanings bear with them certain almost **sacred interpretations** - not only do those elements possess now certain superhuman, extraordinary and exceptional traits but, as almost magical stories, they speak to our beliefs and the system of identification.
5. As such they are very **difficult to break** and cannot be easily changed by reasoning and appealing to knowledge. In a sense, the history involved in the creation of those stories becomes a guarantor of its own reliability.
6. *Mythologisation* is not just one single act of creation, but rather a whole **process of telling and retelling** of those stories (myths); it involves thus the creation and distribution of meaning.
7. *Mythologisation* is a **purposeful and contextual process,** it always serves a purpose and is always located in a particular sociocultural setting. The choice of elements upon which the stories (myths) arise depends on the needs of the present. By providing self-justified explanations that speak to feelings rather than reason, *mythologisation* becomes a key force in political discourse, one that can strengthen certain master narrative or ideology, as the arguments given (stories/myths) do not require any further translation and explanation.

'Mythologisation' produces all sorts of stories/myths, of which of particular importance for socio-political mobilisation is the so-called **political myth**. A political myth, similar to other types of myth, is a form of ideological narrative or a story that gives the past or elements from the past important symbolic, almost sacred, meaning in the present. What distinguishes political myth is, first and foremost, the sphere of its applicability in that it is based on elements from the past (distant or recent) to be operational in the *political* present; and secondly its particular *purpose* – a political myth provides the community with a *sense of common meaning*, equipping it with stories that speak to their beliefs and preach their uniqueness.

In the POPREBEL project the concept of political myths will be understood in relation to all sorts of practices in which populist leaders formulate stories surrounding people, events or dates that are functional for their political message. Of importance may be the stories relating to national heroes and national foes (who do they choose and why), national celebrations (what date, what event and why) and myths of origin (where do they place the beginnings or important milestones in the development of the nation).

What is crucial for the deconstruction of such myths are the following elements:

(1) **Explanatory character.** Political myths, due to their selective and simplifying character, make the world more understandable. They flatten the complexity of reality, they tell simple stories about events, people, dates. By doing so, they become powerful cornerstones of collective identity; since they are based in the past, they give coherence to collective memories, even though they themselves do not need to be logical or coherent.

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(2) **Truth and fiction.** As selective 'flattening' tales, they are not overly concerned with the factual representation of the reality. This does not mean, however, that they totally disregard facts. As with all myths, they contain a grain of truth but in this particular case it becomes a matter of credibility and survival: for the political myth to be believable, it must be rooted in some past events or at least have some sort of connection with generally known phenomena.

(3) **Legitimacy.** Although it is important what political myths say, it is even more significant what they do, and it is the creation of the connection between the ruling and the ruled. Political myths create a narrative that explains the position and the power of authority. Being grounded in the past, these myths expound the roots of the authority, explaining why those who are in power have in fact the right to do so. To put it simply, political myths create the **legitimacy** for political rule.

(4) **Feelings and reason.** Since the representation of reality that political myths offer is at best simplistic, the power of these myths does not lie in their factual correctness, but in their strength to appeal to feelings. Political myths are sets of beliefs, not systems of thought. As such they are immune to reason - they cannot be changed by resorting to reason; factual explanation cannot shake them.

(5) **Mobilisation.** Most importantly, political myths have powerful mobilising ability - they can efficiently mobilise the population around certain people, events or ideas. This is possible because political claims that are made on the basis of political myths are perceived as valid and justified not because they are logical, factual and coherent, but despite of this. It is actually the lack of conceptual rigidness that fuels the myths.

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3.4.3. Euroscepticism

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Schematically defined, Euroscepticism is the: 'outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration' (Taggart, 1998, p. 366). According to Taggart and Szczerbiak, Euroscepticism can be internally delineated between 'hard' and 'soft'. Hard Euroscepticism consists of the principled opposition to the EU and may even demand the withdrawal of given states from the EU or object to their prospects of EU membership (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2002). Soft Euroscepticism does not entail the principled opposition to the EU but focuses on policy areas where a divergence between the 'national interest' and the EU trajectory is perceived (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2008; Kopecky and Mudde, 2002). All manifestations of Euroscepticism can be articulated both on the party-based and the public (or grassroot) levels – inside and outside the EU.

The Euroscepticism of political parties is dependent upon ideology, political and socioeconomic circumstances and the distinction between domestic and foreign policy (Topaloff, 2017). Therefore, the engagement of Eurosceptic parties can be subject to malleability and/or 'situational adaptability'. Within this context, Kopecky and Mudde further diversify the dichotomy between hard and soft Euroscepticism. The authors argue that Eurosceptic parties tend to adopt softer stances and do not oppose the idea of European integration per se. However, they object, to varying degrees, to its materialisation. It is the 'Euro-reject' parties that assume harder stances and oppose both the idea and the materialisation (Kopecky and Mudde, 2002).

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Flood proposes an analytical classification of party-based Euroscepticism which comprises the revisionist, reformist, gradualist, maximalist, minimalist, and rejectionist categories (Flood, 2002). The revisionist category opts for a return to the state of affairs prior to a major EU treaty/decision whereas the reformist desires the modification of one or more existing EU institutions and/or practices. Gradualist Eurosceptics formally endorse the European integration process albeit at a slower pace and with greater care. Maximalists are in favour of pushing forward with the existing process as rapidly as is practicable towards higher levels of integration whereas minimalists tend to accept the status quo but resist further integration. Lastly, rejectionist parties adamantly oppose participation in the EU or any of its constituent institutions. Inside this mode of interpretation, the dominant brands of Euroscepticism among the proponents of Brexit within the ranks of the British Conservatives and smaller political actors (e.g. Brexit Party, UKIP) can be positioned somewhere along the trajectory between a rejectionist and a maximalist stance – one that opts for a withdrawal from the EU with the fewest losses and the greatest gains possible (Leruth, Startin and Usherwood, 2017).

Euroscepticism is a highly topical concept for the study of left-wing as well as right-wing populism. Especially following the toll of the recent economic crisis across Southern Europe, left-wing Eurosceptics tend to scrutinise European integration as a project which is embedded in the neoliberal principles of globalised capitalism (Della Porta, 2017). Meanwhile, two areas of utmost significance for right-wing Eurosceptics across Europe are: (a) varying degrees of opposition to immigration and insistence on the principle of hard borders (Evans and Mellon, 2019); (b) safeguarding national **sovereignty** from the 'domination of Brussels' (Brunazzo and Gilbert, 2017).

In Central and Eastern Europe, as early as the 1990s, a series of (usually right-wing) parties started formulating their nascent Euroscepticism along the lines of a conceptualisation that the EU 'imposes' minority rights from the exterior and weakens national **sovereignty** (e.g. the cases of Slovakia, Latvia, and Estonia) (Bustikova 2018). Following the outbreak of the migration crisis (2015), the brands of Euroscepticism among certain conservative right-wing parties across this region (e.g. FIDESZ in Hungary and PiS in Poland) have undergone a qualitative transformation; they are no longer focused on negotiating a compromise over the terms of a state's membership of the EU but, rather, harbour ambitions to revise the EU's configurations (at least in regard to selected policy areas) and reform its existing institutions and practices from within (Palonen, 2018; Kovacs and Scheppele, 2018).

In Estonia and Latvia, varying shades of Euroscepticism make up components of the political platforms espoused by the **radical right** (EKRE and National Alliance) as well as populist parties with a 'broader' anti-establishment orientation (Who Owns the State?/KPV) and generally comprise three aspects: geopolitical, economic and sociocultural (Braghiroli and Petsinis, 2019; Petsinis, 2019). The geopolitical scrutinises the degree to which Estonia's and Latvia's membership of the EU enhances the security status of these two states vis-à-vis Russia. The economic contests institutions such as the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) and objects to the purchase of Estonian/Latvian land and natural resources by foreign entrepreneurs. The sociocultural dimension revolves around opposition to the EU's quota arrangement for refugees as well as the EU's guidelines for LGBTQ rights.

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3.4.4. Conspiracy theories

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Conspiracy theory can be simply defined as a conviction that a secret, omnipotent individual or group covertly controls the political and social order or some part thereof (Fenster, 2008, p. 1). The concept of conspiracy theory is similar to the notion of rumour, as it broadly represents claims that fail to meet standards of evidence widely agreed upon. However, whereas rumours can be defined as 'unverified and instrumentally relevant information statements in circulation that arise in contexts of ambiguity, danger, or potential threat and that function to help people make sense [of] and manage risk', conspiracy theories refer to claims that seek 'to explain some event or practice by reference to the machinations of powerful people, who attempt to conceal their role' (Sunstein & Vermeule, 2009). Based on this reasoning, Mark Fenster described conspiracy theory as a populist theory of power (Fenster, 2008).

Conspiracy theories can easily be found all over the world. In a poll conducted in seven Muslim countries, 78 percent of respondents said that they do not believe the 9/11 attacks were carried out by Arabs (Schmid, 2017). Around one third of US and Canadian citizens believe that the 9/11 attacks were organised by the US. In China, a bestseller attributes various events (the rise of Hitler, the Asian financial crisis of 1997–1998 and environmental destruction in the developing world) to the Rothschild banking dynasty; the analysis has been read and debated at high levels of business and government, and it appears to have had an effect on discussions about currency policies (Sunstein & Vermeule, 2009). Conspiracy theories are not necessarily wrong. In fact, as the cases of Watergate and the Iran-Contra affair illustrate, small groups of powerful individuals do occasionally seek to affect the course of history (Keeley, 1999, p. 11).

It is difficult to pinpoint a singular group or groups that are more prone to accepting conspiracy theories. Generally, the studies have shown that people who believe in one conspiracy are more likely to also believe in others. A seminal study by Goertzel (1994) showed a correlation between belief in conspiracies and anomia, lack of interpersonal trust, and insecurity about employment, but there were few significant correlations with gender, educational level or occupational category.

Conspiracy theory has been a popular subject of academic enquiry since the last decade of the 20th century. Sunstein and Vermeule argue that most of the academic literature directly involving conspiracy theories falls into one of two

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classes: (1) work by analytic philosophers, especially in epistemology and the philosophy of science, that explores a range of issues but mainly asks what counts as a 'conspiracy theory' and whether such theories are methodologically suspect; and (2) a work in sociology and Freudian psychology on the causes of conspiracy theorising (Sunstein & Vermeule, 2009).

Conspiracy theories research is very relevant for the studies of populism. Conspiracies proliferate in an environment where there is 'the extreme – indeed, ultimate – scepticism of the political sphere by a sector of the population that feels excluded' (Fenster, 2008, p. 71). According to the same author, believing in conspiracies requires the conviction that the only thing politicians can do is be deceptive and plot secret plans for a global takeover (Ibid). Such a cynical and dissatisfied view of political institutions and their functioning is also associated with preference for populist parties (Doyle, 2011). In fact, such parties often use a conspiratorial tone to describe their opponents (Hawkins, 2009) and, in broader terms, their discourse is often described as 'conspiracist' (Vossen, 2010). The worldviews of conspiracy theories and populism are very similar. They both present (or demand) simple narratives with two well-defined sides, separated on moral grounds. They see conspirators controlling society, with more resources and willpower, and ordinary people as their victims. Moreover, they both seem to be rooted in general animosity toward anything official. (Castanho Silva et al., 2017, p. 427).

In the POPREBEL project, the conspiracist narrative will be taken as a strong indicator of populism in politics. Political actors' (parties and individuals) discourses in both traditional and the new media as well as in the promotional materials will be analysed for presence of conspiracist topics and motives.

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3.4.5. Fake news

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The authenticity of information has become a longstanding issue affecting society, both in the context of printed and digital media. The phenomenon of fake news has been addressed by scholars from various backgrounds – psychology (what makes fake news attractive, why do people believe it), sociology (what environment is suitable for proliferation of fake news), political science (who are the actors and what are their political agendas) but also computing (what technical solutions can be used to tackle dissemination of fake news) and journalism (how to differentiate fake from 'real' news).

There have been many attempts to define fake news. First of all, fake news can be conceptualised as distorted signals uncorrelated with the truth (Allcot & Gentzkow 2017, p. 213). Another useful definition: a deliberate presentation of (typically) false or misleading claims as news, where these are misleading by design (Gelfert, 2018). Edson et al. (2018) who reviewed how the term 'fake news' was defined and operationalised in scholarly articles, concluded that the definitions were based on levels of facticity and deception, ranging from satire to propaganda. This term applies to news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false and could mislead readers. Fake news can be related to many topics (health, politics, finances) and cause real harm by going 'viral' on social media – from dangerous health decisions and manipulations of the stock market to influencing the results of elections. According to Allcott and Gentzkow, fake news may generate utility for some consumers but may also impose private and social costs by making it more difficult for consumers to infer the true state of the world – for example, for voters to infer which electoral candidate they prefer. Some analysts have characterised fake news as a major global risk (Allcot & Gentzkow, 2017).

In common with classic studies on misleading information dealing with rumours, propaganda and **conspiracy theories** (Allport and Postman, 1946; Lasswell, 1927; Sunstein and Vermeule, 2009), these most recent attempts to define 'fake news' seek to differentiate between specific forms of the phenomenon with reference to the source's intent to deceive (disinformation) versus the honest mistakes, negligence or unconscious biases (misinformation) (Fallis, 2015; Floridi, 2011).

While fake news is not a new phenomenon, it is undoubtedly of growing importance, mostly due to lower barriers of entry in New Media. Social media are particularly suited for fake news dissemination, thanks to the low cost of producing fraudulent websites and the enormous number of software-controlled profiles or pages, known as social bots (Martens et al., 2018). In addition, Gallup polls reveal a continuing decline of 'trust and confidence' in the mass media, which can be observed both as a cause and a consequence of the increased importance of fake news (Brenan, 2019). The last factor that contributes to the prevalence of fake news is the rise of political polarisation and the growth of negative feelings that each side of political spectrum or rival political parties hold toward each other; hence each side is more likely to believe the negative news about the other (Tucker et al., 2018). Creators of fake news are motivated either by the financial benefits or ideological reasons.

Dissemination and influence of fake news tends to be particularly prominent among the older, less technically-savvy and less educated population, as existing studies show. For instance, Guess et al. found a strong age effect among the disseminators of fake news on Facebook. According to them, on average, users over 65 shared nearly seven times as many articles from fake news domains as the youngest age group (Guess et al., 2019). Interestingly, findings of a recent paper by Allcott et al, indicate that the presence of fake news on some social media (on Facebook, but not on Twitter) may have passed its peak reached in 2016, at least in the USA (Allcott et al., 2019).

A new perspective in studying fake news oriented not only towards creators, but also towards propagators or disseminators, was proposed by Giglietto et al. (2019), driven by the existence and the logic of the 'hybrid news system'. In 'hybrid news systems', judgments regarding the falsehood and motivations of propagators (the actors who share fake news) can easily be different from the motivations of the original creator. Such patterns mean that what happens after the 'generative act' of a piece of false news is crucial to the study of real-world cases. The radical change of perspective required by the hybrid news system thus consists of a shift from exclusive attention to producers of fake news to a broader approach that also focuses on propagators and, as a result, on the dynamic and diverse processes that characterise the dissemination of problematic information through multiple chains of propagation (Giglietto et al., 2019).

In addition, the term 'fake news' has been effectively weaponized by political actors to discredit some news organisations' critical reporting attack a variety of news media (e.g. Caplan et al., 2018; Tandoc et al., 2018; Vosoughi, Roy, & Aral, 2018). With this in mind, Egelhofer & Lecheler suggest that the term 'fake news' can refer to two dimensions of public communication: the fake news genre (i.e. the deliberate creation of pseudo-journalistic disinformation) and the fake news label, i.e. the instrumentalisation of the term to delegitimise news media (Egelhofer & Lecheler, 2019, p. 97).

New media challenge the top-down gatekeeping control of political communication of the traditional media. Social media give the populist actors the freedom to articulate their ideology and spread their messages (Engesser et al., 2017). Fake news disseminated on social media can serve the purpose of 'revealing the hidden truths' about the **elites**, especially during the election campaign. For instance, pro-Brexit figures in the UK and Donald Trump in the US used a plethora of fake news during their respective campaigns (Williamson, 2016).

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3.4.6. Populist Art

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Populist art is a concept introduced by Alberto Asor Rosa in 1965 - in his seminal book *Writers and the People* - which refers to the auspices under which a work of art can be called 'populist.' Since then, many understandings of 'populist

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art' have emerged in various cultural-political circles. Populist art is that type of cultural production (literary, visual, musical and so on) that comprises an affirmative evaluation of **'the people'** in ideological, ethical, historical or social terms. There are various meanings of 'populism' that can be carried by an artwork. Not only are the artworks that depict positive evaluations of **the people** instances of populist art but also those art pieces that render **'the people'** as a defective model, as brutalised victims of power and capital or as 'bare life' entities (Agamben).

Recently, Marco Baravalle has argued that Alberto Asor Rosa's book targeted cultural producers and literary critics whose creations embodied 'the Communist Party's hegemony over literary production—a hegemony based on the legacy of the Resistance on one hand, and on a populist political and cultural vision on the other' (Baravalle, 2018). Similarly, according to Alberto Asor Rosa, a work of art is populist whenever it displays **'the people'** as the main topic and as a model to be followed. **'The people'** category is expected to act as a mobilising force that galvanises spectators (readers) to various political ends. Still, populist art does not depend on the political stance of the artist. However, Alberto Asor Rosa's theory of populist art is context dependent (i.e. Italy of the 1960s) and cannot account for certain instances of contemporary populist art.

In order to understand what 'populist art' is, one must explore first the relationship between 'the artistic' and 'popular.' Artistic production that is acknowledged as 'popular' is usually entertaining, or as Clement Greenberg put it, kitsch (Greenberg in *Avant-Garde and Kitsch*, 1939). Kitsch (popular culture) is easily expressible, easy understandable and triggers in audiences 'sensationalist effects,' whereas avant-garde art occasions aesthetic judgements of a superior nature. Populist art affects everyone, especially 'all those people whom contemporary art has failed to reach or move' (Lippard, 1976, p. 8). Since in the last decade, populism - and especially right-wing populism - has gained momentum in Eastern Europe to a disquieting extent, the 'emotional backlash' (Galston 2018, p. 5) against the **elites**, immigrants, refugees, sexual and ethnic minorities, and everyone else who is not 'ours,' is also materialised in the culture wars directed against those artistic productions that undermine and challenge national pride. The most devoted allies of populist art are the escapist fantasies of those dissatisfied with the present. Yet, between art's ability to reveal the complexities of existence in unique and exquisite formats and populism's models of 'popular' appeal to the 'people,' there will always be a tension that we aim to illuminate as part of the POPREBEL's task to disentangle the realm of popular culture and art's relation to populism.

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3.5. Mental maps & imagined spaces

3.5.1. Mental Maps

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Mental maps are a tool which helps to connect the factual reality with the fictional one. They represent a way of combining factual knowledge of particular places in addition to our subjective perceptions or opinions of (factual or fictional) locations worldwide. In psychology[4], they are understood as cognitive models that represent a type of mental

[4] The concept of cognitive maps was introduced by Edward Tolman, psychologist, in 1948. The concept was used to explain the behavior of rats that appeared to learn the spatial layout of a maze (Tolman, 1948). Subsequently, the concept was applied to

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process (or cognition), made from a series of psychological transformations by which a person (or a community) can collect, storage and recall information about relative locations or the characteristics of certain events within everyday environments.

Through the process of socialisation we internalised a certain representation of the world around us in our minds. This representation is organised around certain mental map(s). In that sense, a mental map is a tool that helps us to organise knowledge about the world and allows us to easily interpret it as well as to orient ourselves within a particular environment. The research of these imagined mental maps offers us an insight into affective nebulas (Maffessoli, 1996) within which people live and into the way how people are feeling. A deeper look into particular aspects and structures of mental maps can help us track fear, stress and/or excitement relating to different phenomena and/or processes in everyday reality (the factual or the fictional ones). Geographical coordinates of **Western Balkans**, **Central Europe**, Eastern Europe, South-East Europe, Mediterranean, Western World etc are examples of imagined geopolitical fictions that exist only in the meta-realities shaped by particular ideological mental maps.

However the geographical spaces are not the only territory through which it is possible to transform the mental topography of our realities. According to Serbian historian Dubravka Stojanovic even more important territory is the historical memory. In her essay 'Balkanization of Historical Memory' she claims that the process of balkanisation[5] always implies the constitution of new states and consequently the production of new and transformation of old borders. The process creates not only problems with customs, traffic, passports, currencies, but also with the issues of historical memory. The splitting of formerly common states necessarily means the splitting of a constructed shared historical memory. It could be said - the 'balkanisation of memory' (Stojanovic, 2019). This process of re-organisation of the historical memory landscapes and creation of new mental and emotional geography of collective identities is based both on a rhetorical strategy and a political method that aim to create powerful society/identity/region-changing fiction that would finally change the existing factional and fictional borders and maps. The mental maps are just the reflection of that struggle between fiction and faction which is always just an optical illusion, because they are both equally live and imposed in our cognition of the world around us.

The mental maps are fiction which mapping our social and political reality and as an imaginative resource suggesting future directions of our political and societal imaginative ranges and interventions. This is the reason why mental maps will be a topic of interest within the framework of the POPREBEL project.

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other animals, including humans and accepted by scientists from other disciplines. For example in urban planning (Lynch, 1960).

[5] Balkanisation: the division of a multinational state into smaller ethnically homogeneous entities. The term also is used to refer to ethnic conflict within multiethnic states. It was coined at the end of World War I to describe the ethnic and political fragmentation that followed the breakup of the Ottoman Empire, particularly in the Balkans. The term *Balkanisation* is today invoked to explain the disintegration of some multiethnic states and their devolution into dictatorship, ethnic cleansing, and civil war (Pringle, 2019).

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3.5.2. Western Balkans

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Western Balkans is a political neologism coined to refer to the Balkan area (geographic area of Balkan Peninsula) that belongs to the geographic region of former Yugoslavia and Albania. In spite of the fact that this term was coined in Anglo-Saxon media in the second part of 19th century (first time use in *New York Times* on 9th December 1877 in the article 'Opinions of the British Press: The London Times on the late advance on Trnova') the contemporary use of this neologism is more related to the relatively recent political documents of EU than to its historical heritage that could be traced in media and political discourses till mid 19th century (Svilar, 2011). For its contemporary meaning it is important to mention three occasions in which neologism Western Balkans has been used in the official documents of different institutions of European Union: (a) 1998 – document: *Presidency Conclusions*[6], Vienna European Summit, 11th-12th December 1998; (b) 2000 – document: *Council Regulation (ec) No 2666/2000*[7], European Council, from 5th December 2000; and (c) 2003 – document: *The Thessaloniki agenda for the Western Balkans – moving towards European integrations. Declaration*[8], from June 2003. These three documents and especially the last one chart the contemporary geo-political region of Western Balkans. This imagined region is predominantly political creation than historical and cultural one. In its contemporary understanding Western Balkans covers the successor countries of former Yugoslavia without Slovenia and Albania, in spite of the fact that: (a) all successor countries of former Yugoslavia (including Slovenia) had almost one century long common history, and (b) former Yugoslavia and Albania had very different historical trajectories.

In historical perspective this geopolitical region was considered as part of Eastern Europe but with relatively specific, further and closer, historical circumstances that chart its historical and political path. As other former socialist Eastern European countries, with the collapse of socialism in the late twentieth century, the region of Western Balkans entered a turbulent and controversial historical chapter of 'transition', followed by the collapse of the value system and a radical historical break with the prior arrangement of societal, political and economic relations. However, not all former socialist countries have been equally turbulently passed through this contradictory socio-economic-political-historical process of transformation. By the degree of intensity of social conflicts, the region of the Western Balkans represents a paradigmatic symbolic place on which the intensity, diversity and speed of social change have broken through the boundaries to which it was possible theoretically to stretch concept of modernization.

Over the last 30 years, the realities of the Western Balkans have been marked by war and ethnic conflicts, the shifting of existing state borders, the forced migration of members of various ethnic and social groups, the destruction of the existing institutional system, which has significantly changed the established practices of everyday life of their citizens. This multi-dimensional process of intense social transformation has led to significant structural social changes, which (directly and / or indirectly) have reflected on the social construction of citizen's everyday practices, geopolitical mental charts and sets of socio-economic values, gender identities and the structure of gender order (Connell, 1987, 1996).

There are many reasons why the region of Western Balkans is interesting to be explored within project that deals with 'Populist rebellion against modernity in 21st century Eastern Europe' that is because:

1. Since mid 19th century, together with USA and Russia, Western Balkans was the cradle of the *first wave of populism*. It could be said that Balkans is the vanguard of populism.
2. Populist parties came to power in different historical contexts in the Western Balkans during last 150 years, which is offering an excellent opportunity for analysis of populist movements in *historical perspective* that includes its continuities and discontinuities, as well as causes that had impact on the strengthening, but also on the weakening of populist political agents and processes.
3. Populism in the Western Balkans has moved *from the political left to the political right* and back. The analyses of this dynamics of exchange of populist options and the exploration of similarities and differences between them and the societal settings that have produced circumstances in which they appear and operate makes this region, on analytical level, *the perfect experimental laboratory* for socio-political-historical analysis of the populism.

[6] See: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/.
[7] See: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/.
[8] See: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/.

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4. Populist movements came as reactions to the transfer of parliamentary institutions in young Western Balkans states (mostly in 1880es), which gives the arguments to the thesis that populism is the *rebellion against modernization*, Europeanization, globalization or any other structural social change.

5. Thanks to the long duration of populist regimes in the region of contemporary Western Balkans it is possible to analyze *the strategies* of populist systems in power and in historical perspective. In spite of the fact that populism is not the codified ideology, it produces a firm system characterized by one '*central paradox*': constant lip service to the power of **the people** but ultimate control and decision-making by a small clique of politicians (Hardt and Negri, 2017: 23).

6. Western Balkans populisms, being the demagogical left and ethno nationalistic right have rejected the concept of the rule of law, which made them ideologically close to the Russian model of authoritarian state. Among other causes that fact has opened the door to *Russian* (ideological and political) *influence in the region*.

7. Western Balkans populisms have created the *model of party state* already in 19th century, the model of state in which the 'people' is identified with one party and its powerful leader who becomes the 'authentic' interpreter of people's will. Party state swallows institutions, uses them for its needs and interests, finally misusing the democracy itself.

8. Populist parties and regimes appeared in all Western Balkans states, despite of the significant social and cultural differences between them. Comparative analyses of those societies and policies will help us to understand social, anthropological, cultural, economic and political *causes and circumstances* that populism made possible.

10. Due to destructive force of populism in politics, economy, political culture many of Western Balkans countries suffer of the consequences of *underdevelopment*. That happened in spite of the fact that Balkans nation states were created rather early (starting with Greece in 1830) and have transferred modern parliamentary systems from Western Europe, but that advantage was annulled with the political influence of populism.

11. *The case of former Yugoslavia* has special importance for studies of populism. Different moments in its history confirm that: (a) it was the only European state that had authentic communist revolution during the Second World War. Populist traditions and political culture are considered to be among many other historical reasons of that phenomenon; (b) in the moment of the fall of Berlin wall and beginning of Central European democratic 'transition' Yugoslav societies choose the opposite direction comparing to former Warsaw pact countries, Yugoslav societies choose disintegrations, re-traditionalisation, re-patriarchalisation, moving away from European integrations, although Yugoslavia had the best starting point among socialist countries; (c) the disintegration of Yugoslavia and sires of civil wars in 1990s were the direct consequence of renewed nationalistic right wing populism that rise after the breakdown of socialism; (d) war traumas and its instrumentalization became the foundation of populist regimes in all former Yugoslav successors states until present moment; and (e) because Eurosceptic arguments that brought victories to populist parties in some EU countries are identical to 'Yugosceptic' 1980s arguments that had fatal consequences.

12. Because of its populist regimes Western Balkans is still *the most fragile part* of European continent. Analyzing and deconstructing Western Balkans model of populism is the first step towards the stabilization of that region, but the wider EU region as well.

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3.5.3. Central Europe

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The recent re-emergence of the usage of 'Central Europe' as a reference point, especially as a counterweight against the liberal West, in current populist discourses in Europe, poses the need of inquiry about the characteristics, specificities and perceptions of the region.

The geographic and mental labelling of the Central European region emerged initially as a result of opposition in the self-construction between the West and the East during the Enlightenment. Goldsworthy argues that the West has been dominant in the production of representations of Eastern Europe thus has 'colonized' the region's imaginary (Goldsworthy, 2013). However, the socio-political reality of the 'lands in-between' was not sufficiently captured by the East-West binary, as it could not be convincingly categorized as part of either pole. 18th and 19th century accounts of Central Europe depict the region as a transition zone between East and the West, the modern and the backward, the familiar and the foreign (Wolff, 1994, Buchowski, 2006). The shifting borders and loss of **sovereignty** of various Central European nations have further strengthened the image of the region as an area of instability, chaos and 'questionable identities' (Fiut, 2007). As a theatre of brutal conflict, totalitarian violence and genocide, Central Europe is part of the 'bloodlands' (Snyder, 2010) – the lands where death, mass violence and suffering have led to deep and lasting trauma (Sztompka, 2000).

Nowadays there is no political or scholarly consensus on the geographical pinning of Central Europe on the present-day political map, as its boundaries were everchanging and situational, cutting across current national borders (Gerner, 1999). The Central European paradigm however, cannot be defined only on the geographical dimension, but should be construed on the economic, cultural, historical, socio-political and psychological nexus (Mező, 2001). Moreover, Central Europe is a socio-political and cultural construction, negotiated through regional discourse both from within and outside its domain. As Kundera phrased 'Central Europe is not a state: it is a culture or a fate. Its borders are imaginary and must be drawn and redrawn with each new historical situation' (Kundera, 1984, p. 35).

Historically, the notion of Central Europe is associated with the territory of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Danube region. In the Interwar period, it included the region under Neuman's concept of Mitteleuropa (Naumann, 1915), a broader understanding of Central Europe under German sphere of interest and cultural hegemony, however, this term lost popularity as it became strongly associated with German nationalism and expansionism. The legacy of the Habsburg Empire conjoins Central Europe with ethnic diversity, religious tolerance and cultural pluralism (Delanty, 1996; Blokker, 2008). On the other hand, the region witnessed constant struggle against imperial oppression, fight for national **sovereignty**, and exclusivist nationalisms, which eventually resulted in the empire's collapse, and which factors shape the region's identity and political landscape until today.

Europe's division by the Iron Curtain resulted once more in Central Europe's position of being trapped between competing oppositions, 'culturally in the West and politically in the East' (Kundera, 1984, p. 33). The region's political arrangement reinforced Central Europe's external socio-political and cultural identification with the East and the Soviet sphere. The terms 'Central Eastern Europe', 'East-Central Europe' and 'Central Europe' are often used interchangeably, however might refer to different areas, and have different connotations. The first two terms are commonly understood as referring to the regions of historic Central, East Central, and South-Eastern Europe which after 1945 came under Soviet domination. However, with the new political reality the internal and external need arose to differentiate Central Europe from the Eastern region. Simultaneously as the term 'Europe' started to be directly associated with the West, the region's sentiments of being abandoned by, yet longing to belong to the West resulted in the revival of the concept of 'Central Europe'. From the 1970's onwards, Central Europeanness has become an intellectual and cultural concept, as a way of distinguishing from the Soviet space and emphasizing Western connections, reflected both in domestic and dissident culture, as well as employed by Western scholars (Ash, 1986; Judt, 1990).

Central Europe's ambiguity until today lies in its dynamic nature reflected in its connections to the West and the East and their interplay. Central Europe's distinction from the 'East' or 'West' might often seem arbitrary or situational, depending on the selected criteria, underlying power relations and political agenda. Although selected criteria e.g. religion, alphabet, level of urbanisation and industrialisation, individualism vs collectivism can be used as certain measures of distinction, on the other hand, the ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity in CEE as well as the socio-political interconnectedness between its states and nations make any clear-cut division impossible. Despite of the lack of clear definitions, from the 1970's onwards Central Europe has re-emerged as a concept of a distinct collective

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identity: a sentiment, a particular notion of history, unique experience of being connected to, yet being trapped between the East and the West, experiencing the extremes of two totalitarianism, a belonging to 'Europe' that has been taken away and needs to be regained (Kundera, 1984; Konrád, 1985).

The end of communism in Eastern Europe resulted in confusion about the definition of the European Other in Western Europe, because the Other could no longer be confined to the homogenous specific geographical space of the Soviet bloc (Buchowski, 2006). After the fall of the Iron Curtain, Central Europe's path to European Integration has begun rapidly, which required a reorientation of thinking about Central Europe: from thinking in terms of **sovereignty** (freedom) vs dependence, into thinking in terms of interconnectedness, links, connections, dialogues. Central Europe in the context of European integration meant a certain degree of development, an example compared to its Eastern neighbours, its image in the West was positively framed by the enthusiasm about peaceful revolutions and democratic transformation, moreover, the fast and peaceful transition in CE was contrasted with the tragedies of war and destruction in the Balkans. Central European countries, mainly the Visegrad Group, shared the same goals: EU and NATO accession, nonetheless, their path to European integration was not only a journey of cooperation, but of internal competition and tension, among others due to the experience of different historical realities, as well as underlying unresolved conflicts and traumas regarding disputed borders and ethnic minorities. Moreover, the postcommunist transitions brought the re-emergence of nationalisms, inferiority complex, need for redefining collective identity, as well as assessing collective memory and trauma (Blokker, 2008).

The discourse on Central Europe was a discourse of catching up: as Blokker points out, 'returning to, not joining Europe' - as a way of dissolving being stuck between West and East, of belonging to a one and united Europe (Blokker, 2008, p. 258). Yet, the European integration and the accession of Central European countries to the 'New Europe' in 2004 did not bring the dissolution of the East-West division. Newly joined Central Eastern European states were still referred to as newcomers in need of catching up with and complying to the rules of the West. The EU accession brought with it a much-awaited economic push, it did not however bridge the growing internal socioeconomic differences. Quite to the contrary, the parallel processes of external economic convergence and internal (within) country divergence, overlapped with growing social inequalities, which were the consequence of economic pro-capitalist changes. The simultaneous processes of postcommunist transformation and the EU accession despite its multiple achievements, left many disappointed. The failure of reaching Western European economic prosperity, regardless of the region's geographical centrality, strengthened the feeling of 'internal periphery'. As Blokker puts it:

> 'the emancipatory potential that Central Europeanism contained in the 1980s in the form of its anti-politics might have potentially retained in the context of the European project was neglected in favour of a political, strategic approach in the enlargement process that hardly involved a critical reflection and renegotiation of the basis of European integration' (Blokker, 2008, p. 259).

Disillusionment with European integration and Western European politics spread among large segments of the region's population caused Central Europe's need of redefining its identity. As we can witness in current populist politics, the (re)definition of the concept of Central Europe simultaneously carries the redefinition of the West and the East, and of cultural-ideological centre(s) and peripheries. It is, an ideological and political quest for a place and role between two visions of life, and two civilizational orders. The master-narrative of the accession period in Central Europe was the one of return to the family of developed, civilized, democratic and prosperous Western European states, leaving the trauma of communist regime behind. Central Europe was predominantly choosing the West over the East. In post-accession period, confronted with the existing internal division within the EU, it was about defining a unique role that Central Europe can play. The issue of identity of Central Europe became the key aspect of its self-definition. Two consecutive tendencies can be found here. The first was about defining Central Europe as a bridge between West and East, the intermediary that is able to understand the West and able to communicate with the East. The second one, especially used by populists, made use of the mechanisms of **Othering**. In right-wing populist discourse, the liberal West is perceived to have forgotten (betrayed?) Europe's true identity and values, therefore, the West is not anymore an example to follow, nor is perceived ideologically and culturally superior compared to Central Europe or the East. Central Europe becomes a mental space not of a region that is lagging behind, but one that is preserving Europe's true values and traditions, changing the previous power dynamics. Central Europe in populist rhetoric becomes the defender of 'true Europeanness', having common understanding and solidarity among its members by listening to the voice of its citizens, while the European Union is portrayed as an imperial power led by a corrupt (Western) elite against the will of **the people** (Csehi and Zgut, 2020). The (re)strengthening of Central European identity furthermore

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brought the revival of Central European regional organisational and institutional frameworks, such as the Visegrad Four. No longer a transit zone, but a tangible entity and framework, the concept and identity of Central Europe needs to be recognized on its own right with its distinctive features, embracing its connections to and difference from both the East and the West.

The populist regimes of Poland and Hungary found themselves in a rapidly increasing conflict with EU institutions over the principles of democracy and respect of liberal values defined in EU documents as the core of European collective identity. The alternative view on democracy without liberal checks and balances, and in particular, without the guiding principle of the rule of law, the so called 'illiberal democracy' became a new concept gaining ground in debates on Central European political identity. By proposing such an 'illiberal turn' (Bustikova and Guasti, 2017), Poland and Hungary symbolically place themselves closer to the East, where other illiberal systems of Russia, Turkey and Belarus constitute a potential political and economic community alternative to the EU. Whether a new boundary on the **mental map** separating East and West, this time having Central Europe on its Eastern side emerges from this process, remains to be seen. For the time being, some new initiatives are formulated, such as the Three Seas, which is to become a network of cooperation of EU member states located between the Baltic, the Black Sea and the Adriatic, uniting countries in an expectation to build a new platform for integration. While there may be several reasons for regional integration, in right-wing populist debates it is often perceived as an opportunity for promoting a specific ideological agenda. Its main assumption would be that Central Europe represents true and authentic European values (as opposed to Western Europe, championing a leftist worldview). As one of the slogans popularized by the Polish ruling elite says: 'here the heart of Europe beats'. The image of Central Europe as 'heart of Europe' is thus instrumentalised by right-wing populists to pursue an agenda of distancing from Western Europe and of scepticism towards EU integration.

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