Rethinking Populism: ‘the People’ as a Popular Identity Subject in Bernie Sanders’ Discursive Articulation

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Abstract

This study explores the articulation of a popular political identity by the US Senator Bernie Sanders and the political coalition he communicates. The analysis part is conducted on two levels: the construction of the populist signifier ‘the people’ and the construction of the antagonist in Sanders’ political communication.

The theoretical part is mostly driven by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s perspective in radical democracy, identity construction, collectiveness and the chain of equivalence. By deploying theoretically unprejudiced approach, the thesis shows how a popular identity, namely ‘the People’, emerges, how it is communicated in order to put forward an alternative reading of populism which is hotly-debated subject among scholars and political scientists. Furthermore, the thesis elaborates how the theoretical discussion proposes a way of understanding the collective subject of ‘the People’ which appears as an identifiable and contra-conjectural category.

The analysis ascertains that ‘the people’, as a populist subject, emerges as collective citizens demanding equal rights and taking the larger issues of inequality at stake based on inclusive values and positions, rather than as undemocratic, authoritarian, ethnically and culturally homogenizer subjects. Consequently, any subject causing ‘injustice’ becomes the antagonized other who obliges ‘the People’ to experience misery, oppression, and discrimination.

The research tackles how Senator Sanders’ political communication brings disperse identities along with the chain of equivalence, how his movement articulates the political front of ‘the People’, and how it signifies the outsider through dichotomizing the political space. The study concludes that Sanders popular articulation provides a critical perspective for us to read populist zeitgeist of the twenty-first century.

Keywords

Populism, popular identity, collective identity, identity politics, political communication, discourse theory, antagonism, Bernie Sanders
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Populism, Collective and Popular Identities

1. Introduction

Human beings, as commonly argued, are all several things at once. The 21st century politics is saturated with the idea of individuals wearing many hats in different contexts and representing themselves accordingly. However, the presence of many hats on individuals are accompanied with another reality which causes deep ambiguities and rounded concepts: identity is being malleable than at any point in human history as our popular culture consumption, political demands, social needs, and values are constantly changing; and connected devices, which have become inextricable organs of ours, are annihilating the limits of time and physical place which were once deciding factors on who we were. Decisive limits, which define individuals and categorize accordingly, are disappearing as an outcome of the malleability (Hall, 2011), predefined identity categories such as class, gender, race and religious affiliations are losing their usefulness for the distribution of roles as a result of increasingly grid social structures. Class can now be hidden in many ways as a result of emerging new forms of employments, sexuality and increasingly gender are becoming fluid concepts, religious allegiances are almost out of daily social life, and race is increasingly seen as a social construct can be downplayed, surmounted or communicated.

These inclinations and changes have had a profound effect on politics. Political actors could once claim to represent defined class or social interests, however, unionized mass working classes have been swept away by decades of globalization; communities and social interactions have been reconstructed by the idea of individuality, identity and political culture that prioritize the choice of those identities. As a result, the classes were dismantled, many different identities have emerged around their particularistic demands and values; and joined into public sphere seeking for representation. Individuals getting together around similar social concerns and reshaping their political identities based on those concerns have given birth to new actors of politics as we all know as collective identities.

All of these social transformations have been accompanied by the emergence of an economic culture that prioritizes private pursuits, demands and needs. In this competitive environment, these newly emerging collective identities such as animal protectionists, environmentalists, feminists etc don’t see any harm in defining themselves through what they demand, which issues are at stake for them and more importantly who they are and at where
their shared conscious meets. By continuously articulating themselves to figure out answers to these questions, collective identities benefit from cohering around an identity-action. However, socially, economically and culturally competitive environment, in which these multiple collective identities reside, does not always allow them to acquire what they demand, to secure a stable identity and to achieve what they claim. In other words, collective identities are continuously in a struggle with other political identities, mostly with political actors who hold the right to decide to self-actualize themselves.

Throughout these constant struggles, some identities become able to fulfill and satisfy the questions which construct them. However, a great majority of them face with a failure which they feel that they are left unsatisfied, disappointed and excluded; and their capacities are left aggrieved by the institutional politics. At this point, an alternative and appealing area of politics, politics of redemption, introduces itself as populism where these left-behind collective identities aggregate themselves into one popular entity and represent their collective conscious’ about their dissatisfaction with populist rhetoric (Canovan, 1981; Laclau, 2005a).

From France to India, from Poland to the US, from the UK to Hungary, many polities are facing with the same political thunderbolt of populism where the Brexit Campaign, the Presidency of Donald Trump, the %99 Campaign of Bernie Sanders, Le Pen’s nationalist movement, Alexis Tsipras’ aggressive position toward the EU and many other momentous events around the world are named as. While many conventional political actors in these countries, who have had years of established political experience, grided networks, massive investments and wide name recognitions, are losing their political grounds against the mobilized populist movements, the newly emerging populist actors cultivate a political alternative in the body of a popular identity where it is promised that feelings, emotions, aspirations, and demands will be satisfied. In other words, populism appears as a political alternative for voters of Europe, the US and elsewhere who create an alliance of values, demands and concerns among each other under an overarching signifier, the people. By creating a common ground around discontented feelings and representing the constituents with ‘the People’, these once dispersed identities get together under a popular identity.

However, many scholars (for example Ivarsflaten, 2008; Mudde, 2004) - even though implicitly acknowledging the fact that populism emerges as a reactive political stance of dissatisfied individuals - name populism as a weakly defined political ideology based on ill-defined ‘the People’ which harnesses the fear of outsiders, antagonize the elite and the institutional order, manipulates political emotions. Based on the current populist zeitgeist in
Western Europe and North America which is mainly constructed around these signature features, the scholars bring content-based empirical conclusions about populism while positioning it as an opportunistic political move at the extremities of liberal democracies. In this regard, many discussions, scholarly or journalistically, blame populist actors getting the public to play along with a deceit political agenda which fabricates similarities which do not exist and manufacture panics by falsely identifying enemies.

This study takes this current elaboration at its center by starting to discuss different approaches scholars take in regarding the question of what populism is, of what populism constitutes and how a populist identity is created. After discussing different approaches and acknowledging varieties of populist identities, the literature review continues discussing how dispersed individuals transform themselves into identities and how they articulate their collectiveness. By challenging the current perception about populism which is mostly created by observational deductions and inductions, the theoretical discussion aims to lay out Laclau and Mouffe’s discursive analytical approach to understand how collective identities are constructed, elaborated and articulated. The discourse-analytical approach offers this study a theoretical lens to read formal and empirically-isolated forms of populism where I discuss that populism is a way of politics-making aggregating multiple different and dispersed collectives into a popular identity against the ones who don’t cater what is demanded. By not ignoring the fact that the populist zeitgeist in Europe and North America serves to the current negative perception about populism, the study tries to develop a neutral approach to understand populism.

The theoretical discussion is followed by a case study in which populist articulation of The U.S. Senator Bernard Sanders are analyzed and discussed in order to present an empirical example on employment of populist discourse to aggregate different collective identities. The analysis also reveals how ‘the People’ is used as the signifier of populist popular identity. The study uses Sanders’ social media posts and statements from his website where he displays, performs and communicates the popular identity he advocates.
Research Questions

Reading Sanders’ political communication online through Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse-theoretical approach, the study aims to answer the main research question which was posed: To whom does Bernie Sanders’ discursive articulation of ‘the People’ as a popular identity subject refer?

Two more sub-questions were presented to support the main research question:

**RSQ1:** Which groups are included in Sanders’ articulatory definition of ‘the People’?

**RSQ2:** How does Sanders define the antagonistic other of ‘the People’?

Relevance and Contribution to The Field

The US 2016 presidential election period has been one of the most important political events that had and will have an effect on the American and world politics. Not only the presidency of Donald Trump, but also the race between Clinton and Sanders will leave an indelible impression on the politics of future, since once an unknown Vermont Senator Bernard Sanders has become the most popular and approved political figure of the American politics after the elections inspiring other politicians all around the world (Penn, Ansolabehere, & Nesho, 2017), even though he could not get the nomination against Hillary Clinton. His campaign has started from the stretch with %1 of votes (Pollster, 2015), he has succeeded to become a strong contender during the primaries against Hillary Clinton who was named as ‘the most experienced and qualified candidate of the United States History’ by back-then sitting president Obama (B. Obama in Nelson, 2016). After the presidential election, his influence in American politics did not evaporate, and his grassroots movement has kept its capaciousness and magnitudes which had started as an underdog attempt. Many political commentators (Chaykowski, 2016; Gold, 2016; Grothaus, 2016; Holmes, 2016) have praised him and his campaign’s skills utilizing digital platforms to expand the electorate he represented during the election; and the people he still represents after the election.

Sanders’ movement during the election has been created as a coalition of different social groups including unions, people of colors, students, workers, urbanites and countryside citizens; and his political constituent consists of aggregation of different sections of the American society where he still keeps articulating the political demands and claims of these groups after the election. Therefore, the movement he represents constitutes a proper example for populism from Laclau and Mouffe’s perspective. In fact, Mouffe, herself, praises Sanders’
populist rhetoric which aims to create a political frontier of class, feminists, students, intellectuals, etc. (Mouffe in Shahid, 2016). With RSQ1, I address this discursive mechanism employed by his political movement to articulate a popular identity by bringing disperse social groups under a common representation against the ones who do not cater. Consequently, with RSQ2, I analyze how the movement constructs and articulates the opposite side of itself, so to speak the enemy of the discoursed popular identity.

The thesis locates itself at the theoretical intersection of populism, collective identities, and political communication. Given the fact that I have only encountered limited empirical study which analyzes the articulatory practice of a popular identity through discourse theory on digital political communication (see the review), this study aims to address this need in the literature by identifying and discussing the implications of discourse theory into populist political communication through providing theoretically rich empirical analysis.
2. Literature Review

2.1. Varieties of Populism

Populism has created considerably high interest among social scientists, especially political scientists, journalists and political commentators (Kaltwasser, 2012; Mudde, 2004), yet many criticized populism and asserted that “the mercurial nature of populism has often exasperated those attempting to take it seriously” (Stanley, 2008, p. 108). However, the reality of populism is conquering our daily political discussions; and it is used widely and contestably (Barr, 2009; Roberts, 2006). That is to say, “populism does leave an imprint on important political phenomena” (Hawkins, 2010, p. 49).

The attraction towards populist movements from every social layer and the ability of populist sentiments to cultivate political engagement make this study highly important, especially while we are experiencing a decline in political participation (Skocpol & Williamson, 2012), a weakening trust in democracies (Foa & Mounk, 2016), a deterioration in party memberships and voter turnouts (Invernizzi-Accetti & Wolkenstein, 2017). In an era of political alienation and abalienation, populism’s constitutive role in the politics also makes these efforts pertinent as the first step of creating an understanding of populism which will help us to analyze and to understand the further discussion in this thesis.

2.1.1. The Bemused Nature of Populism

Almost every scholar agrees on the fact that “populism worships the people” (Ionescu & Gellner, 1969, p. 4), yet any consensus has not been reached beyond this fixation. Gellner and Ionescu, as one of the first attempts to analyze the concept, assert (1969, p.1):

“There can, at present, be no doubt about the importance of populism. But no one is quite clear just what it is. As a doctrine or as a movement, it is elusive and protean. It bobs up everywhere, but in many and contradictory shapes. Does it have any underlying unity? Or does one name cover a multitude of unconnected tendencies?”

The main reason behind having difficulties to define populism rests on the fact that the term has been adopted to describe many different political bodies in very diverse political and social contexts. Throughout history, parties, ideologies, politicians, and leaders across the world, political movements and protests have been named or categorized as populist actions, resulting in a huge variety in the paradigm. The modern-day concept of populism first appeared in the late nineteenth century, both in the Russian Empire and the USA. Russian Narodism and
the American People’s Party were first organized political movements based on the core idea of populism which sees ‘the People’ as the source of virtue and goodness (Hicks, 1931; Postel, 2007; Torke & Thaden, 1972). They initiated a mass mobilization dividing society into two main camps - the people, and the people’s enemies. However, these two movements could not reach to any substantial resolutions, and their supporters were dissolved into different political movements in the respective countries, namely the Bolsheviks and the Democrat Party.

Populist movements have started to reappear in the 1950s, especially in Latin America (Roberts, 2006) but also in Africa, and even in France with a unique form known as the Poujadist movement (D. Johnson, 2003). Afterwards, populist parties and movements have always been at the center stage in the political arena, or they have been a shoo-in for a leading role. Populist parties and leaders have taken office (Donald Trump, Fidesz, Syriza), become part of coalitions (Finns Party, Lega Nord), or emerged as a vigorous opposition (Sweden Democrats, M5S). As an inevitable consequence, the topic has been one of the most dynamic political phenomena and widely addressed by both the mass media and academic literature. It is unavoidable not to encounter with a populist reality in almost every geographical and ideological context including Latin America, Africa, Eastern Europe and Baltic countries. Significantly recent study of Mudde and Kaltwasser (2012) also discusses emerging populist trends in the western democracies of Europe and North America. Besides being a global phenomenon, populist sentiments vary by region adopting different political stances. For instance, Europe, especially Western Europe, has been experiencing almost exclusively right-wing variant of populism which mostly targets immigrants and ethnical minorities since the 1980s (Art, 2011; Ivarsflaten, 2008; Mudde, 2011; Schäfer & Streeck, 2013); Latin America, on the other hand, has experienced a different variation of populism which has associated itself with inclusive appeals, diverse ethnic identities, wide social programs and ‘leftish’ stances (Levitsky & Roberts, 2013; Madrid, 2008; Roberts, 2006). An extensive research on the British media (Bale, Van Kessel, & Taggart, 2011) displays that the list of politicians, who were labelled as ‘populists’ by the media, includes Jacob Zuma (South Africa), Gordon Brown (UK), Silvio Berlusconi (Italy), Hugo Chavez (Venezuela), Mahmoud Ahmedinejad (Iran), Mike Huckabee (USA). Any similar analysis in today’s media would give different names such as Jean Marie Le Pen (France), Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Turkey), Frauke Petry (Germany), Geert Wilders (Netherlands), Donald Trump, Bernard Sanders (USA), Alexis Tsipras (Greece) and so on. Indeed, finding a common ideational intersection among these names is highly challenging since they are geographically, historically, politically and socially dispersed actors.
2.1.2. Populism: An Ideology or A Discourse?

Most researchers tend to view populism as an ideology. Cas Mudde (2004), who has been significantly influential in the literature, suggests that populist political philosophy is articulation of a bundle of loose interrelated ideas, and populists utilize these articulated and fixed ideas to create “interpretive frameworks that emerge as a result of the practice of putting ideas to work” (Stanley, 2008, p. 98). Populists define themselves through those ideas and frameworks, eventually letting the rest be ‘the other pole of spectrum’. Cas Mudde, in his series of studies on right wing parties in Europe, suggests a widely used and accepted definition of populism which is employed by many to analyse populism and populist communication (Engesser, Ernst, Esser, & Büchel, 2016; Inglehart & Norris, 2016; Rooduijn, 2013; Stanley, 2008).

“[populism is] a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite,’ and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people” (Mudde, 2004, p. 543)

In Mudde’s account, populist ideology consists of mental frameworks and fixed facts that assist political actors and voters to define their political realities (Pankowski, 2010). In this widely accepted definition, populism takes its ideological shape through three core features: anti-establishment, authoritarianism, and nativism (Mudde, 2007). For Mudde, populism is nourished from the resentment towards any established authorities, whether they are the financial elite such as big banks, big pharma or multinational/global corporations, the media elite such as pundits, journalists or commentators, the political elite such as professional politicians or intermediary officers, the intellectual elite such as scientific experts or academics. Anti-establishment or anti-elitism is probably the most cited feature of populism since it creates a distinctive difference between ‘the pure, uncorrupted and authentic nature of the people’ and ‘exploitative and corrupted nature of the elite’ (Filc, 2010; Kazin, 1998).

Secondly, according to Mudde (2007), populists show authoritarian leanings, approving strong and charismatic leadership which expresses the voice of the people without caring of different mechanisms that ensure institutional checks and balances and the protection of minority rights (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008; Mudde, 2004, 2007). The popular sovereignty and actualization of the ‘general will’ override individual liberties. This characteristic feature of populism has been read as its opposition to the liberal (procedural) form of democracy.
(Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008; Mudde, 2007). While liberalism suspects that populists’ authoritarian tendencies may create a dictatorial monster, populism supposes that liberalism’s procedural structure “imposes undesired constraints on the power of the people” (Filc, 2010, p. 9).

Finally, populism is highly associated with the belief that belonging to a particular community is the prominence value of populism (Isaiah Berlin in MacRae, 1969). However, this is not accurate enough to define ‘the value of the people’ for populist politics, because same associations can be found in all nationalist ideologies and ethnocentric beliefs. What is more, populism entails the belief that the people is the source of virtue and good, using terms such as ‘us, the people, the virtuous’ vs. ‘them, the enemy of the people, the corrupt’. From eyes of the ideological populist framework, it embraces a banal version of ‘oneness’ while creating a group of ‘the pure people’ based on nativism or xenophobic nationalism (Mudde, 2007). Referring to abovementioned three core features of populism, Norris and Inglehart make a bleak analysis of the features of populism especially its characteristics in Europe and North America (2016, p. 7):

“Populism favors mono-culturalism over multiculturalism, national self-interest over international cooperation and development aid, closed borders over the free flow of peoples, ideas, labor and capital, and traditionalism over progressive and liberal social values.”

Nativist and authoritarian sentiment of populism, in Mudde’s account, represents “one pole of a cultural continuum” (Inglehart & Norris, 2016, p. 7) on which cosmopolitan values, multicultural practices, and social liberal values are located at the opposite pole. Populism, within these three core features, embraces an understanding of homogeneous nation-states dismissing every cosmopolitan values such as open borders, shared multicultural practices, diversity of cultures and lifestyles, tolerance for diverse political, social and intellectual backgrounds (Acemoglu, Egorov, & Sonin, 2011; Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012; Pasquino, 2008; Stanley, 2008). Furthermore, populism, as an ideology with authoritarian tendencies (Mudde, 2011; Taggart, 2000), challenges and impairs socially liberal values such as the fair trial principles, the protection of minority rights, the political-cultural participation, the international cooperation, and also the support for equal rights for women and different genders, the environmental protection, the freedom of expression, the freedom of religion which are all associated with liberal values. That’s to say; populism is used to be synonymous with far right.
However, historical experiences (Kazin, 1998) and the existence of a wide variety of populist actors in the politics (Bale et al., 2011) indicate that nativist, mono-culturist and authoritarian characteristics associated with populism actually do not reflect the core experience of populism, falling short of defining what populism is. Even though Mudde and Kaltwasser (2012, p. 2) claim that “… ideological features attach to populism depend upon the socio-political context within which the populist actors mobilize”, evaluating populism through these three features result in over-generalization and present some problems.

The current interest of journalists and scholars to define components of populism is mostly driven by the intention of explaining right-wing movements in North America and Europe and timely right-wing populist political actors such Donald Trump, Marine Le Pen, Nigel Farage, Geert Wilders, Victor Orban and Norbert Hoffer (Inglehart & Norris, 2016, p. 8). Many, including Mudde, develop a definition of populism based on the characteristics observed in these actors or movements resulting in a negative fixation for populism. The current political actors and campaigns such as Donald Trump (his political rhetoric is based on a mix of racial resentment, political and economic isolationism, intolerance of diverse cultures, sexism, the appeal of strong-man leadership); and the Brexit campaign (the campaign is constructed around a nativist proud of being British and mistrust of outsiders) overshadow many aspects of populism, and limit the current discussion into these negative resentments and imperceptions. Thinking populism as an ideology nourishing from nativism, anti-establishment and authoritarianism does not allow us to discriminate among distinctively different populist movements and eventually lumping Geert Wilders, Le Pen, the 19th century farmers’ populism in the USA and Evo Morales together. Furthermore, restricting analysis of populism to its ideological premises also does not enable us to identify the conditions for the rise of populist movements. It does not supply enough room to understand why certain social movements embrace the populist worldview in certain historical contexts (Laclau 1977). And, uttering it as ‘a thin-centered ideology’ rarefies to comprehend populism in different contexts.

As an alternative to the approach above, De la Torre (2010) brings more flexible and ‘kneadable’ definition of populism which may be applicable for many contexts. De la Torre, based on his observation in Ecuador, denies the ideational structure of populism and defines it as a “rhetoric [oratory] that constructs politics as the moral and ethical struggle between el pueblo [the people – my own translation] and the oligarchy” (2010, p. 4). Populism as a discursive political style employed by political actors rather than an ideology leads us to perceive it as a “mode of political expression that is employed selectively and strategically by
both right and left, liberals and conservatives” (Gidron & Bonikowski, 2013, p. 8). At this point, populism takes on a new meaning and dimension allowing us to modify how we assess it. Contrary to seeing populism as a binary realm - an actor is populist or not - understanding it as a way of making political statements shifts our assessment to a matter of degree – an actor has more populist characteristics or fewer (Deegan-Krause & Haughton, 2009, p. 822). By operationalizing populism as specific instances of political expression (Bos, Van Der Brug, & De Vreese, 2013; Deegan-Krause & Haughton, 2009), it would be possible to detract the focus from a simple populist/non-populist normative formulation. Deegan-Krause’s and Haughton’s (2009) claim on ‘degreed populism’ help us to understand why populism takes different characteristics and contexts; and to analyze variations of populist politics within and between different actors (Hawkins, 2010; Pauwels, 2011). Panizza (2005, p. 8), similarly, evaluates populism as a mean of political expression saying that populism should not be used “to signify that [...] subjects were populists, in the way they were unionists or socialists, liberal Democrats or conservative Republicans, but rather that all these people employed populism as a flexible mode of persuasion to redefine the people and their adversaries”

Accepting populism as a mean of political expression elaborates what many sociologists and political scientists (De la Torre, 2010; Hawkins, 2010; Levitsky & Roberts, 2013; Madrid, 2008; Roberts, 2006, 2007) argue on Latin American political contexts. They claim that Latin American politicians employ different populist sentiments to strengthen and uphold whichever ideological stances they have. For instance, Madrid (2008, p. 482), in his analysis of the rise of ethno-populism in Latin America, claims that socialist leaders engage with populist rhetorics to leverage their ideological objectives consisting of anti-establishment and anti-system appeals such as economic redistribution, mobilization the nationalization of natural resources, etc. Many socialist leaders in the region – those who are already entitled with an ideology-identify themselves with a populist concern or message in their political expressions to convince their constituents. Populism here concerns mostly to pro-redistribution opinions when Latin American leaders use populist language to signal to the voters that they are not beholden to big economic interests and in line with socialism and the interests of the voter (Acemoglu et al.,

1 For instance, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of Turkey and Alexis Tsipras of Greece are two different modern political actors who employ dissimilar populist sentiments for political expression, persuasion and identification.
Hennesy’s analysis (1969) over the Latin American variant of populism exemplifies (albeit from a different theoretical perspective) that even nationalistic and charismatic populism emancipates different constituents to demand ethnically and socio-economically enriched reforms, to mobilize, and to advocate radical policy changes after the post-colonial era by owning inclusive, indigenous-aware social programs and economic reforms.

Some historical observations made by scholars focused on populism in different contexts would shed lights on our understanding of populism more. Postel’s political analysis (2007) on the rise of American populist movements reveals that populism in America has gained ground during economic depressions and stagnations or social subversions. Exemplifying 19th century populist movements’ (The American People’s Party) political articulation before and during the Great Depression and other populist fractions during the Vietnam War (Watergate babies), Postel claims that populist movements mostly arise to challenge harsh economic, social or political realities as a coalition of middle-class activists, workers, and small business owners. In the American’s People’s Party’s context (also known as the Populist Party or the Populists), Postel argues that the movement contested some social and economic changes such as technological developments in transportation and communication, excessive industrial production, and global trade; and brought these subjects up for public and political discussion. Contrary to the current perception resulting from ‘the populist zeitgeist’ of 21st century (the book title of Mudde, 2004), Postel (2007) views populist politics of the Party not as intolerant, unreasonable, backward-looking opposition or a rejection of democracy, but as a defiance against economic, social and political retrogression, seeking for substantial reforms and increased democratic participation. Based on his discussion on the Populist Party, Postel (2007) argues that populist movements may be strongly democratic, mobilizing millions of middle-class citizens who are mostly unheard.

Given the various types of populism observed in different geographical and historical context, a single definition made by ideational approach is away from being convincing. Various movements and actors show different characteristics within populism’s borders; therefore a single definition runs short to catalog the various movements as such. Instead, accepting populism as a political discursive style, a mode of expression and of making political statements renders our understanding possible that there are ‘multiple populisms’, and populism owns plural logics based on different articulations. Populism here requires a taxonomy according to language and communication it obtains. As we understand populism as a family
of varied discourses and political expressions; every populist identity shares some common attributes and traits, such as the appeal to ‘the People’ and anti-establishment stance, but also presents significant differences in their articulations, expression, and communication; particularly to whom they refer as ‘the People. Margaret Canovan (1981) suggests four different populist identities based on their owned values and characteristics which allow us to grasp diverse populist phenomena: agrarian populism, populist dictatorships, populist democracy, and populism of politicians. Filc (2010) builds up on Canovan’s proposal, and he claims that populism can be better grasped as a family of varied political expressions, communications, and identities based on the way they articulate their discourses and ‘the people’ they represent. Inspiring from Canovan, he divides populism into two main characteristics depending upon their way of articulating their political constituents: inclusive and exclusionary populist movements (Filc, 2010, p. 11). According to him, inclusive populism refers to a political movement or a collective which is an alliance of different social groups and identities and also welcoming ‘excluded’ ones. Exclusionary populism, on the other hand, maintains same features as being an alliance against the common enemy, yet it also disregards excluded identities in order to create a more refined identity (Filc, 2010, p. 12). These two forms of populist articulation commonly aim (1) to develop a mean for different social groups (based on class, gender, race, unsatisfied demands, etc) to become political subjects; (2) to resolve conflict in society by appealing to the people; (3) to define meaning of the word ‘people’; (4) to represent ‘the people’ by a singularity in a possibly direct way (Filc, 2010, p. 11). However, inclusivity or exclusivity of populist movements gets decided through the process of identification and communication made by political actors. The term ‘the People’ refers to an identity which “is always in transit between several symbolic references” (Balibar, 2002, p. 28) and it articulates according to different positions of its subjects, thus resulting in the

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2 Agrarian populism refers to farmer movements with radical economic agendas (exp: Us People’s Party); populist dictatorships refers to the mode of government such as established by Getúlio Vargas in Brazil; populist democracy refers to the 21st populist zeitgeist in Europe and North America while making calls for popular referenda, direct participation, majoritarian regimes; and finally populism of politicians refers to non-ideological politics taking ‘the people’ at center (Canovan, 1981).

3 Hereby, Butler (2000, p. 23) argues that excluded identities are “underrepresented by the general will or the universal, do not rise to the level of the recognizably human” and these identities are considered as not a part of the dominant identity. Excluded groups go by the names of jobless, immigrants and illegal or undocumented aliens, Muslims, Jews, Waloon, Roma, %99, Black, Mexican, les sans papiers etc.
consolidation of collective identities in different characteristics. As Filc (2010, p. 12) argues, “It can be used either to constitute the political identity of a previously excluded group, claiming its inclusion […] or to strengthen a threatened identity by excluding the other.”

Those who support the ideational approach take a stand against discursive approach arguing that evaluating populism as political communication-identification style limits the possibility of making any empirical and theoretical analysis because of vagueness and abstractness in the description of populism and political sides (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012, p. 7). On the other hand, for Ernesto Laclau (2005a), the binary structure of populist politics—the people vs. other— is a symbolic distinction; therefore it should be vague and abstract. He calls these dual categories as non-ideological ‘empty signifiers’ without any significant meaning, yet a process of ‘identification’ initiated by a movement or a leader would give these categories a meaning which will eventually fill the signifier, “whereby specific social groups are construed as ‘the people’ (us) and pitted against oppressive ‘others’ (them)” (Gidron & Bonikowski, 2013, p. 10).

Right here, the scope of this study obliges me to choose which of populism, namely ideological perspective or discursive perspective, will be considered to go further in the literature review. Aforementioned historical examples and a wide variety of different populist articulations and applications drive the discussion into a situation where populism shows multiple characteristics and identities, therefore I formulize this study on the fact that diverse populism(s) share a couple of common attributes and traits, but also constitute significant differences in their expression and communication. Since the most distinctive feature of populist politics is the reference to ‘the people’, and the meaning of ‘the people’ varies among populist practices as it corresponds to different collective identities in different contexts; I move on by accepting that populism is an umbrella term consisting of diverse practices and constructions based on differences in their articulations of ‘the People’. Even though it is not the aim of this study, addressing populism as a way of politics-making by aggregating and articulating specific social groups against ‘the Others’ help us to understand the conditions for the rise of populist movements, and to understand why populist political identities show certain cultural belongings, such as nationality, ethnicity, anti-globalization, anti-establishment, etc. Limiting our discussions with the main research question as well as RSQ1 and RSQ2 will not put us back to understand how collective identities are created since popular identities run through the same process of identification. In order to proceed in this discussion, let me address the literature of identity.
2.2. Construction of Collective Identities and Movements

2.2.1. Collective Identities

Since it was introduced by Cooley (1902), identity studies have come along and become a central topic to modern sociological discourses. The initial studies mainly focused on the creation of ‘me’ through looking yourself from others’ perspective, namely the personal identity. Later, social movements around identities such as gender/sexuality, race/ethnicity or class have shifted scholarly attention to macro-sociological entities such as collectives and group agencies (Cerulo, 1997, p. 386). Since academic interest on identity construction has tended towards these three collective issues of what Appiah and Gates (Appiah & Gates, 1995, p. 1) called the “holy trinity”, predominant focus on the formation of the ‘me’ have shifted towards “the notion addresses the ‘we-ness’ of a group stressing the similarities and shared attributes” taking gender/sexuality, race/ethnicity and class at its center (Cerulo, 1997, p. 386).

However, collective identity theories, which have been employed to understand the capacity of newly emerging collectives, have passed the limit of these widely discussed issues and have created new domains in which “other logics of action based in politics, ideology, and culture, as the root of much collective action” are discussed (Buechler, 1995, p. 442).

Collective identity is described as “an interactive and shared definition produced by several interacting individuals who are concerned with the orientation of their action as well as the field of opportunities and constraints in which their action takes place” (Melucci, 1989, p. 34). Similarly, Castell argues that individuals bring a definition of themselves through creating

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4 Cooley’s ‘looking-glass self’ concept creates a basis for the studies of personal identities.

5 Main scholar attentions of the social constructionist approach, as I highlighted above, are around “holy trinity” of collective identity discussions. It goes without saying that social constructionism works on gender identity in which they explore how femininity and masculinity is defined through social interactions (for example Connell, 1995; Eilberg-Schwartz & Doniger, 1995; Thorne, 1992); on gender-sex link in which they explore how biological distinctions translate into social facts (for example Arditti, Klein, & Minden, 1984; Sault, 1994); and also on the gender literature in which they contribute to lesbian identity and lesbian movements (for example V. Taylor, Whittier, & Morris, 1992). Similarly, race and ethnic identities represent another strength of constructionism. For instance, blackness and racial classification (Davis, 2010), racialization and self-racialization (Balibar & Wallerstein, 1991), national identity (Berezin, 1997; Spillman, 1997) are under heavy analysis of constructivist collective identity discussions. And finally, another focus area of collective identity discussions is the last one of “holy trinity”, the formation of social classes (for example Davidoff & Hall, 2013; Dudley, 1997; Garcia, 1991; Snyder, McNall, Levine, & Fantasia, 1992).
a common cause and associating themselves with certain entities (2010). This act of association with particular entities also comes with ‘the presence of non-association’, or ‘the notion of other’ as Tajfel and Forgas put it boldly: “We are what we are because they are not what we are” (1981, p. 124).

The term collective identity is a centuries-old concept which was also defined in early classic sociological literature such as in Marx’s “class conscience” (Lukács, 1971) or Durkheim’s “collective conscience” (Durkheim, 2014). However, these early literature dissociate themselves from the current literature, because class consciousness or collective consciences are evaluated essential or natural processes, rather than "definition produced by several interacting individuals” (Melucci, 1989, p. 34). These essentialist approaches evaluate collective identities as unified, singular social groups which emerge from different collective attributes such as physiological or material traits, geographical or locational similarities, etc. Collective identities are seen as structured and patterned entities “as extensions of institutionalized actions” where their primary focus is “to reform the predominant social structure and/or gain entry to the polity” (Buechler, 1995, p. 438). Organizations and their extensions such as unions originate a strong basis for collective identities while utilizing resources effectively and making political emphases (Tilly & Wood, 2015). Therefore, collective identities somehow show bureaucratic and formal characteristics (Buechler, 1993, 1995).

For instance, from a Marxist view, Germani and Di Telia argue (in Filc, 2010, p. 10) that working classes in industrial countries develop a political class consciousness and support socialist parties (since their material traits and organizational structure require this), while subordinate classes in peripheral countries identify with populist movements instead of acknowledging that their material and social traits require them to come together their class-related identities. Therefore, populism here, in their words, represents “a form of false consciousness of the subordinate class, since populist movements do not represent these [subordinate] classes’ real interest” (Filc, 2010, p. 10). In other words, the workers in the peripheral countries prefer turning their back to their organizational basis, which is their class resource, and they lose their chance to mobilize their collective attributes. Constructionist approaches act with suspicion towards essentialism of collective attributes, and further to that, they reject any predefined categories or attributes which are assigned to a collective. Therefore, for them, populism itself cannot refer to a ‘false consciousness’, but maybe to a different consciousness.
The constructionist perspective embraces the idea that every collective identity is socially bounded, a constructed artifact which is “molded, refabricated, and mobilized in accord with reigning cultural scripts and centers of power” (Cerulo, 1997, p. 387). On the contrary to the essentialist view, there is almost a consensus that identities are multiple and polyvalent (Duszak, 2002; Melucci, 1989). Identities, either the personal or the collective, cannot be seen as a fixed, monolithic entity which people do or do not correspond to, rather they present a continuum in which individuals take different positions and become relatively ‘ingroup’ and ‘outgroup’ (Duszak, 2002). Kroskrity defines this multiplicity by saying that individuals obtain “repertoires of identity” personally or collectively (1999, p. 112). They form different ways of expression while “look[ing] to other sources of identity […] as the definers of collective identity” (Buechler, 1995, p. 442).

2.2.2. Collective Mobilization of Identities

Identities based on different belongings such as animal protectionism, environmentalism, counter-culturism, anti-globalism move scholar attention to other domains of the identity field. In the current literature, these belongings exemplify “collectives moved by issues of collective definition, signification, and power” (Cerulo, 1997, p. 393). While being ignited by their collective issues, these groups give birth to collective identity-based movements which mostly target “the social domain of civil society rather than the economy or state” (Nip, 2004, p. 28). On the contrary to traditional social movements spurred by ideology, collective identity-based movements articulate what matters to them, they “act rather than react; they fight to expand freedom, not to achieve it; they mobilize for choice rather than emancipation” (Cerulo, 1997, p. 393). In other words, collective identity-based movements transform into ‘new social movements’ which are self-reflective and dedicated to expressive actions of the collective. New social movement theories highlight the importance of values and issues for collective identities which produce meanings for involved actors. Alberto Melucci notes how ‘new social movements’ reshape the understanding of collective action:

“The freedom to have which characterized . . . industrial society has been replaced by the freedom to be. [...] In post-material society, there emerges a further type of right, the right to existence, or rather, to a more meaningful existence” [my emphases] (Melucci, 1989, pp. 177–178).

In accord with Melucci, many theorists argue that Western societies have undergone a heavy transformation since the 1970s: Western polities enter into the post-industrial age in which ideological politics (i.e., class politics) and personalities of these ideological politics (i.e.,
labor, blue collar) lose their positions; and identity politics, in the shape of new social movements, fills the gap left by the ideological struggle (Habermas, 1987; Offe, 1985; Touraine, 1985). According to them, these movements are driven by new causes, issues, actors, and motivations bringing a new way of politics. Desai argues that “the new actors [are] middle-class, educated men and women opposed to the old actors, i.e., the proletariat; the new issues [are] included gender and sexual equality, peace, ecological justice as opposed to the old class issues; and the new politics [is] a new way of organizing” (2010, p. 424). The list of new issues may grows with other political, social, historical or economic demands which echoes with “more meaningful existence”: equality among species, educational equality, anti-establishment, social justice, economic redistribution, welfare, access to healthcare, anti-globalization, recognition of marginalized identities, and also fundamentalism, nativism, nationalism… In other words, any sense of ‘we’, which is “symbolically meaningful to participants and that logically precedes meaningful calculation of the costs and benefits of joining in the collective action”, stimulates the creation of identities around issues or demands, consequently the creation of new social movements (Buechler, 1993, p. 228).

These new social movements, based on collective identities around collective demands, present a special form of collectiveness. Since they gather around a common issue, they also develop a collective (shared) conscious letting them develop coordinated actions, offense and defense mechanisms and different type of expressions for insulation, differentiation, cooperation, competition and persuasion. This shared consciousness works as “interpretative frameworks that include political consciousness, relational networks and the goals, means, and the environment of action of the movement” (Nip, 2004, p. 26). While whichever demand and issue they articulate, new social movements enact themselves in a moral space where they define themselves as right and good (C. Taylor, 1989); and frame their identity within shared values, worldviews, attitudes as well as demands (Della Porta & Diani, 2009). The framing or schematization of identity occurs through linking historical, cultural and social concerns with simultaneous action of thought, articulation, and action (J. L. Cohen, 1985; Enford & Hunt, 1995). Albeit he speaks from a critical perspective, Michael Piore (1995) calls these new social movements as “communities of meaning”, because what making them a social movement is the whichever symbols, boundaries or discourses they develop to identify themselves.

2.2.3. Identification Processes for New Social Movements

Since new social movements and the establishment of collective identities have become a much-debated topic for scholars, identification process that they have passed through, have
also obtained an energized attention. A fast-growing literature discusses mechanisms and way of expressions that different collective movements obtain to distinguish themselves from others and to renegotiate their boundaries. In this context, the processes of identification “performs multiple functions, including transforming vague dissatisfactions into a politicized agenda, providing a sense of collective identity, and defining certain goods as potential movement resources” (Buechler, 1993, p. 222).

Inevitably, the first and most obvious identification process for a collective is done by physical symbols. Since the late 1980s, several studies argue that physical symbols are used to show in-group positions of individuals⁶. To show how physical symbols can be used to identify certain collective identities, the most recent example of using physical symbols to frame an identity is Donald Trump’s red “Make America Great Again!” hats used during and after the 2016 US elections. In an interview made by CNN journalist Cassie Spodak (2017), a Trump supporter says that “I think that they [MAGA hats] brought some divisiveness”, “they made a great divide between Democrats and Republicans but I think they made people pay attention, they made people wake up”. Besides physical symbols, intangible symbols such as moral (Judeo-Christian), socio-economic (wealth) or cultural (university degree) differences between individuals can be used to construct a collective identity as they can be used as symbolic boundaries which create “conceptual distinctions made by social actors…that separate people into groups and generate feelings of similarity and group membership” (Lamont & Molnár, 2002, p. 168). Even though these symbolic boundaries may result in prejudice among and between different collectives -these boundaries bring visible lines that allow privileged individuals to assert their superiority or worth, Lamont’s earlier findings claim that the boundaries that are strongly grounded with a strong shared meaning, ensure a strong collective body (1995).

In related studies, scholars discuss that collective identities are created by individuals who stop performing their personal traits and behave according to certain norms, objectives, and necessities of a salient group (Haslam, Reicher, & Platow, 2011). This process of what Turner et al. call as depersonalization, triggers the construction of collective identities through group empathy, altruism, and cooperation but also ethnocentrism and stereotyping (Turner, 2002).

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⁶ Objects (for example Martorella, 1990), signs (for example O’barr, 1994), artworks (for example Dauber, 1992; Martorella, 1990), clothing (for example Rubenstein, 2001) or public spaces (for example Mukerji, 1997; Zukin, 1991) can be used to articulate and frame identities.
Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994). The most prominent example of depersonalization can be observed in any organizational structure in which individual members are told to show a sense of belonging, i.e., a football team or an army.

Finally, another approach to the creation of collective identities is offered by post-structuralism in which language, discourse, discursive expression, and communication play essential roles. In his work, Kroskrity considers identities as the multiple “linguistic construction of membership in one or more social groups or categories” (1999, p. 111). It is language or discursive expression which gives individuals the needed apparatus to construct and frame identities; and identities are open to change through processes of social interaction (Davies & Harré, 1990). Putting differently, identities are “established” and “communicatively produced”, later they are “displayed”, “performed” or “communicated” (Kroskrtiy, 1999, p. 112). Davies argues that individual identities are firstly articulated by two consecutive steps (Davies, 2000, p. 90):

“1. Learning the categories which include some people and exclude others, e.g. male/female, father/daughter;
2. Participating in the various discursive practices through which meanings are allocated to those categories. These include the story lines through which different subject positions are elaborated.”

Later, these two steps of “learning the categories” and “allocating the meanings” are followed by two more steps where identities create their belongings to certain groups, hereby collective identities are created (Davies, 2000, p. 90):

“3. Positioning of self in terms of the categories and storylines. This involves imaginatively positioning oneself as if one belongs in one category and not in the other (e.g., as girl and not boy, or good girl and not bad girl);
4. Recognition of oneself as having the characteristics that locate oneself as a member of various subclasses of (usually dichotomous) categories and not of others – i.e., the development of a sense of oneself as belonging in the world in certain ways and thus seeing the world from the perspective of one so positioned. This recognition entails as emotional commitment to the category membership and the development of a moral system organized around the belonging.”

What may sound confusing here is that these consecutive four steps somehow suggest that the construction of identity, either the personal or the collective, is an allocation or designation of meanings to already-existing categories. For instance, in the first step, individuals learn ‘the categories of male or female’; or in the third step, they acknowledge ‘the
positions categori
ess of good or bad’. Here, the authors are subjected to a wide critique since
they admit that there are pre-existing categories or presuppositions. Some overcome this
problem by accepting the existence of pre-existing identity categories (for example
Androustopoulos & Georgakopoulou, 2003); while others make a distinction between “socially
effective” and socially ineffective categories (Hausendorf & Kesselheim, 2002, p. 267). Laclau
(1996, 2005a) defines these pre-existing categories as ‘floating signifiers’ with a lack of
“constant” meaning (1996, p. 40). To put differently, these social categories may pre-exist but
only “in a socially ineffective, non functioning, […] latent way. They only come to full
existence, functioning and socially effective, when they are in a way 'made operational' in
discourse” (Versluys, 2007, p. 97).

2.2.4. Online and Identity

Thanks to the advancement of communication technologies, newly emerging digital
capabilities all together play a significant role in constructing and communicating collective
identities. In the current digitalized age in which individuals are inevitably media users
performing content producer and content consumer roles at the same time, a broad scholar
attention also concentrates on how digitalized communication technologies interact with
personal and collective identities. The main question asked is how digital communication
technologies (DCTs) facilitate the process of identification for movements which come together
around a common issue, shared values, worldviews, attitudes as well as demands by enabling
individuals from diverse locations and backgrounds to congregate for such cultivation (Ceren,
2006; Custard, 2007; Hollenbeck & Zinkhan, 2006; Meyrowitz, 1997). Many empirical
observations, in the sequel of this question, note that digital communication technologies play
an instrumental role enabling identities to emerge through creating communicative spaces.

The most highlighted benefit of DCTs is that it helps collective identities to carve out
their shared consciousness, which is one of the core precepts required to have in order to
cultivate common political, social, historical or economics interests and values. DCTs make it
in a very efficient and coherent way (Hollenbeck & Zinkhan, 2006). In an earlier study on
online and offline feminist collective groups, Ayer (2003) asserts that online platforms help
identities to establish a shared consciousness in a more resourceful manner. By doing interviews
and nethnographic observations, Ayer concludes that the online feminists show a higher level
of group consciences and a stronger dedication compared to the offline group due to the fact
that the online group has a better definition of who they are as a result of participatory online
space and a well-defined identity boundary about their group. More recent discussions on how
DCTs facilitate the creation of a shared consciousness can be found in the literature written about the Arab Spring (Hassan, 2015; Khatib & Lust, 2014). Khatib and Lust’s book gathers many-first hand observations of tech-savvy activists and elaborates how the protests have evolved with the help of online manifestations of different collective movements within each country’s socio-political context where the activists had never have a chance in an offline setup.

DCTs also assists collective identities to identify adversary identities as it is illustrated by empirical studies made on online platforms. By operationalizing a series of content analysis and nethnographic observations in a homosexual woman bulletin board, Nip (2004) suggests that the fortification of the queer identity mainly draws its strength from the culture of opposition to heterosexual coupledom. In some scarce cases, Nip observes that the direct negative references to heterosexuality play a pivotal role in accepting a new member into the online community. A more recent study, made by Van Summeren (2007) in a Dutch discussion forum, argues how religious attributions is employed to define and recognize a collective identity and its antagonistic other. Based on her content analysis, she notes that some forum users make explicit references such as ‘We, the Muslims’ in opposition to ‘non-Muslims’ or ‘you Dutchmen’. References to certain Islamic rituals such as fasting, devotions, etc. strengthen the sense of belonging among Muslims, and they even externalize those Muslims who don’t make such references.

DCTs’ another contribution to collective identities is that the Internet and digital technologies make the identification process fluid and comparably effortless. Among the first ones discussing the relation between DCTs and identity theories, Meyrowitz (1986, 1989, 1997) argues that communication technologies allow individuals to be more than one place at the same time while weakening the once indispensable connection between physical and social place. By furnishing individuals with borderless possibilities, new communication technologies rearrange the domain of social interaction and its limits. Meyrowitz points out that new communication technologies stretch the boundaries that distinguish, differentiate and mould collective identities. Since him, the evolution of more recent forms of communication has carried the phenomenon of ‘borderless’ collectives one step further, and the Internet has emerged as a perfect tool for individuals to overcome their physical limits, time and space constraints and to become a part of a group somewhere in the world providing a new source for

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7 Meyrowitz mainly talks about television, however his discussion keeps its validity for digital technologies as well.
both community and identity (Castells, 2001; Dijk, 2012; Wellman, 2001b). Barry Wellman illustrates this process with a metaphor in which he says people are moving out from their little boxes and being a part of a global community (2001a). In this global community, the Internet is facilitating the expansion of these networks, since collectives or communities are essentially “networks of interpersonal ties that provide sociability, support, information, a sense of belonging and social identity” (Wellman, 2001b, p. 18).

2.3. DCTs, Social Movements and Political Communication

DCT platforms such as blogs, websites, forums prompt communication and political science scholars to discuss that the Internet delivers an alternative and practical ecosystem for individuals, collective identities and marginalized excluded groups to overcome the limit of offline media regulations and states’ repressive control; and engage in discourse with each other (Fauske & Wade, 2003; Mehra, Merkel, & Bishop, 2004; Norris, 2002; Wilson & Peterson, 2002). Although this field of scholar discussion should be addressed with precaution in order not to fall into technological determinism, Diani (2000) and Tilly (2015) clearly states that DCTs are becoming essential tools of social movements all round world, in addition to different tools such as signing petitions, demonstrations, boycotts, divestments, sanctions, sit-ins (Della Porta & Diani, 2009). One of the most recent examples of how social movements expand their repertoires of contemporary struggle with the help of these tools is The BDS Movement Palestine (Bakan & Abu-Laban, 2009). The BDS Movement articulates an ethnic and class based discourse against the Israeli state's illegal occupation and its repressive policies directed at Palestinians (Bakan & Abu-Laban, 2009). The movement represents a nonviolent struggle employing many different actions of boycotts and sanctions mainly driven by online expressions due to the extensive surveillance of offline gatherings by the Israeli government. As exemplified here, a substantial scholar attention has shifted to the discussions arguing the propulsive force of DCTs in helping individuals, collectives and other social groups reach their movement objectives, particularly focusing on how DCTs are used to broadcast, raise awareness, organize and create bonds within themselves and also external but sympathetic groups.

The internet’s contribution to political communication in these early years has been mostly evaluated as an outcome which the Internet provides: many-to-many communication, anonymity, and reproducibility (D. G. Johnson, 2003). However, with the unstoppable popularity of 2.0 social media technologies such as Facebook (public access in 2006), Twitter
(2006) and Instagram (2010), networking effects of DCTs and the establishment of online communities around different causes have become one of the core research areas. These social media platforms have added instantaneity, reach and interactivity into the logic of DCTs, thus allowing groups to share and communicate what they are, to meet other like-minded individuals and groups sharing similar ideology, cause or worldview immediately (Crandall, Cosley, Huttenlocher, Kleinberg, & Suri, 2008; Norris, 2002; Preece, 2001; Song, 2009), consequently leading to quick and effective formation of collective identities around a shared conscious and goal (Ayers, 2003; Ayers & McCaughey, 2003; Vegh, Ayers, & McCaughey, 2003). Based on this feature of social media platforms, Langlois et al. (2009, p. 429) highlight that such platforms are “new types of technocultural spaces” in which they provide communicational and social means for collectives to converse.

There is also another outlook considering that these social media platforms increase political engagements by allowing younger generations to participate in politics (Fenton, 2010), allow citizens to reach out alternative information sources (Gillmor, 2006), and eventually create a sphere where unlike minded people get together and create a deliberation (Witschge, 2004). However, this positive assessment has been repeatedly and vigorously challenged. The critics mainly argue that these social media platforms are under a huge influence of filter and algorithm interventions (Pariser, 2011; Sunstein, 2009) resulting in echo-chambers (Pariser, 2011) or enclaves (Sunstein, 2001).

This fragmentation debate draws very significant attention from political commentators and scientists even though the Internet provides enormous diversities of views and identities (Harmon, 2004; Shapiro, 2000; Sunstein, 2001). The Internet is increasingly giving users different abilities to read and to create contents. However, self-selection is also another ability the Internet creates for users. The Internet users are now available to set filters according to what they want to read; they are able to customize their news feeds based on their preferences, to create bookmarks and web favorites to regularly visit same websites, etc. The Internet makes it possible to avoid and bypass opposing positions making serendipitous encounters practically impossible (Dahlberg, 2007). Hill and Hughes’ early study (1999) reveals that users who engage in politics online basically create “communities of interest” and ignore other political points of views, therefore political discussions online occur in homogeneous spaces (Dahlberg, 2007). These early evaluations echo with the recent ones. Jon Keegan’s journalistic analysis (2016) compares the US liberals’ and conservatives’ Facebook timelines on different topics such as gun control, immigration, healthcare, etc. and notes that the liberals and the
conservatives engage with different political truths and political inputs in their timelines, resulting in polarization or even extremism. Even though the fragmentation debate suspiciously question whichever possibilities the Internet brings to political communication, it also supports the idea that DCTs allow individuals to surround themselves with like-mindeds and reinforce or elaborate their own opinions, ideas, goals, issues, demands - what the literature calls attributes that define their identities.

2.4. Concluding Remarks on The Literature

Before starting to present theoretical foundations of this thesis, let me summarize and to state where this literature review leaves the reader and me. The literature review addresses to two major approaches that the scholars interpret populism by getting help from recent and historical experiences. Here, those who evaluate populism as a thin-ideology advocate that there are fixed characteristics which define populism and populist politics. On the other hand, those who see populism as a discourse that different politicians and movements adopt to a certain extent also submit the idea that populism is an “empty” concept which finds its meaning through articulations certain demands, issues, values and causes where they can be either inclusive or exclusionary. Populism(s) share common traits such as developing a common mean to become political subjects, defining its constituents, appealing to ‘the People’, yet there are major differences among varieties of populism. Movements, that follow these common traits, still frame different ideas of ‘the People’ and they distinguish themselves through articulating different demands, issues and causes in the name of ‘the People’ they frame.

With an emphasis on the latter which will create our theoretical foundations, I have wended my discussion into the literature written about the construction process of different collective identities. Here, I have briefly visited different perspectives which undertake the question of how collective identities are constructed and represented by issues they adopt and by significations they highlight. Acknowledging the fact that populist politics manifests itself through offline and online mobilization in today’s world, I have moved on to the topic of collective mobilization and identity-based social movements, identification processes of those movements, and the relationship between identity construction and online.

Similarities and commonalities of collective identities and populism as a discursive style shine through. In this context, populism refers to a mode of political expression in which a colossal collective identity is created under the name of ‘the People’. This process takes heart from the common dissatisfaction of masses and aims to construct shared consciousness on
values, issues, and demands. To highlight one more time, the signifier ‘the People’ acquires different meanings depending on the articulatory practice during this identification.

The literature review is assembled and written in a way that concentrates the subject of this thesis in a continuation and enhancement for the upcoming theoretical foundations. All of the necessary subjects, to a certain degree, are touched upon in order to provide an overview of theories and approaches which create a basis for the theoretical framework in the following pages. The review aims to define the concepts that form the basis of the theoretical discussion and to include a general summary, as well as it aims to enable the reader to add his own interpretation to the discussion on the following pages. From this point forth, the theoretical framework discusses Laclau and Mouffe’s lenses to understand how populism occurs in different discourses establishing different political collective identities, and which tools are used to signify populist practice.
3. Theoretical Framework

In the intersection of populism and collective identities, Laclau and Mouffe step in and propose two interrelated theoretical frameworks on how one should read populism and its political articulation, particularly to redefine left-wing politics in the age of confusion around liberties and equalities. The first theory, Radical Democracy, touches upon the necessity and inevitability of collective identities and their roles in modern politics. After summarizing how Radical Democracy Theory advocates pluralism of collective identities to democratize our modern politics, the discussion moves on their second theory, Discourse-Theoretical Approach, which sheds lights on how a particular collective identity comes to life through articulating itself and its adversaries. In the final part of my theoretical framework, I investigate how these two theories engage with populism.

3.1. Radical Democracy and Collective Identities

The term Laclau and Mouffe coin ‘Radical Democracy’, which was introduced in their book Hegemonia and Socialist Strategy (1985, it will be referred as HSS henceforth), is a theoretical approach which seeks for dissensus in politics in order to “engage the energies of ordinary citizens” and to “seek a fuller realization of democratic values” (J. Cohen & Fung, 2004, p. 23). For them, consensus seeking democratic practice does not allow differing opinions, races, classes, genders, worldviews and ‘controversial issues’ to come the fore (Mouffe, 2000), and there is a need for “a form of politics that recognizes diversity and invites participation from a variety of social spaces” resulting in “the continual proliferation of new voices, new communities, and new identities” (Sandilands, 1993 p.3 in Filimonov, 2015, p. 19). By challenging symbolically competitive representation model of modern liberal democracies and liberal theory (for more J. Cohen & Fung, 2004; Steiner, 2012), radical democracy prioritizes participation over deliberation in order to obtain an expansion of new voices and identities, and similarly an expansion of the scope of social struggles.

By emphasizing the importance of participation of multiple identities in politics, Laclau and Mouffe discuss that politics is about continuous articulation of particular demands, issues, and values. Therefore it is a mode of subjectification consisting of what collectives want as well as what they dispute. Collective identities define themselves through intersecting and shifting demands in a fluid and interchangeable manner (See more at 3.3) (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 4). Therefore, the authors repeatedly call that political struggles are not only limited to class,
which is just one identity among many (Laclau, 1977; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Mouffe, 2014). From this point of view, they oppose to the Marxist class essentialism which reduces struggles of different identities into a single overarching logic of class. Without disregarding Marxist intellectual tradition, they expand the meaning of political struggle in which different identities, including classes, seek to join in political practice, want to establish its hegemony (See more at 3.8).

The essence of radical democracy holds on the idea that as long as new identities are articulated, political participation will expand and democratic practice will find its root: real pluralism. By saying pluralism, Mouffe (2000, 2005) points out that collective identities, by definition, are dissimilar and sometimes competing entities based on their demands and values, consequently, their participation will enlarge pluralistic norm of politics. Pluralism, according to them, can only be captured once collective identities negotiate and articulate who they are and what they demand politically. In this context, Laclau and Mouffe are not a far cry from other scholars; they argue that collective identities require what Derrida called ‘constitutive outside’ to create their own identities, which helps collectives to identify themselves and their adversaries. Mouffe, in On the Political (2005, p. 15), asserts that “in the field of collective identities, we are always dealing with the creation of a ‘we’ which can exist only by the demarcation of a ‘they’.”

Pluralism of identities, which refers to the multiplicity of perspectives and values, is recognized by the liberal theory as well (Galston, 2004), however, it is also acknowledged that it is empirically and practically impossible for everybody welcoming and adapting them all, as a result, the liberal theory does not see politics as construction of identities but recognition of them in an institutional structure (Galston, 2004). The liberal theory imagines that a deliberation or a midway can be achieved; and these different perspectives and values can be brought together in a harmonious and non-conflictual manner (Habermas, 1985). Mouffe (2000) argues that this is the point where Radical Democracy and Liberal Democratic model become distinct from each other, since collective identities, according to Mouffe, require antagonism and conflictual platforms in order to constitute ‘we’ and to distinguish itself from ‘them.’ Consequently, democratic practice only becomes possible when these collective identities are set free, and a deliberation is not be sought. The liberal theory, on the other hand, avoids from antagonistic practices in politics in order to defend loosely defined individual liberties. From Mouffe’s perspective (2000), seeking for consensus and deliberation poses obstacles for different identities to articulate themselves to create a social totality, a collective.
3.2. Discourse Theory and Structured Totality

The articulatory practice of dispersed individuals eventually concentrates on a particular theme which is what Laclau refers as social totality (Laclau, 2005b). This social totality necessitates a process of identification which results in answering questions such as who they are, who they are not, what defines themselves and what keeps them together etc. Here, they introduce a poststructuralist theoretical framework, mostly known as the discourse-theoretical approach (DTA), which puts articulatory practices at the center of identification, which itself is a process that never ends and stays incomplete.

The point of origin of Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory is not so far away from the Foucauldian understanding of discourse, even though Foucault’s discourse analysis is mostly employed to work on historical articulations of knowledge and organization of cumulative knowledge, not to work on social and political identities and their political involvements. Both of Laclau and Mouffe’s DTA and Foucault’s discourse model have roots in linguistic structuralism which oppose the idea that a word and its meaning have fixed and natural relations between them. One of the pioneers of linguistic structuralism, Saussure (2011, originally published in 1915) argues that a sign (a word) is more than just a sound-image, it also has an assigned concept. Consequently, he divides the sign into two components “the signifier and the signified” (Berger, 2013, p. 3) where signifier refers to a sound-image and signified to a concept. For Saussure, the relationship between these two components is arbitrary, and it is only matter of semiotics and “there is no logical connection” (Berger, 2013, p. 7). Simply put, he argues that a sign becomes meaningful only if it relates itself to other signs and simultaneously differentiate itself from other signs (Chandler, 2002). Here, he inspires to “contemporary commentators tend to describe the signifier as the form that the sign takes and the signified as the concept to which it refers” (Chandler, 2002, p. 18).

As one of those contemporaries Saussure inspires, Foucault (1972) discusses how meaning is created as a result of arbitrary yet cyclic associations. For him, énoncés (signifiers) alone are not meaningful but abstract constructs that get a meaning by allowing semiotic cultural signs to attach to what is énoncés[ed]. After repetitive semiotic assignments – when it is signified enough-, énoncés communicate a message between and among objects and subjects. Laclau and Mouffe’s DTA uses Foucault’s work as a starting point and embraces the Foucauldian model at socio-political level (Stavrakakis, 2007). In HSS, they first discuss how a particular discourse is created by associating different and previously unarticulated signifiers.
(elements in Laclau and Mouffe, énoncés in Foucault) to a certain meaning and transforming them into discursively articulated signifiers (moments in Laclau and Mouffe) which are in a relation between and among themselves. The relation among discursively articulated signifiers is what they call “structured totality resulting from articulatory practice” (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 105). This structured totality, or to put boldly, discourse, aims to dominate the field of discursivity and seeks to take as many as unarticulated signifiers (elements) into its totality. The more a signifier gets a privilege or a central role, the higher importance it gets to characterize a particular discourse, and the better it represents the totality, that is what Laclau and Mouffe call nodal point. Finally, since signifiers also get their meanings “depending on its relation to other words [signifiers] within the system” (Chandler, 2002, p. 18), they also differentiate themselves through defining what they are not. At first, this seemingly confusing relation between element, moment and nodal point has been illustrated by Andrare (2015) to make it easier to understand.

In his illustrations, Andrare presents signifiers with nodes where they are all initially floating and unarticulated; namely elements (See Image 1). Once two elements (Nodes A and B) are articulated together, they turn into moments since now there is a relationship between them. Of course, the authors highlight that the transition from elements to moments is not fully achievable, these signifiers become fixed only temporarily and partially (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985), yet the moments constitute the first two signifiers of a structured totality or discourse. For instance, think a piece of cloth (Node A) and a piece of land (Node B). They do not have any meaning by themselves. However, if the cloth is repetitively articulated in a way that it starts to represent the land, it becomes the flag of the particular land, at least for a limited period. Both of these signifiers now become articulated constructions, representing meanings.

In Figure 2, other signifiers, those formerly floating signifiers, (Nodes D, E, F) join into the cluster, creating different associations and articulations with the previously articulated nodes A and B. To turn back to our simple example, let’s assume Node F represents the appearance of people who were, by chance, born in the land; Node E is a sentence, and Node D is a simple drawing. By repetitive articulations, Node F turns out to be the signifier of the specific people living in the land; Node E starts to signify the slogan/motto of what the flag stands for; Node E turns into the national symbol or the coat of arms on the flag which bears a message.
The cluster of Nodes A, B, D, E, and F defines a grand meaning or a structured totality, what Laclau and Mouffe call discourse. For our example, an unsophisticated nationalist discourse. Node A (in our example, flag) gets in relation to the highest number of other signifiers, therefore it becomes the key signifier or the center of construction, which Laclau and Mouffe call nodal point. Finally, Node C stays unassociated (unarticulated) throughout the whole articulatory practices. Therefore, it never becomes a part of the constructed discourse. However, it still performs a task. Andraré illustrates the final step of discourse articulation: discourse gets its totality through the relation of signs to other signs and their differences from other signs. Andraré draws a line dash around the discourse where the line represents the partially fixed exclusivity of the discourse which also gives meaning through defining what the constructed discourse is not (Node C).

DTA is highly beneficial for us to understand the process of articulation and consequently the creation of identities, since it lays down how an unrelated concept (unarticulated signifier) turns into being something which has a meaning and value for a group of people. As we will discuss below, it helps us to comprehend how certain issues and demands aggregate under a body constructing collective identities.
3.3. Collective Identities and Discourses

Inspiring from Lacanian psychoanalysis, Laclau and Mouffe elaborate how discourses evolve into collective identities by enabling identity construction through articulation. According to them, neither individual nor collective identities can be fully achieved and completed; as a result they always stay in the process of continuing identification—rather than turning to be a stable identity. This identification process occurs by trying to give answers to a set of questions such as who they are, who they are not (Mouffe, 2005, p. 15), which meanings define themselves and what keeps them together, etc. (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). In addition to these questions, identities obtain a political character through fixing what they demand (Laclau, 2005b, p. 35). Politics, according to Laclau and Mouffe, is all about the participation of new voices and identities into the practice; therefore, collective identities’ articulation on what they demand forms a basis for proposing an alternative (see more 3.1. Radical Democracy and Collective Identities).

Laclau (2005b, p. 35) constructs collective practice of politics on “demands” where he states that the category of demands is “the elementary form in the building-up of the social link”; to put differently, demands link individuals to collectives. He uses the term ‘demand’ in “the more active meaning of imposing a request — a claim - on somebody else” [my emphasis] (2005b, p. 35) in addition to the first meaning of simply requesting. Laclau (2005b, pp. 33–34) takes individual as a unit of analysis in order to grasp how individualistic demands evolve into collective identities. According to him (2005b, pp. 36–37), an individual initially participates in politics through simply requesting something for himself. For instance, an individual may demand a certain service such as supplemental nutrition assistance (food stamps) for himself from the decision-makers. Laclau argues that this initial demand is followed by some structural feature: 1) a social need turns into a request while the individual expecting that a decision maker, who holds the power of decision-making, will answer to this demand. Both of the individual and the power holder accept the process of making a request as the legitimate way of doing politics, the social actors don’t question the right of the individual to present the

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8 To avoid misunderstanding, Laclau boldly states that communities are bigger than the sum of individuals. Therefore, he accepts that methodologically individualistic approach would not lead any analysis to understand the community as a totality. He underlines that the individuals are not meaningful, self defined totalities with clear-cut corners fitting into the totality of the community. However, he adopts individual demands as a unit of analysis in order to comprehend how the articulation of discourse, as a result, the articulation of identities occur. (See more at Laclau, 2005b, p. 35)
request or the right of the power holder to take the decision. 2a) if the request is fulfilled by the power holder, no further possibilities occur, the individual does not need to involve in an action, to position himself in resistance. 2b) if the request is rejected, a personal frustration will occur as a result of rejection, however, it is only one demand of one individual that is not fulfilled, so that no substantial situation will occur. 3) If different individuals request the same demand and face with the same rejection from the same power holder as a response to their request, dissatisfaction or frustration will show itself among a wider section of the given society. As these rejected individuals figure out that there are more people in the same situation asking for food stamps and got frustrated, they create a solidarity around the idea that their shared common request remain unsatisfied; and eventually, transform their unfulfilled request into a claim on those who didn’t satisfy their initial request. This transformation requires to undergo a process of identification where the rejected individuals articulate what they are, what they claim as a social totality, who has left them unsatisfied, how they represent their causes, how their shared conscious functions to let them to develop coordinated actions, expressions and to “transfer their vague dissatisfaction into a political agenda” and eventually they turn their action into a collective identity.\(^9\) (Buechler, 1993, p. 222)

As I have tried to exemplify in the example scenario here, a request asking the fulfillment of a simple social need, in time, can transform itself to a counter-stance of a group of people against power holders who fail to respond. While the group shapes its position by articulating a discourse, it may also get in an interaction with other groups who are also unsatisfied with the orientation of their demands. In this context, other demands as well can aggregate themselves into the social totality and may relate themselves with the created collective identity. For instance, the initial collective that comes together after the food stamps request is not met, can later start to give voice to interrelated issues such as malnutrition, hunger, and poverty, etc. Hence it expands the range of identification. Throughout this aggregation, certain demands turn into nodal points which represent the collective identity. However, it does not mean that each individual demand loses its particularity, rather it keeps its own particularised characteristic but also it links itself to the structured totality and becomes a part of the discourse that the collective articulates. This equivalent aggregation of a plurality

\(^9\) Even though this scenario is a simple example for the creation of single-issue collective identities, this thin-defined collective identity may expand its scope as discussed in the following paragraphs.
of demands result in a political stance, that is what Laclau and Mouffe call political front (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Mouffe, 2000, 2013).

Politically speaking, Laclau and Mouffe point out that transforming unfulfilled demands into nodal points (demands that represent collective identities) enable democracy to be plural and radical, at the same time, allow political identities to emerge around new issues such as gender, ethnicity, peace, environmental justice, poverty, national security, fair trade, free trade, etc. that is what scholars call new social movements\(^\text{10}\).

3.4. Antagonistic Nature of Discourse and Identities

In the essence of Radical Democracy Theory and DTA, there is a common observation made by Laclau and Mouffe, which sheds light on the rest: all of the discourses, therefore identities as well, are created relationally and differentially going through articulations and constructions. As we discussed earlier, a signifier necessitates to differentiate itself from others to find itself a meaning, a cluster of articulated signifiers can turn into discourse only if it discriminates itself from other clusters, a discourse can participate in the hegemonic struggle only if it defines an adversary to compete. Similarly, collective identities, through the way of identification, bring a definition to themselves through the articulations of values, issues, and demands (Olson, 2016), but also their differences from the rest. As Laclau puts boldly in Emancipation(s) (1996, p. 38), difference means identities.

Identities can not be fixed once and for all, they can not be fully defined due to continuously articulating presence of ‘the Other’, which also changes simultaneously (Lacan, 1977, p. 1,7). ‘The Other’ performs a permanent task in the process of identity creation: The ‘Other’ can be held responsible or can be blamed on hindering the identity (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 125). Hence, it brings a never-ending continuing possibility of antagonism without any chance of overcoming (Thomassen, 2016; Townshend, 2004). Neither Laclau nor Mouffe does not evaluate antagonism as something to be avoided; contrariwise they welcome antagonism

\(^{10}\) Laclau and Mouffe find the term ‘new social movements’ unsatisfactory and they resist to use it. According to them, the term refers to a situation where highly diverse struggles are named as ‘new’, because they don’t belong to ‘the original social movement’ where workers are the only actor, considered as class struggle. Instead, Laclau and Mouffe use the term ‘new antagonisms’ which is “not the idea of arbitrarily grouping them into a category opposed to that of class, but the novel role they play articulating that rapid diffusion of social conflictuality to more and more numerous relations which is characteristic today of advanced industrial societies” (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 159).
for radical pluralism, political participation, and multiple discourses. They evaluate the construction of identities “as the outcome of hegemonic struggles that derived from an antagonism to be found at the heart of all contemporary social relations” (Townshend, 2004, p. 270).

Borrowing the term from Derrida, Laclau (1990) uses ‘constitutive outside’ to describe what antagonism stands for: ‘the concept of other which brings a unity for an identity through constituting and negating its limit. Antagonism, here, is seen as the key to understand how identities are constructed even though ‘antagonized other’ is open to a variety of meanings. In Laclau and Mouffe, articulation of different meaning and occurrence of social change through constructing new identities require the conflict among competing identities.

3.5. Chain of Equivalence

At the intersection of antagonism, collective identities, new social movements (new antagonisms) and DTA, Laclau and Mouffe introduce a concept called chain of equivalence which refers to the aggregation of many different demands (plural), which are representing many different collectives. A chain of equivalence is about the construction of an extended antagonistic frontier constituting of multiple collectives in order to propagate the struggle among larger masses; or alternatively, to defense the threaten identities against the common enemy. In the case of collective identities, this frontier can be seen either as a circumstantial alliance where different subordinate identities act with solidarity or as a discursively articulated bloc or camp come together “by virtue of the ensemble of shared values and ideas” (Arditi, 2010, p. 489).

The construction of a bloc refers to the aggregation of different non-competing collective demands (in spite of the possibility of their differential natures or characters) into one chain. Laclau claims that a collective identity or an alliance of collective identities can create a chain of equivalence around a common lack or unsatisfied demands where they also need to identify the source of this negativity, why and by whom they are precluded (Laclau, 2005b, p. 38). Since the chain essentially aims to create an antagonistic frontier, the precondition for the creation of the chain is the totalization (through discursive articulation) of the other side which is challenged by the chain.

To continue our example about food stamps, remember that a collective identity has been constructed as a result of recognizing that a request made by many was not met. Later, through articulatory practices, other interrelated issues - such as malnutrition and poverty were
aggregated into the claim, expanding the range of identification. Here Laclau takes the articulatory practice a step further saying that, in this sense, the collective, which has been frustrated that hunger and poverty are social realities in the given society, is introduced that there are other groups who are equally unsatisfied in their claims at different topics such as schooling, housing, security, immigration, corruption, health benefits, pensions, working hours, employment, etc. As these dispersed groups gather under a single roof of an extended solidarity, they also develop a common ‘other’ (power holders or any other groups that cause a common lack) who is opposed by their alliance. What Laclau (2005b, 2005a) calls chain of equivalence is created among these different collective identities fretting over issues which are dissimilar by its nature, yet share a common idea about the source of negativity\(^{11}\) (Image 2).

The wider identity or the extended antagonistic frontier established by the chain includes of multiple collective identities and social demands, yet it “does not annul the differential nature of the demands and identities” rather it “constitutes instead their common denominator” (Arditi, 2010, p. 489). Consequently, the chain of equivalence crystallizes around one particular demand or a common denominator among many others. The representation of the chain is only possible if a singular subject starts to represent it (Laclau, 2005b, p. 39) To put differently, Laclau notes that “an assemblage of heterogeneous elements [demands and identities] kept equivalentially together only by a name [which] is necessarily a singularity” [his emphasis] (2005a, p. 100). This singularity fulfills the function of being a point of identification which collective identities coalesce around. Later, he adds that “the more the chain of equivalences is extended, the weaker will be its connection with the particularistic demands which assume the function of universal representation” and continues adding that “what it wins in extension it loses in intension” [his emphaes] (Laclau, 2005b, pp. 39–40). That’s why Laclau calls this particular demand or the common denominator “empty signifier” which refers to their emptied nature to function as the representative of the chain (1996, Chapter 3)\(^{12}\).

\(^{11}\) Here, the reader may question the role of historically already-in-existence subordinations which are articulated as relations of oppression. Some collective identities such as feminism and ethnic minorities do not build upon their collectiveness on political demands or a common lack, but on their denied rights which democratic ideology recognizes in principle for all citizens. However, these collective identities still join into a chain of equivalence or spearhead a chain where gender or civil right inequalities become the common denominator.

\(^{12}\) Even though, for me, the common denominator representing the chain is nothing different than a nodal point, Laclau introduces the concept “empty signifier” in order to highlight that this singularity “bring[s] equivalential homogeneity to a highly heterogeneous reality [the chain of
By its nature, the chain of equivalence creates itself also by congregating the negativity of a wide opposition against the power holders (Arditi, 2010; Laclau, 1996, Chapter 3, 2005b; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Townshend, 2004). The wider the chain becomes, the more popular identification it needs to cover the whole opposition represented by the chain. Consequently, the chain reaches a point where it starts to represent a popular will of a popular identity, dividing the society into two antagonistic camps: the people vs. the other.
Chain of Equivalence

One individual demands a social need, and it is refused. Then the individual figures out there are others demanding the same need and being refused and frustrated. They come together around the same unsatisfaction (Claim1). These initial solidarity constitutes the first social totality, therefore a collective identity. Later, they expand their identification with interrelated issues and demands (Claim2 and Claim3) by discursively articulating those claims among each other.

Later, the discursively articulated totality (indicated by orange nodes) creates other linkages with other discoursed identities (green and yellow nodes) directly or indirectly. These multiple articulations with other collectives establish a chain of equivalence. The wider the chain is, the more extending it is.

When the chain extends as an assemblage of naturally heterogeneous demands and discourses, it crystallizes around a common denominator, which Laclau calls "empty signifier". It represents the wide frontier against the common negativity. At maximum point, the chain is represented by a popular identity (the people) and it divides the society into two antagonistic camps.

By Andacı Baran Ceyazıtlogoğlu
3.6. Popular Identity and Populism

The construction of a popular identity, where a great sum of unsatisfied demands aggregates, refers to a logic where they create a grand alliance around the common lack and against the ones who hold demands unsatisfied. In *On Populist Reason*, Laclau states that creating a popular identity relies on a “radical anomie, the need for *some kind* of order” [his emphasis] (2005a, p. 88), indicating that a situation of disorganization and dissatisfaction is required for the emanation of consolidation. Because popular identity results from some degree of crisis, it does not have to be solely progressive, but also it can be defensive.

As we argued above, the aggregation of unsatisfied demands reaches out to a certain level where the power holder is seen or persuaded as incapable of answering all of these demands; the popular identity presents itself “both as *subversive* of the existing state of things and as the starting point for a more or less radical *reconstruction* of a new order wherever the previous one has been shaken” [his emphasis] (Laclau, 2005a, p. 177).

The theoretical discussion so far has laid down four significant conditions to understand how collective identities transform themselves into a popular identity: (1) banding together around unsatisfied collective demands, issues, and values; (2) creating an alliance with other collective identities who are equally unsatisfied with the existing order; (3) dichotomizing the society through creating a extended frontier or a chain of equivalence which is a grand consolidated identity (by the help of an empty signifier) against the power holder; and finally (4) offering a change (progressive characteristic) or reconstruction (defensive characteristics). According to Laclau (2005b, 2005a), these conditions are the structural features which define populism as a category.

As a category, populism finds its nature through defining who popular identity is and who are the ones causing the common lack as so collective identities. The popular identity, as agreed upon by almost every scholar, is crystallized around the empty signifier term ‘the People’ (Laclau, 2005a, pp. 74, 93, 127); At this point, Laclau praises Jacques Rancière while comparing his definition of ‘the People’ with the latter’s *demos* (2005a, p. 93). For Rancière, the Demos is “in-between” (Ranciere, 1992, p. 63) which is neither community itself, nor the people as the total, rather “it is, at the same time, the name of the community and the name for its division” (1992, p. 59). Herein, Laclau gets inspired from Ranciere while constructing ‘the People’ which a popular identity crystallizes around. Accepting that even the biggest totality has to differentiate itself from ‘what-it-is-not’, and given the fact that antagonism is inevitable,
Laclau does not evaluate ‘the people’ as a sociological group, but rather internally split “communitarian being” between *populus* and *plebs*, - the former is whole, the latter is part (2005a, p. 94). ‘The people’ which a popular identity crystallizes around refers to “the plebs presenting itself as the totality of the populus” (2005a, p. 93). At this point, popular identities articulate ‘the people’ as a collective actor “who claims to be the only legitimate populus” (Laclau, 2005a, p. 81), and formulates ‘the other’= the populus – the people.

### 3.7. The People of Inclusive and Exclusionary Populisms

Here, the reader may ask this question: what does constitute ‘the People’? Filc (2010, p. 11)\(^\text{13}\) asserts that populism may burst into sight adopting one of two major characteristics of ‘the peoples’ as collective actors, namely *inclusive* or *exclusionary* characteristics. This division of ‘the people’ is based on the identity of the antagonistic other or the enemy, as well as values and demands associated with ‘the People’. For Filc, a popular identity represents a solidarity around *the chain* who either *claim* “an alternative […] by and through which subordinate and excluded groups become political subjects that oppose the dominant bloc [the power holder]” (Filc, 2010, p. 13) or a “strategy for the protection of a threatened collective identity” (Filc, 2010, p. 16).

That’s to say, inclusivity or exclusivity of a popular identity is determined by which collective identities and collective demands are consolidated through the chain of equivalence against the power holder. Based on the articulation between these participating collective demands, the limits of a popular identity are bounded. Even though popular identities are constructed reactively as a response to some degree of crisis, and they cannot flourish unless collective identities construct a chain of equivalence against agreed-upon negativity in the order; they still have a possibility to radicalize politics and to become a collective subject of change (Filc, 2010; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Thomassen, 2016). Here in Laclau asserts that “the true dimensions of this indeterminacy can best be apprehend [sic] if we take into account… [that] everything depends on the system of equivalential articulations within which it [the people] is located” (2005a, pp. 86–87).

In this regard, ‘the people’ becomes the subject of one of two populisms: (1) a conservative popular identity which aggregates the negativity towards the system with a

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\(^{13}\) He inspires from Laclau (1977, 2005a) and Canovan (1981) while constructing the idea that there are multiple popular identities based on the way of articulation.
preservative, protectionist and defensive, an exclusionary definition of ‘the People’. Therefore, it represents “a response on the part of the various groups in society to a rapidly changing world which threatens to destroy a hitherto stable and secure identity” (Betz, 1990, p. 46, See also Betz, 1993 in Laclau, 2005a, p. 175). Alternatively (2) a progressive popular identity which is the consolidation of “social groups barred from the political field to become part of it… [by] enlarge[ing] the boundaries of participation and social belonging” (Filc, 2010, p. 13).

The discussion in the literature review on the topic of populist characteristics is built on this division. Many scholars (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008; Art, 2011; Inglehart & Norris, 2016; Ivarsflaten, 2008; Mudde, 2004, 2007, 2011; Schäfer & Streeck, 2013; Taggart, 2000) take the former as the only format of populism without valuing who the aggregated identities are in ‘the People’. However, Laclau and Mouffe also challenge this ‘monism’ by claiming that ‘the People’ may refer to different meanings based on how it is articulated; consequently, they challenge the hegemonic negative meaning attached (a mono-culturist, traditionalist, homogenous and banal social) to ‘the People’.

3.8. Hegemony Over Meaning

For Laclau and Mouffe, the concept of hegemony originates the very basis of their discussion on discourse as well as radical democratic practice. Generally speaking, the general use of the term hegemony refers to a static and already fixed concept which is “the imposition of a pregiven set of ideas” in an oppressive manner, however Laclau sees it as “something that ‘emerges from the political interaction of groups’; it is not simply the domination by an elite, but instead is a process of ongoing struggle that constitutes the social [my emphasis]” (Worsham & Olson, 1999, p. 1). To paraphrase, hegemony is a social and temporary consensus that has been provisionally established as a result of the struggle that different social groups have participated in. Hegemony, contrary to the Marxist elaboration, comprises of the articulation of relationships between social identities. Because it is based on the results of

\[14\] As I discussed throughout the theoretical discussion, every discourse and identity becomes a subject of exclusion. In the case of exclusionary populism, exclusion is seen as strategy to protect the given popular identity in order not to be more unsatisfied. Furthermore, the groups excluded by this type of populism (immigrants, Muslims, Mexicans, les sans papiers etc.) are seen responsible on hindering the popular identity.
struggles among and between interacting social identities including classes, it does not refer to domination, but acquiescence.

The struggle between different discourses for articulations of meanings is what Laclau and Mouffe call hegemonic struggle. In HSS, they assert that “The hegemonic subject, as the subject of any articulatory practice, must be partially [sic] exterior to what it articulates - otherwise, there would not be any articulation at all” (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, pp. 134–135). In other words, hegemonic struggle refers to a clash between differently articulated discourses competing to fix meanings of floating signifiers. It is continuing processes which is open to change; a signifier gets a meaning according to who wins the hegemonic struggle. Changeability of meanings makes possible to construct new meanings by the efforts of new political and collective identities’ alternative articulations. Therefore, every layer of society can participate in the hegemonic struggle. That is why, Laclau and Mouffe welcome new voices, new communities, and new identities to multiply meanings and, more importantly, articulate new meanings for currently hegemonic ones.

For example, think the signifier ‘democracy’. Its meaning has changed so many times through historical experiences; it still refers to so many different meanings as a result of widespread circulation (Worsham & Olson, 1999). To hegemonize ‘democracy’, it is needed to fix its meaning, however always provisionally. As Mouffe (2000) points out, the hegemony over the meaning of democracy has been created by neo-conservative liberals. Therefore, neo-liberal version of democracy has prevailed in today’s politics, which is, in a nutshell, a market idealization model around personal autonomies using the rhetoric of freedom and individuality. On the other hand, provisional characteristic of meanings makes possible to shift the current meaning of democracy and to turn ‘democracy’ into something which resists neo-liberalism. Articulations made by different identities may create a chance which results in assigning new meanings to democracy.

As we can understand from our example of democracy, hegemony over meaning results in the creation of a partial social imaginary which is only possible when a given articulatory practice constitutes a structured totality; and that structured totality fixes the meaning of signifiers in a widely consented way and ‘agreed-upon value’. What makes discourse, particularly political discourse, imaginary - and slippery in a way – is that it cannot represent the full desires or understanding of people, given that all identities are relationally created and articulated as a result of differences between and among them. That’s why it cannot simply
refer to a universal object, but to symbolic and metaphorical meanings (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 111).

3.9. Concluding Remarks on the Theoretical Framework

The theoretical discussion above puts various essential lineaments of Laclau and Mouffe’s argument so as to formulate a consistent and comprehensive concept of populism. Contrary to modern elaborations of populism as I discussed in the literature review, Laclau and Mouffe’s framework obtains more consistent and comprehensive stance because the framework does not lay down the discrete features such as authoritarianism, nativism, etc. as simple enumerations, but it theoretically elaborates the whole. Starting from the preconditions of the emergence of populism, Laclau and Mouffe’s framework explains how individual demands aggregate with each other through articulations, resulting in the building up of a wider frontier dividing the society into two separate antagonistic camps by signifying its totality with an empty signifier.

These structural features, Laclau designates, constitute a strictly formal definition of populism, keeping all its defining characteristics out of the theoretical discussion. Most of the descriptive attempts in the review try to bring a general understanding for populism based on either empirical contents and observations with numerous exceptions or deductional assumptions. Instead, Laclau and Mouffe helps us to understand ontological steps of populism while conceptualizing forms rather than focusing on contents and observations. Laclau’s approach clarifies that populist sentiment can emerge in different socio-economic realities if identities cultivate the logic of equivalence to construct a political frontier against ‘the other’. That’s why some movements such as Finns Party, Lega Nord, Front National, Sweden Democrats and some leaders such as Donald Trump and Nigel Farage are associated with populism as so Podemos, Syriza, Hugo Chavez, Evo Morales and Bernard Sanders are associated with. Even though these actors articulate different ‘peoples’ and ‘the other’, the way they articulate their identities is matching.

File’s division on populism which categories ‘the people’ in two major attitudes namely inclusive and exclusionary populism, notes that populisms share some common traits given the fact that discursive articulation constitutes two antagonistic camps, yet they are distinctively different from each other having looked at who participates in the articulated popular identity.

To articulate or communicate a popular identity, it is needed to have a communicative space where an articulatory action takes place. Online platforms constitute a great instrumental
role in bringing like-minded individuals to together without any time and physical space constraints around their shared consciousness. Furthermore, the online platforms enable any collective identity to disseminate their political stance, to broadcast what they are standing for, to publicize what they are demanding. This feature, without any hesitation, assists popular identities to construct and communicate the chain.

The theoretical framework gets strengthen from Laclau and Mouffé’s understanding of collective identities, and ontologically it goes on their clarification on the construction of collective identities. My contribution here is to connect separately discussed topics such as the chain of equivalence, popular identity, populism, and antagonism together in order to analyze an empirical data which constitutes of an articulatory practice of Bernie Sanders.

In the light of the literature review and theoretical framework, the next pages will present a case study which will be conducted to discuss how a populist movement articulate its own chain of equivalence and construct a definition of ‘the people’. The case study aims to display how a popular identity is featured and communicated.
The Case Study: Bernie Sanders’ Populist Headway

Setting the Scene

When publicly declaring his presidential bid on the Democratic party ticket in May 2015 in front of dozens of people, Bernie Sanders surprised many political commentators by disavowing his personal ambition as an unknown political figure, focusing on the America people rather than himself even though he had no recognition among the people he addressed and demanding serious policy changes:

“This campaign is not about Bernie Sanders. It is not about Hillary Clinton. It is not about Jeb Bush or anyone else. This campaign is about the needs of the American people, and the ideas and proposals that effectively address those needs”  
(His speech in Berniesanders.com, 2015a)

By lashing %1 on behalf of the 99%, his candidacy has been established on several political demands such as fixing income and wealth inequalities, addressing unemployment, renewing political campaign financing, raising wages, reforming Wall Street, providing healthcare for all as well as providing free public college education, reversing climate change, avoiding international interventions (Berniesanders.com, 2015a). During his presidential bid, he repeatedly articulated that his campaign has focussed on democratic values which have been ripped off by the money a handful of billionaires funnels into the political system to buy candidates and elections15, and he invited the people to fight against the oligarchy16. Sanders’ campaign summoned the people to join into a democratic uprising while saying “change takes place because people struggle”17, by condemning “the same old – same old establishment politics and stale inside-the-beltway ideas”18.

By articulating a political discourse around the slogan of *A Future You Can Believe In*, the 74-years-old senator had become “a magnet to an assortment of existing groups and newcomers” (Rolfe, 2016, p. 207) in the age of the global financial resentment which amplifies the distrust toward the political elite and the political institutions and casts doubt on neoliberalism which keynotes free market, free trade, immunity of property, laissez-faire, privatization, deregulation, free trade, fiscal austerity etc. His throwback to Keynesian welfare model of the post-war era, his reference to European social democracies and his admiration for Roosevelt’s New Deal which aimed for the regulated, unionized, and semi-socialized capitalism of the mid-20th century while producing a vibrant middle-class majority have presented a policy alternative for Americans (Berniesanders.com, 2015b); and have created an ethos around him and his candidacy which have been guiding beliefs and ideas for those seek for a solution of political deadlock.

Besides articulating an issue-based agenda against the financial austerity programs in the wake of the global crisis, his personal and political background as an activist during the Civil Right Movements in the 1960s, and as a politician in Vermont and on the peripheries of Congress have fostered the perception about his goodwill and virtue in the eyes of millions making his movement something the people felt connected (Gabbatt, 2015). This background, along with his legislative records and the footages of his life during Martin Luther King Jr.’s movements has reached out to the people through a couple of books and documentary studies (Bernie 2016, 2015; Sanders & Nichols, 2015; Tasini, 2015).

By huddling veterans of Occupy movement, numerous NGOs, unions and digital activists together; and activating organizations such as Revolution Messaging, an agency dedicated to authentic digital storytelling for progressive causes and ActBlue which is founded for “people-powered movements” and “[to] connect grassroots donors with the causes and” (E. Hill, 2016), Sanders has aggregated democratic optimism with an anti-system discourse.

The discourse of Sanders has echoed with a lot of strong movements such as The Fight For 15 which prompts states to raise the minimum wage (Heuvel, 2016), The Dreamers which demands citizenship for illegal immigrants and students (Foley, 2015), Black Lives Matter, which demands fair and non-discriminatory criminal justice (Garner, 2016), Health Care for All, Campaign for Free College Tuition (Berniesanders.com, n.d.-b) in addition to unions, minority organizations, student groups and prominent environmentalists. In one of Sanders’ rallies, a 66-years old labor activist says that the people in the rally were “not springing up from nowhere. There are a lot of strong movements here which naturally gravitated to Bernie... The
movement was already here” (Meyerson, 2016). In other words, the campaign has brought some long-time allies and some complete strangers together, molding them into one large conversation under the Sanders’ leadership, which represented one popular identity during the election.

Movements such as Brand New Congress, National Nurses United, Food & Water Watch, Million Hoodies as well as local groups, committees, and initiatives\(^{19}\) had already articulated a general mentality recognizing inequalities and dissatisfaction that has been imposed on the people, and the very same movements have been creating a large amount of antagonism towards institutions. Bernie Sanders with his political discourse has picked up the thread of the movements shaped by dispersed ideas, demands, claims; and he has brought them into the fold, transformed them into a popular identity, with a much wider definition of the people.

Even though the Bernie Sanders presidential campaign have failed to possess the candidateship against Secretary Hillary Clinton, the coalition he has led, did not evaporate; moreover, summits and national enclaves have been organized to harness the energy of the campaign with the task of preserving and expanding it; and eventually the campaign transformed itself into a movement (Guttenplan, 2016). Led by Our Revolution, a progressive political organization spun out of his presidential campaign (Gaudiano, 2016), the electoral coalition around him has turned into a massive collective action (L. Cohen, 2017; Weigel & Wagner, 2016) which aims “[to] revitalize American Democracy by unifying the millions of people who got involved over the course of U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders’ presidential campaign in support of progressive causes”, “[to] empower the next generation of progressive leaders by inspiring and recruiting progressive candidates to run for offices” and to elevate political consciousness by “educate[ing] the public about the most pressing issues confronting our nation and the bold solutions being offered [...] ensure[ing] that drowned out voices are heard and become an important part of the local, state and national dialogue” (Our Revolution, 2016).

\(^{19}\) The Sanders Movement articulate many identities which are created around political demands such as a prescription drug price reform, a single-payer healthcare initiative; and political claims such as ending the poverty, reversing the effect of climate change, ending aggressive military policies etc.
As a de facto leader of *Our Revolution*\(^{20}\), Bernie Sanders still stays as the face of the created political coalition where *he continues articulating an across-the-aisle cooperation with those who share different opinions in a variety of settings*, yet unite in the promise of a popular political front (Cook, 2016). These Bernie-ignited initiatives and movements maintain deep ties with other like-minded movements within the political discourse Bernie Sanders utters (Cook, 2016). Sanders’ coalition has continued to challenge the potent economic inequalities by mentioning the outcomes caused by economic conventions, privatization of public functions, internationalization of markets and competitions, deregulations of financial services as well as growing environmental and judicial inequalities (Berniesanders.com, n.d.-a). These issues and demands, the coalition continuously articulates, represent the sum of many claims of different movements, collectives, and groups where the coalition’s articulation gets a shape of a popular identity or an extended frontier. So to speak, in Sanders’ context, his electoral campaign begets a new form of activism and defines the next chapter for the frontier established during the campaign. Given the fact that the US political system places importance on individual politicians rather than organizations, this thesis homes the Sanders coalition’s political articulation from his own social media account and website as an example of a discursive populism in Laclau and Mouffe’s term where it delivers a significant research area for the further research as well since his campaign establishes a domain of study where it is much more than a single primary campaign in the US politics. The coalition’s political articulation establishes a political popular consciousness, as Chomsky points out in his book *Occupy* (2012), which will remain there.

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\(^{20}\) The organization pledges to support Bernie Sanders presidential campaign and the diversity of the groups and networks within the campaign; and it stays committed to Sanders’ political agenda (Our Revolution, 2017). As a matter of fact, Bernie Sanders published a book named “Our Revolution” in which he outlines a progressive economic, environmental, racial, and social justice agenda (Sanders, 2016).
4. Methodology and Data

4.1. Choosing the Methodology

With the deep theoretical discussion held in the previous pages, discourse analysis appears as a logical methodology to investigate how Bernie Sanders-initiated collective identity articulates itself which has profound effects on the US politics and elsewhere. Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) argue that discourse studies have been a fashionable methodology especially for social scientists studying on written, spoken or visual texts within the context of political science, communication, culture, and society. Even though identity and collective action studies have always been hand in glove with discourse studies; ascending possibilities DCTs provide, make discourse analysis a more prominent method for modern empirical studies.

As Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) discuss, all of discursive analysis methods share the same take-off point while taking identities and social relations as fluid and temporary concepts based on how individuals and groups define themselves and those around them. The researcher carries out a critical study (Burr, 1995, p. 3) on the material collected to investigate and to lay down a perspective which can have diverse philosophical and theoretical premises. Further, the researcher should be aware that especially social and political knowledge is bounded with historical and cultural specificity and predominance, therefore s/he should avoid from foundationalist, essentialist and structuralist positions in order to understand the social situation occurred by discourse (Burr, 1995, p. 3; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 5). Therefore, it is expected that the researcher will recognize that all of social actions and processes, in our case popular identities, are created by social interactions “in which [the researchers] construct common truths and compete about what is true and false” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 5).

The analysis should acknowledge the fact that discourse analysis requires theoretical and methodological unity, that’s to say, it needs “a complete package” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 4). However, the researcher is free to create its own ‘package’ for the analysis by combining different elements from discourse studies. This multi-perspectivity is celebrated and positively valued.

At this point, I stay at the crossroad where I keep using Laclau and Mouffe’s theoretical framework to understand how a popular identity is communicated; yet I employ less abstract and methodologically more illustrative discourse analysis method to focus on empirical instances of communication in order to comprehend and to study populist articulation of Bernie
Sanders’ movement. Without ending up with pure conversation analysis or ethnographical methodology where discourses lose its significance, the communicative instances— which is constructed by negotiating, molding and merging demands and values of different participant identities into a popular identity, becomes a primary unit of analysis.

The discursive analysis seems suitable method to explore patterns, communicative instances in which groups’ and identities’ are formed and transformed through social interaction. As Laclau and Mouffe’s approach relies on poststructuralist theories, discursive analysis also braces up from the poststructuralist theory and denies deterministic approaches: the methodological discursive analysis works with people’s everyday practice of communication, takes discourses as “flexible resources in creating and negotiating representations” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 158), treats empirical data as a social construction of communication (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Shotter, 1993), considers discourses as worldviews of identities which look real or true for their speakers after agreeing on a basis ground (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002), as well as how a group of people defines themselves according to others around and against them. This methodological position draws a conclusion that individuals and groups are producers of discourses as well as products of them (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Therefore, Herein, the method evaluates discursive activities as communicative efforts rather than going into ‘deeper essences’ of language systems and meanings beyond the words (Wittgenstein, 2009). In other words, the employed discursive analysis method, by acknowledging the fact that universal ways of understanding and categorizing the social are unreachable (Billig, 1982; Potter & Wetherell, 1987), focuses on identities’ attitudes.

The efforts of this study can be related to what Flyvbjerg says about social sciences: “reflexive analyses of values and interests and of how values and interests affect different groups in society” (Flyvbjerg, 2005, p. 39). By showing interest in the role of communicative instances, the analysis treats discourses as “resources for accomplishing social actions in specific contexts of interaction” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 21) and differentiates itself from Laclau and Mouffe’s analysis method which is mostly interested in “depersonified” subjects and “how discourses, more generally, limit our possibilities for action” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, pp. 20, 21).

Even though the Sanders coalition articulates an identity as a product of social interaction among many diverse social groups, the theoretical discussion and analysis also cooperate with Laclau and Mouffe’s understanding of discourse, collective identity and
hegemony. By referring to DTA, the analysis shows how the term ‘the people’ is filled, how it turns to be a nodal point and how a singularity is established to lead the popular identity and how the chain of equivalence is constructed. By keeping the focus on the rhetorical organization of communication rather than the linguistic organization, the chosen methodology aims to identify the discursive patterns of Sanders.

4.2. Data

For Potter and Wetherell (1987, p. 7; 1993, p. 3), discourse refers to all types of written, spoken or visual interaction as well as all kinds of meanings, narratives, explanations, anecdotes, and confrontations. Therefore, they see discourse as an interpretative repertoire (1987, p. 138) which constitutes any community’s common sense and “providing a basis for shared social understanding” and consciousness (Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates, 2001, p. 198). Eventually, each repertoire affords necessary sources for groups and individuals who can employ it to construct their version of reality, and communicate its own identity. That’s why the researcher should expect that any articulation of content should reflect the practices of that community, including digital and online communication.

When it comes to the volume of empirical data, discourse analysis does not require an extensive sample size since the aim is to identify discursive patterns and use of articulation rather than making a content analysis (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 161). However, the researcher is free to focus on as many as diverse discursive practices such as manifestos, official statements, social media accounts, speeches, media appearance, etc. as long as the contents occurred naturally. The literature review (2.2.4 and 2.3) uncovers that social media constitutes a very significant role in identification processes of collective groups and new social movements; therefore social media accounts alone constitute a very reliable source of data and social media posts stand as betaken units of analysis.

1) Posts from Bernie Sanders’ verified Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/berniesanders. Since the focus of the study is not any electoral process, rather it is about articulation and communication of a popular identity, the period of the collected Facebook posts is free to choose. I choose contents posted after the election period which ended on 20th January 2017 when the president-elect Donald Trump took office. I preferred working in the post-election period in order to avoid contents consisting of verbal attacks toward Trump and Clinton. Even though the volume of data is not a primary concern in discourse
I have proceeded with a significant number of posts which are expected to deliver sufficient amount of inputs to do a discourse analysis. In order to have a possibility to skip posts mentioning about short term political discussions, I proceed with a two-months period. Among six months (February – July), the randomly selected consecutive two-month period is March - April 2017. The posts have been reached through Crimson Hexagon platform, a social media monitoring and analysis software service. The platform delivers 230 Facebook posts produced by Bernie Sanders’ Facebook account. Since social media textual postings in one platform (Facebook) mostly repeat in other platforms (Twitter and Tumblr), and Facebook provides more character-based space for textual contents, it seems suitable for the thesis to use Facebook posts as the material. Worth noting, 230 posts also include many reflections addressing to short-term political events (such as appointments of the administration, particular law amendments, investigations, etc.) (See appendix 1 for all posts), which are ignored. While quoting fragments from the Facebook post, I refer to the post by assigning an ID number that should help easily find the source in references.

2) Issues statements from Bernie Sanders verified personal website: https://berniesanders.com/issues. The website delivers the official positions of Bernie Sanders-ignited movement as it also provides easy access to issues articulated by the movement, political stances, and identities represented within the movement, the website constitutes an important source of data for the analysis. There are 33 separate articles which were published and edited couples of times. However, publishing and editing dates are not publicly reachable. While quoting fragments from the statements, I refer to the full name of the document in brackets.

4.3. Utilizing The Methodology

As taking the role of a discourse analyst, I aim not to get behind the meanings of what is said in Sanders’ articulation, rather find out what Sanders communicates and to whom he refers as ‘the People’. Accepting the fact that the reality can not be reached fully, I start my analysis by employing Laclau and Mouffe’s formulation ‘identities construct themselves through demands and values’ where social subjects produce subjectivities and speak those subjectivities (1985).
The People: Who Are They?

The analysis starts with the deconstruction of ‘the people’ which is used as the subject of the popular identity. By taking ‘the people’ as a ‘nodal point of the chain of equivalence’, deconstruction aims to expose value-basis components of the subject, which are challenging taken-for-granted hegemonic or dominant assumptions. The value-basis positions, Sanders attaches to ‘the People’, compose the first step of the subjectivities around the popular identity which also problematizes the dominant meanings assigned to the subject. Furthermore, it reveals flexible resources for the subject in creating and communicating representations, as well as motivational, perceptual and evaluative grounds. There are two intentions why the analysis starts with the deconstruction of ‘the people’:

- The notion of ‘the People’ has been widely criticized by scholars who evaluate it as a mono-culturist, traditionalist, homogenous and banal social structure with nationalist, reactive and conservative intentions. The deconstruction helps the analysis to understand which values are attached to ‘the people’.

- Secondly, ‘the People’ has been seen as the nodal point of populist politics as every populist politician and popular identity appeal to ‘the People’ over elites and ‘oligarchy’. Therefore, the values and moral positions of ‘the people’ plays an essential role to understand demands articulated into the chain of equivalence.

By visiting Facebook posts, the first part of the analysis analyzes which values or moral positions are communicated and integrated to ‘the People’. Since the website mainly communicates political demands and issues belonging to ‘the People’, only social media posts, which include ideological contents, are deployed to illustrate how the movement converse ‘the social subject’.

The People’ Chain: What Do They Demand?

The investigation on value-basis positions provides a possible representation of the political attitude of the identity. However, the researcher’s reflexive analysis on political values can be neither innocent not neutral. Therefore, an analysis solely on moral attitudes and values only presents one version of many possible understandings; while the temporary closure of the notion of ‘the people’ based on values represents only a limited version of popular identity
communication. Even though attitudes and values create a basis for the analyst, I need to work on articulated demands, issues and other identities which clamp themselves to the chain.

Since Sander’s popular identity has been considered as an aggregation of other collective identities and demands, the deconstruction goes with analyzing which palpable demands are communicated in the name of ‘the People’. By selectively visiting several website statements, I aim to reveal how ‘the People’ becomes the producer and the product of the created identity through defining themselves by their political demands. To answer RSQ1, political demands particularly revealing inclusivity or exclusionary character of the movement are prioritized.

The People’s Foe: Who Do They Contest?

The final step of the analysis focuses on the identification of the antagonist in Sanders articulation as it is also constructed by the popular identity as the responsible for hindering and restraining the actualization of the popular will. As stated previously, the antagonist plays a crucial role in the process of redefining ‘the people’ and creating a popular alliance between dispersed collective identities since the alliance aims to overcome the obstructions posed by ‘the antagonist’ as well. As I have discussed in the theory section with Laclau and Mouffe’s words, Discourse Theory takes the fact of an identity comes into being only if an another force poses an external resistance or negative stance as a point of departure. In this setting, the antagonist is seen as an obstacle preventing the communicated identity from attaining its capacity; as a result, the identity poses it as an enemy held responsible for this non-satisfaction (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) (See also Howarth, 2000; Wetherell & Potter, 1993). Therefore, the identification of the antagonist is possible by answering the question of who has been targeted in Sanders’ articulation as an obstacle.

To make the analysis consistent and reader-friendly, the next section is structured as responses to these questions: Who are ‘the People’?, What do ‘the People’ demand?, Who do ‘the People’ contest? The answers to these questions correspond to RQ and RSQ1 and RSQ2 altogether. While indexing the data thematically, I have encountered the fact that Facebook posts actually provide necessary data to answer all of these three questions, if I include the actual contents of the links the Facebook account shares. As commonly known, manifesto-type, long-winded statements are not preferred to be shared as posts in Facebook; rather Facebook pages prefer using links to send social media users to a website where they can engage with long contents. The shared links which may make a contribution to our analysis are almost exclusively from berniesanders.com/issues as they are used to communicate the movement’s positions and demands. Therefore, the analysis’ second part covering ‘what do the People
demand?’ is done through visiting the statements from the website. Worth noting once more, these statements are repetitively used through the Facebook posts.

4.4. Reliability and Validity

The complex structure of discourse analysis and the subjectivity of the researcher while observing discursive patterns on materials constitute the most important obstacle for the research validity, since the traditional social science paradigm aims to represent social reality as fact-based as possible. However, social constructivist attempts always rely on that ‘reality’ can not be reached; and the multiplicity of social imaginaries constitute the social; therefore, the researcher always presents an observation consisting of relativist inferences. From this perspective, discourse studies have been criticized for being vague and abstract in their attempts to perceive and present the social.

Wetherell and Potter (1993) highlight that relativism of a discourse analysis does not diminish the value of the study or the significance of the observation. Although they accept that discourse analysis does not satisfy the traditional paradigm of being objective, Wetherell and Potter don’t agree with the assumption that all requirements for research validity are dismissed in discourse analyses. Jørgensen and Phillips similarly approve that subjectivism and relativism the researcher takes, essentially play significant roles in “the maintenance of, or challenge to, power relations in society” (2002, p. 117). Since the primary task of discourse analysis is to “unmask[ing] of dominant, taken-for-granted understandings of reality” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 176), the researcher can theorize and investigate a social position which is seen as taken-for-granted from where s/he sees the world. In other words, they agree on that social-scientific knowledge cannot be reached omnisciently but subjectively, yet it keeps its validity from the social position of the researcher.

An investigation on Sanders’ articulatory practice to construct a popular identity falls under the same social-scientific knowledge production where I take the role of investigating a socially and culturally constructed identity in the light of the relativist premise. Therefore, my goal as a discourse analyst is not to simply search for ‘the truth out there’, but to focus on the coherence of the analysis.

The reliability of the study is another way to show that the analysis is valid and based on consistent observations. From the scientific paradigm’s perspective, reliability refers that the analysis being conducted is repeatable, replicable and, more importantly, fruitful for further researches. Jørgensen and Phillips highlight that “the explanatory potential” of the analysis and
“its ability to provide new explanations” makes the scientific attempt fruitful (2002, p. 125). I need hardly mention that it would be naïve to expect that two researchers employing the same discourse analysis method would reach out the same results given the fact that the researchers’ reflective observations are inevitable. Therefore, the level of fruitfulness provides a better measurement to test the reliability of a given discourse analysis, which I believe that the analysis provides a new understanding for populism which further studies can rely on.

5. Analysis and Discussion

5.1. The People: Who Are They?

The first part of the analysis mainly focuses on how Sanders’s Facebook account articulates ‘the People’ particularly within the boundaries of values and demands. In this context, I investigate how Bernie Sanders’ Facebook page is used to communicate a political persona of ‘the People’ by problematizing the definition, making a moral evaluation and aggregating the political demands. As the discussion goes, Bernie Sanders’ populist articulation brings an alternative description and an idea of ‘the People’ which enters into a hegemonic struggle over what ‘the People’ means for.

5.1.1. The People’s Moral Positions

I have developed my analysis by accepting that ‘the People’, in the context of the Movement, gains a meaning by relating itself with values and demands of the participant identities; moreover, it challenges the hegemonic meaning of the term by reconstructing its’ own definition. To analyze how this articulatory practice works, I need to deconstruct the movement’s articulation which will expose cultural or social biases, presuppositions, and taken-for-granted ideas and it will call commonplace interpretations into question. At first sight, deconstruction may sound pessimistic; however it is “about undermining ingrained assumptions to view things in a new light” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 163). To deconstruct ‘the people’, I need to understand how the identity is communicated; and how it is positioned against the assumptions. By visiting several Facebook posts published, I will be able to ascertain and identify which values are embodied to ‘the people’ and how these values falsify the widely acclaimed presupposition over the meaning of ‘the people’.
Throughout the posts, the social totality of ‘the people’ is associated with “the progressive vision” which is “the majority of Americans share” [my emphasis], issuing that “[the people] want an agenda that fights for economic, social, racial and environmental justice. They want a government that represents all of us, and not just the 1 percent” [my emphasis] (204). ‘The people’ is communicated as the majority and as a political subject of change:

- **We are the majority.** It is time we flexed our muscles. It is time we got involved in a way that we have never done before. It is time to make the political revolution.” [my emphasis] (320).

As ‘the people’ is conversed as the majority, Sanders also asserts how it should get benefit out of being a majority:

- My message is get involved. Run for school board. Run for the board of selectmen. Start thinking about the legislature. Put pressure on your government. It is not just elections. It is fighting for [...] justice (200),

- Active protest and resistance is our only path forward. Those of you who have stood up and raised your voice for the issues that matter [my emphasis] (149),

- Grassroots organizing, local and state elections, constant activism - this is how we move forward” [my emphasis] (155).

In these repetitive messages, Sanders’ social media language positions ‘the people’ as the American majority who should get involved in through constant activism to set a new political agenda for themselves. By advocating active participation in all of the political processes, ‘the people’ has been portrayed as a political majority who is excluded from the political process, yet it has the capacity to participate in. The aim of the political revolution is embodied to ‘the People’, and bottom-up activism has been characterized with it. Here, Sanders’ articulation highlights that civic involvements have been prioritized over ethnic-nationalist or collectivist involvements; the revolution has been communicated as a democratically obtainable objective. However, to achieve this, it has been said that “voices from every state and county in America” (329) should be brought together. These repetitive appeals to interaction and involvement of the majority become first signifiers who attaches to ‘the People’, yet they stay insufficient for us to grasp with whom the Movement communicates and who the ones are invited to participate in and interact with. Therefore, a series of questions arise: What recurs the majority or ‘the people’ in this articulation? Who is ‘the majority of Americans’? Which values illustrate ‘the people’? What constitutes ‘the progressive vision’?
To start with, Sanders’ social media posts communicate certain economic values and positions as the definitive elements for the people:

- **Millions of Americans** today are overworked, underpaid and under enormous stress [my emphasis] (239).
- **we have seen in the last 4 decades a massive, massive redistribution of wealth [...] go[ing] from the pockets of working families into the hands of the billionaire class** [my emphasis] (262).
- The billionaire class consolidates power and wealth at the expense of everyone else. (162)
- **America is the wealthiest country in the history of the world. And yet today, millions of our seniors are going hungry and millions of children are in poverty.** (348)

As the posts suggest, economic inequality has been articulated as the problem of ‘the People’; and the people is positioned as the working families who “feel powerless at the hands of the wealthy, and the powerful, and their employers” (270). Including white and blue collars as well as rural communities, ‘the People’ is characterized as a political persona who fights against “this kind of inequality” which is “one of the greatest moral and economic issues of our time” (290).

The movement illustrates ‘the People’ as a political persona who is discriminated by the current economic model. As the movement highlights that the people’s due is not met because of the predominant economic injustice; the gap between ‘the people’ and the billionaires becomes a moral issue as far as an economic issue. As a result, the political persona is communicated as a political subject seeking for economic equality, fairness and moral sharing.

The second link between race-related positions and the people is formed by addressing how ‘the people’ interact with diverse ethnical and cultural identities. Creating ‘we’-form sentences, he positions the political persona (the people) against “voice spreading hate and fear toward those [minority] communities” (139), aiming at eradicating racism and xenophobia against “minorities and people with little power” [my emphasis] (160). Targeting inflammatory statements and actions, the political identity is also associated with a position which denies “the rhetoric and pushed policies which support the idea that the West and Islam are incompatible” (146). Furthermore, the movement communicates its political position by saying:
• we must commit to ensuring all people can live lives of decency and dignity” [my emphasis] (314)
• “we stand against an ill-conceived and misguided policy that doubles down on his [Trumps’] hateful, xenophobic, anti-immigrant rhetoric” (297).

The emphasis on xenophobia and anti-immigrant rhetoric plays a definitive role in the creation of a value-basis for ‘the People’. By stressing that “all people” including “minorities and people with little power” are the part of the communicated identity, the People is associated with political values such as cultural openness, tolerance, and equality among different minority identities.

The third link, Sanders’ articulatory practice creates, is between values coming from environment-friendly positions and the people. Contrary to the practice observed in economic and race-related positions, the movement constructs a political persona relying on scientific facts rather than views. By attaching the claims of the scientific community into ‘the People’, the Movement embraces the idea that “climate change is real and it is caused by human activity” (346) and gives voice to ‘the American people’:

• In cities and states and towns across the country people are saying: ‘No. We will not continue to destroy the planet and threaten people’s safety and well-being. We want to leave this planet habitable for our kids and grandkids. We are going to cut down on carbon emissions because it’s the right thing to do for the planet and for the economy. [my emphasis] (248)
• People around the world are saying: ‘The time for denial is long past. We won’t endanger our planet and the future of our children and grandchildren. Listen to the scientists and do what is right for the future of our civilization. Congratulations to those who are stood up around the world to march and fight back’ [my emphasis] (346)

The articulated persona is built on the reality that “climate change remains the single greatest threat to our country” (359), and it advocates “large-scale action and protest [...]to make sure our voices are heard” (359). As quoting Ulrich Beck21, Sanders underlines that the environmental position of ‘the American people’ cannot be detachable from the rest of the

21 Ulrich Beck discusses how political thought and action should be developed in the face of radical global change which harms everybody without making any discrimination: “smog is democratic”.

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world. By communicating the political persona as a global citizen for environmental matters, ‘the People’ is framed with a series of values which includes being-open-to-cooperation and cosmopolitanism as well as environmentalism and science-centralism.

The fourth link, Sanders’ online articulation creates, is between values coming from socio-political positions and the people. Here, the articulated popular identity meets with several societal views and obtains those values as attributions to itself. Sanders communicates a value-based position for ‘the people’ who is seeking for a changeover from the neoliberal market model to a regulated social welfare model, where a series of crazes and prominence occur. ‘Social security’, ‘education’, ‘welfare’, ‘international cooperation’, ‘access to healthcare’, ‘community care’, ‘liberation of body’, ‘freedom of express’, ‘freedom to choose’ becomes articulated elements of ‘the People’ who obtains a characteristic of a transition generation between social democracy and liberalism marked by the coexistence of mixed values. The dominant values observed above such as egalitarianism and fairness embody themselves into ‘the People’ at this manner as well. An identity of ‘the People’ who fights for fair, equal and reachable social rights is conversed with specific emphases on unionization, collective action, and healthcare:

- **Making sure that every citizen has the right to child care, health care, a college education, and a secure retirement is not a radical idea** (290).
- **The Americans should not have to live in fear that they will die because they cannot afford to take the life-saving medication they need** (140).
- **Want[ing] to regulate women’s bodies …denying women control over their own bodies […]. This is a disgrace and we will fight back** (307).
- **Our job is to keep fighting back against all attacks on women** (250).
- **We must stand together workers from all industries and demand fair pay, fair treatment, and a fair contract** (180)
- **We must fight to undo that damage, and give workers a stronger voice than before** (258)

In addition, Sanders-ignited political identity communicates a tranquil position regarding international relations and gives out sounds of amicable values. Criticizing extensive budget allocations to wars instead of the needs of ‘the People’, the communicated identity is put in a position where it develops a discursive repertoire mentioning “the last thing we should be doing is spending even more money on the bloated Pentagon budget” (236) and evaluating war affairs as immoral and harmful efforts for the American economy, social structure and
minorities as well as world peace and stability. Throughout the Facebook posts, Sanders points out that the movement stands against “such engagements disastrous for American security, for the American economy and for the American people” (280). Therefore, Sanders’ articulation characterizes a political identity which is conflict-avoiding and anti-war, advocating values of domestic peace as well as international cooperation.

At first sight, the political identity Sanders communicates, acknowledges the variety of politically subjective positions among the people without imposing upon certain values; however, it primarily pays attention to particular social groups and particular values. These values inevitably attach to ‘the People’, and represent it. To turn back to Laclau (2005a, p. 94), these repetitive attachments designate the plebs; and present it as the totality which epitomizes the populus, while Sanders’ articulation provides a common social understanding and conscious. This assemblage of separately heterogeneous values creates a singularity which manifests itself through the shared consciousness and the common understanding.

The common understanding highlights that 1) there is an economic injustice which keeps ‘the People’ unsatisfied by distributing the economic goods unequally; as well as there are 2) racial and 3) social injustices which segregate the many by allocating the social goods asymmetrically. 4) Environmental values associated with the articulated identity also stress the position of ‘the People’ where it searches for ‘environmental justice’ and wants to actualize ‘the common good’ for all. This common understanding, or discursive repertoire, performs the duty of being a universal value-basis for the identity. Therefore, Sanders tries to define ‘the People’ by articulating the subject within these universal values of economic, racial, social and environmental equality, morality, fairness, cooperation, peace seeking, toleration. As a result, this temporary closure of ‘the notion of the people’ maintains the role of a nodal point contributing to establish a discourse on an all-encompassing basis. In the majority of occurrences, these four major links frame ‘the People’ and constitute the moral and ethical dimension of the rhetoric he communicates.

The initial observations indicate that the constructed persona creates an intersectional parallelism with class, minority rights, religious and civil right struggles, and imply that the movement tends to form a cluster of values for ‘the people’ which fall into Filc’s (2010) inclusive populist rhetoric. The repetitive identifications of ‘the People’ unite them into one inclusive characteristic with references to similar worldviews. This cluster of values inaugurates the interaction among ordinary citizens and constitutes the common ground. By establishing recurring linkages between the notion of economic, social, racial and
environmental values and ‘the people’, the process of identification emanates where different floating signifiers - such as ‘redistribution of wealth’, ‘equality’, ‘minorities’, ‘fairness’, ‘womens right’, ‘peace’ and ‘environmental awareness’ start to interact with the signifier of ‘the People’; and eventually they become a part of the singularity which identifies ‘the People’. By interacting with these signifiers and values, the meaning associated with ‘the People’ differentiates itself from the hegemonic understanding which claims ‘the People’ as a monocultural, self-centered, ethnocentric, majoritarian, nativist and authoritarian entity.

However, the value-based singularity which is a resource of identification for the popular identity stays at an abstract level not letting ‘the People’ to develop a coordinated action and organization. Since popular identities are political fronts recognizing diversity and participation from a variety of social layers; and the politics is seen as a mode of subjectification where many collectives bring up more solid demands to reshape their political dissatisfaction into a political action; the common understanding – or the singularity as we discuss- need more palpable political subjects in addition to economic, social, racial and environmental values. In other words, more particularistic demands should join into the common understanding of ‘the People’ while widening the extension of the definition of itself. Here, political claims come into play to reconstruct ‘the People’ through the chain of equivalence.

5.1.2. The People’s Chain: What Do They Demand?

The construction of an extended frontier with the involvement of particularistic demands in the name of ‘the People’, and consequently the formation of an aggregated popular identity constitutes the second step of the analysis on Sanders’ political articulation. Even though the economic, social, racial and environmental values constitute a common ground to negotiate ‘the People’, they come short of defining and constructing the popular identity, since the Sanders coalition coalesces around political claims as so Laclau and Mouffe argue (See more at Setting the Scene). By keeping in mind that Sanders represents a political coalition in which many particular collective identities are communicated, his online communication reveals that Sanders articulates the alliance by reviving their individual claims and communicating those claims as the common interest of ‘the People’. These non-competing demands aggregate into Sanders-represented grand identity where they generate a chain by virtue of the collective and mutual values as well as claims.

To ensure having a unity within the analysis, we can discuss articulated issues and demands by classifying them into four major claim areas where the popular identity negotiates
its boundaries (economic, racial, social and environmental). The analyzed statements do not constitute a different data set; rather they are contents shared by the Sanders’ Facebook page while communicating the idea of ‘the People’. Because the statements are between 250 and 1200 words, the Facebook page uses links from the website instead of posting only-text based contents on Facebook. The website ([https://berniesanders.com/issues/](https://berniesanders.com/issues/)) lists these political claims as political issues by announcing them as “fundamental” matters the American people should act on.

On the website, the movement lists 33 major issues which are all separately ‘displayed’ and ‘communicated’. As different economic, social, racial and environmental issues separately and independently join into the political identity Sanders articulates, the website performs multiple functions at once such as providing a sense of grand collective identity, defining certain economic, social and environmental goods, moulding movements together, generating a grand conversation among claim owners or collective identities and outlining potential movement resources and a particular politicized agenda. However, the aim of this study put by the research questions is not to discuss and categorize where the Sanders movement stays politically, but to analyze what ‘the people’ corresponds to (RQ), and how the movement articulates an inclusive stance of populism (RSQ1). Therefore, demands discussed below is to show which type of popular identity (inclusive or exclusionary) is communicated by the movement, and which segments of the social are hinged on the political front the movement establishes. Hereby, a selection of issues have been made to satisfy this aim, and the political claims which reveal the participatory collective identities’ demand have been incorporated into the analysis. That’s why, the analysis does not discuss all of 33 issues separately, but addresses the particular political claims which disclose inclusive or exclusionary characteristic of the movement.

**Economic demands** which exhibit themselves in Sanders articulation, come first, and they elaborate which economic issues shape the economic values of ‘the People’ designating the limits of the subject. Noting that the articulated issues present a interwoven structure where economic claims also consist of social and environmental pillars, the website brings diverse economic-political claims up demanding “income and wealth equality”, “decent paying jobs”, “a living wage”, “improvement of the rural economy”, “reform at Wall Street” and “fair taxing”. The economic dimension of the popular identity builds up on these naturally particularistic yet universally defining claims. Throughout ‘issues’ manifested on the website, the emphasis on the *inequality* distinguishes itself:
• Just as the commandment ‘Thou shalt not kill’ sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say ‘thou shalt not’ to an economy of exclusion and inequality. [my emphasis] (Income and Wealth Inequality)

• The reality is that since the mid-1980s there has been an enormous transfer of wealth from the middle class and the poor to the wealthiest people in this country. That is unacceptable and that has got to change. [my emphasis] (Income and Wealth Inequality)

• We must send a message to the billionaire class: “you can’t have it all.” You can’t get huge tax breaks while children in this country go hungry. [my emphasis] (Income and Wealth Inequality)

Here, the articulatory practice puts an emphasis on that inequalities are created by an economic system which discriminates favor of the few at the expense of the many. By speaking for ‘the middle class and the poor’ and advocating their claims, the first and foremost collective claim owner which appears in Sanders’ discourse is the middle class and the low-income Americans. The scope and extent of the subject are later elaborated by particular demands which are presented as the solution for the problems ‘the People’ faces:

• “We must come together and reduce income and wealth inequality by:
  1) Demanding that the wealthy and large corporations pay their fair share in taxes. […].
  2) Increasing the federal minimum wage from $7.25 to $15 an hour by 2020. […].
  4) Reversing trade policies like NAFTA, CAFTA, and PNTR with China that have driven down wages and caused the loss of millions of jobs. […].
  5) Creating 1 million jobs for disadvantaged young Americans by investing $5.5 billion in a youth jobs program. […].
  6) Fighting for pay equity by signing the Paycheck Fairness Act into law; 12) Making it easier for workers to join unions by fighting for the Employee Free Choice Act” (Income and Wealth Inequality)

22 You may reach to the full list at https://berniesanders.com/issues/income-and-wealth-inequality/

23 These political claims have been communicated by different collective groups such as American for Tax Fairness, Citizens for Tax Justice, Robin Hood Tax, Fight for 15, Occupy Wall Street and numerous unions such as United Automobile Workers, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, Communication Workers of America.
By pointing out these demands as the solution for the problems, the Sanders coalition not only communicates these particular demands but also embodies those identities who fought for these demands in his popular articulation. Moreover, the victims of these inequalities are positioned as the subject of the articulation. To put differently, those victims represented by political claims find a voice in the communicated and articulated identity, and political positions of the groups advocating these issues find their collective demands integrated into the popular identity Sanders coalition presents.

In another post on the website, the Sanders’ movement firstly communicates a major problem for ‘the People’ saying that “The six largest financial institutions in this country today hold assets equal to about 60% of the nation’s gross domestic product. These six banks issue more than two-thirds of all credit cards and over 35% of all mortgages.” (Reforming Wall Street). Later, he lists the demands of ‘the people’ - which have been communicated by several collectives such as Occupy Movement that now become the part of the identity communicated by the Sanders movement.

- break up the big banks and prohibit any too-big-to-fail institutions from accessing the Federal Reserve (Reforming Wall Street)
- propose a financial transaction tax which will reduce risky and unproductive high-speed trading and other forms of Wall Street speculation (Reforming Wall Street)
- Introduce a tax on Wall Street speculation (Reforming Wall Street)

As these political demands separately participate in and become a part of ‘the people’s demands, the group of people who have conversed these demands, affiliates with the communicated persona. Consequently, the construction of ‘the People’ expands its scope overpassing economic values and obtaining more palpable economic characteristics. This expansion refers to the construction of the chain of equivalence. By added up these economic demands into the chain, whatever those particular groups’ attributions are, inevitably turn into attributions and hallmarks of ‘the People’. Similar to these two examples, other issues listed on the website profoundly elaborate which economic demands, therefore which demand-owner groups have been added to the identity of ‘the People’ (Table 1)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of the Statements ‘On the Issues’</th>
<th>Issues Demanded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income and wealth inequality</td>
<td>Redistribution of wealth, Job creation, contestation of globalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating decent paying jobs</td>
<td>The infrastructure investment and job creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A living wage</td>
<td>Minimum Salary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preventing a global race to the bottom in the airline industry</td>
<td>International Labor Law and Reform in the industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving the rural economy</td>
<td>Strengthening of Family farms and local production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reforming Wall Street</td>
<td>Regulating financial institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making the wealthy, wall street, and large corporations pay their fair share</td>
<td>Fairness in taxation and sharing of burden</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: The list of economic demands communicated at berniesanders.com/issues*

Economic demands articulated with the identity of ‘the people’ state an important place in Sanders’ political movement, these aggregated demands provide a demographic definition of ‘the people’ mostly covering class-related identities: the middle class, the poor, the 99%, the Occupy Movement activists, Fighter for 15, several unions’ members, taxation fairness fighters etc. These demographic spectra show that the Sanders’ movement interacts with different collective identities which advocate diverse economic demands and embody their claims within its chain. Furthermore, these demands deepen and strengthen the *economic values* associated with ‘the People’ helping us to illustrate that ‘the People’ is used to signify an economic stratum which is left unsatisfied and is gathered under a single roof of Sanders’ popular identity.

The second category of demands appears to be *environmental demands* which find themselves aggregated into the Sanders’ discourse and attached to the political persona the coalition communicates.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of the Statements ‘On the Issues’</th>
<th>Issues Demanded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Combating climate change to save the planet</td>
<td>Environmental awareness and fighting with the climate change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Electric must pay to restore the Hudson River</td>
<td>Fixing environmental Hazards GE causes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitution Pipeline must be defeated</td>
<td>Opposition to the construction of the pipeline</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2: The list of environmental demands communicated at berniesanders.com/issues**

The statements covering environmental issues clearly mentions that the aim of the movement is to “combat climate change and make sure our planet is habitable and safe for our kids and grandkids will” (Combating climate change to save the planet). By highlighting “the impacts of climate change are apparent here and now”, the climate change is communicated as an economic issue as well as a public health issue and a national security issue.

- This is every kind of issue all at once: the financial cost of climate change makes it an economic issue, its effect on clean air and water quality make it a public health problem, its role in exacerbating global conflict and terrorism makes it a national security challenge and its disproportionate impacts on vulnerable communities and on our children and grandchildren make acting on climate change a moral obligation. (Combating climate change to save the planet)

Based on this argumentation, Sanders communicates that “the majority of Americans understand the seriousness of climate change, and they demand action” pointing out that “banning fossil fuels lobbyists from working in the White House”, “ending the huge subsidies that benefit fossil fuel companies”, “bringing climate deniers to justice so we can aggressively tackle climate change”, “working toward a 100 percent clean energy system”, “investing in clean, sustainable energy sources powered by the sun, wind and Earth’s heat” and 36 more detailed demands are defended and claimed (Combating climate change to save the planet). The movement highlights that the low-income Americans and minority groups are the ones who suffer the most because of environment wrongdoings and hazards, and these groups are seen as the part of ‘the People’ the movement articulates. Therefore, environmental demands have been communicated as the severe issues where ‘the people’ gets the biggest damage and consequently the highest aggregation toward the negativity:
• If our democracy worked the way it’s supposed to, that would be enough – the debate would be over, the facts would be heard and lawmakers would obey the will of the people. But that’s where the billionaire class comes in. Instead of engaging on this issue in good faith and allowing democracy to play out, executives and lobbyists for coal, oil, and gas companies have blocked every attempt to make progress on climate change, and thrown unprecedented amounts of money at elected officials to buy their loyalty. (Combating climate change to save the planet)

Similar to combating climate change to save the planet, two more statements on the website lay down the environmental demands of the movement in more particularistic contexts. One of them communicates the demands of the people who reside in the banks of the Hudson River politicizing GE’s action and demanding the company stop polluting the riverbed which is “an important source of food for some of the poorest residents in New York, many of whom are immigrants forced to live on the unhealthy fish caught” (General Electric must pay to restore the Hudson River). In this context, the movement thematizes this particular demand in order to address issues of ‘the people of NY’ which becomes a part of ‘the People’: the poor and the immigrant New Yorkers. The other statement similarly puts the construction of a pipeline carrying natural gas produced by fracking on the agenda of the movement. Communicating the risk of the pipeline, the movement asserts that “we cannot, we should not and we must not allow our children to be poisoned by toxic drinking water just so a handful of fossil fuel companies can rake in even more profits” (Constitution Pipeline must be defeated). By articulating the environmental demands of the people once more, the statement sets forth that the movement takes a position against increasing the country’s dependence on environmentally hazardous energy resources and it articulates the concerns of the local people living in the region:

• The possibility of methane leaks from the proposed Constitution Pipeline would be catastrophic to our air and our climate — and if this pipeline were approved, eminent domain would be used to seize land from farmers and homeowners”

(Constitution Pipeline must be defeated)

By communicating anxieties of the local people, the movement adopts the possible consequences as the problem of ‘the people’. Through articulating environmental demands, the movement aggregates several collectives into itself: the environmentalists, the locals in Hudson River, the climate fighters and anti-fracking activists.
Another category of demands consists of race-related demands where the popular identity is introduced to a culturally and ethnically open stance where multiple racial and religious identities coalesce:

- *We are a nation of immigrants. I am proud to be the son of an immigrant. My father came to this country from Poland without a nickel in his pocket. Their story, my story, our story is a story of America: hard-working families coming to the United States to create a brighter future for their children.* [my emphasis] (A Fair and Humane Immigration Policy)

Referring to Sanders’ and the nation’s own story, the Movement articulates ‘being an immigrant’ as the identity value for the Americans whose demands for racial justice is inseparable from ‘the people’s. They are seen as the integral part of the movement’s struggle and the intact elements of ‘the people’ identity.

- *A political revolution that mobilizes millions of Americans inclusive of Latinos and immigrants will ensure that Congress acts on what the majority of Americans demand* (A Fair and Humane Immigration Policy)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of the Statements ‘On the Issues’</th>
<th>Issues Demanded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A fair and humane immigration policy</td>
<td>Rights of illegal immigrants and minor groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial justice</td>
<td>Rights of people of color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting historically black colleges and universities</td>
<td>Supporting ethnic-cultural institutes of segregation-period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting for the rights of native Hawaiians</td>
<td>Rights of indigenous Hawaiian communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowering tribal nations</td>
<td>Rights of indigenous communities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: The list of race-related demands communicated at berniesanders.com/issues

The deconstruction of this identity property is particularly important to lay down populist characteristics of the Sanders Movement, since File’s division of inclusive and exclusionary populism primarily takes strengthen from how the popular identity engage with non-dominant/excluded cultural and ethnical groups (2010). Remembering Butler’s definition of excluded groups (2000, p. 23) (see Page 19), it is seen that the Sanders Movement embodies the underrepresented identities into itself, producing a definition of ‘the People’ without borders and, at the same time, replicating and assembling different collective identities’ claims on the
political persona he communicates\textsuperscript{24}. Even though the list of demands covering the issue goes with 56 different points, here are some units of text from the website, exposing the position the movement takes (A fair and humane immigration policy):

- *Dismantle inhumane deportation programs and detention centers*
- *Pave the way for a swift and fair legislative roadmap to citizenship for the eleven million undocumented immigrants*
- *Protect Immigrant Workers Exercising their Rights*
- *Employ Humanitarian Parole to Reunite Families*
- *Keep Families Together*
- *End the Economic Exploitation of Immigrant Workers*

Besides articulating immigrants as the part of ‘the people’, The movement addresses to specific American minority groups such as Hawaiians, Blacks and Native Americans, and communicates these groups’ struggle as the struggle of ‘the People’. Here, the movement continues to obtain more particularistic demands into its chain, consequently to expand the front it constructs:

- *Honor Native American treaty rights and tribal sovereignty*
- *Move away from a relationship of paternalism and control and toward one of deference and support*
- *Protecting sacred places and Native American cultures*
- *Self-determination and self-governance of Native Hawaiians*

People of color have been specifically articulated within the Movement’s discourse given the fact that they are the most visible minority group in the US (US Census, 2013). By communicating physical, political, legal, economic and environmental injustices the people of color have been facing, Sanders positions the demands of these groups as the demand of ‘the People’ pointing out that the social subject is discriminated:

- *re-enfranchise the more than two million African-Americans who have had their right to vote taken away by a felony conviction*
- *put an end to discriminatory laws and the purging of minority-community names from voting rolls*

\textsuperscript{24} The Website openly mentions that the Movement works closely with DREAMers – a political group working for illegal immigrants to obtain permanent residency.
• stop the unequal exposure of people of color to harmful chemicals, pesticides and other toxins in homes, schools, neighborhoods and workplaces
• require police departments and states to collect data on all police shootings and deaths that take place while in police custody and make that data public
• strengthening Historically Black Colleges and Universities [which] disproportionately serve students facing the intersecting effects of wealth inequality, systematic K–12 disparities, and discrimination

Political demands asseverated by Sanders also reach to the dimension of socio-politics. The website displays and communicates very diverse social demands as a part of the politicized agenda of ‘the people’ where issues such as college tuition fees, financing of political campaigns, affordable housing, women’s right, STDs awareness, LGBT equality, empowering tribal nations, veterans’ right, the scope of medical care, fighting to lower prescription drug prices, fighting for nurses, family values and international peace are articulated and incorporated into ‘the struggle of the people’ (Table 4).

Even though these demands have been politicized and advocated by several collective groups\(^ {25}\) since 2006, the Sanders coalition practices the same articulatory pattern observed above: ‘the People’ is framed by these social demands, and the demands are seen as an integral part of ‘the People’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of the Statements ‘On the Issues’</th>
<th>Issues Demanded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It's time to make college tuition free and debt free</td>
<td>Tuition-free college education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting big money out of politics and restoring democracy</td>
<td>Campaign finance reform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting for affordable housing</td>
<td>Affordable Housing and fixing homelessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting for women's rights</td>
<td>Supporting planned parenthood and women’s health</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^ {25}\) For instance, campaign finance reform in The United States is one of the mostly discussed political demands in the country with the involvement of numerous political groups such as American Promise, Wolf PAC, Move to Amend, Occupy Movement as well as local efforts. The topic has created a significant interest after the Supreme Court decision in 2006 allowing corporations to donate unlimited Money to political campaigns.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Demand</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working to create an AIDS and HIV-free generation</td>
<td>STDs awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting for LGBT equality</td>
<td>Equality for all genders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring for our veterans</td>
<td>Healthcare for war veterans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicare for all</td>
<td>Healthcare for all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthen and expand social security</td>
<td>Social security expansion for the poor, the worker and the parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting to lower prescription drug prices</td>
<td>Lowering drug prices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting for disability rights</td>
<td>Providing education, job and social security for handicapped citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senator Bernie Sanders' plan for Puerto Rico</td>
<td>Rights of Puerto Ricans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standing with Guam</td>
<td>Rights of Guamians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ending the race to the bottom</td>
<td>Stopping economic exploitation of Haitians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting for nurses</td>
<td>Improving conditions of nurses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real family values</td>
<td>Introducing parental leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War and peace</td>
<td>Stopping international interventions and establishing international cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War should be the last option: why I support the Iran deal</td>
<td>Supporting negotiations with Iran</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4: The list of social demands communicated at berniesanders.com/issues*

As one of the principle issues highlighted is to achieve the political revolution (Jacobs & Smith, 2016; LoBianco, 2016), the manifestation called “getting big money out of politics and restoring democracy” constitutes a good example to examine the pattern in which particular demands embody itself to ‘the People’:

- *With a political campaign finance system that is corrupt and increasingly controlled by billionaires and special interests, I fear very much that, in fact,*
government of the people, by the people, and for the people is beginning to perish in the United States of America. We cannot allow that to happen. [...] The need for real campaign finance reform is not a progressive issue. It is not a conservative issue. It is an American issue. [my emphasis]

The emphasis on ‘the people’s government’ plays a significant role in the movements’ attempt to define ‘the People’. The movement frames the demand of “a publicly financed, transparent system of campaign financing” as an American people’s issue by mentioning its relation to the democratic practice in the country. In other words, ‘the demand for democracy’ is articulated and embodied to ‘the people’ by both bringing more progressive definition for it and positioning it as a ‘the People’s desire. (getting big money out of politics and restoring democracy).

- Our vision for American democracy should be a nation in which all people, regardless of their income, can participate in the political process, can run for office without begging for contributions from the wealthy and the powerful. [my emphasis] (getting big money out of politics and restoring democracy)

- Our vision for democracy should be one in which candidates are speaking to the vast majority of our people – working people, the middle class, low-income people, the elderly, the children, the sick, and the poor – and discussing with them their ideas as to how we can improve lives for all of the people in this country. [my emphasis] (getting big money out of politics and restoring democracy)

Here, Sanders makes a distinction between the current democratic practice and the movement’s vision for democratic practice. Sanders positions ‘the People’ as an actor who wants to participate in politics for the majority of the people, as well as an actor who wants to take control of their government. This articulation constitutes the pedestal of ‘the political revolution’ where ‘the People’ obtains a democratic-revolutionary characteristic.

Another aggregated theme of demands concentrates on international affairs where the movement seeks for and articulates unarmed solutions in trouble spots particularly for the conflict-affected people such as Iranians, Syrians, Iraqis, and Afghans which are under the direct range of motion of the US government, as well as Palestinians who are fighting with the Israeli Government which receives support from the US. Articulated demands go as such listed below by emphasizing the positions ‘the American People’ takes:
• Move away from a policy of unilateral military action, and toward a policy of emphasizing diplomacy, and ensuring the decision to go to war is a last resort (War and peace)

• Expand our global influence by promoting fair trade, addressing global climate change, providing humanitarian relief and economic assistance, defending the rule of law, and promoting human rights (War and peace)

• pursue diplomatic solutions before resorting to military engagement – especially after nearly fourteen years of ill-conceived and disastrous military engagements in the region [Iran] (War should be the last option: why I support the Iran deal)

• Israeli attacks on Gaza as disproportionate and the widespread killing of civilians as completely unacceptable. (War and peace)

In the particular sense of unincorporated territories such as Guam and Puerto Rico, the movement also aggregates demands of the residents even though they have limited access to the congressional procedures and they do not have any votes for the presidency. Sanders communicates the demands below as well as making the people of these regions the subject of other economic, racial, environmental and social demands listed before:

• [Guamanians] are entitled to fair representation at the Federal level and should be empowered to choose their own political future (Standing with Guam)

• make sure people in Guam exposed to radiation receive compensation (Standing with Guam)

• convene a meeting with Puerto Rican leaders, its creditors, labor unions, business leaders, and pension advocates to work out a debt repayment plan that is fair to all sides (Senator Bernie Sanders' plan for Puerto Rico)

In another statement covering social issues, the movement communicates demands of LGBT community. By articulating several claims of the LGBT community such as “ensur[ing] LGBT Americans have access to comprehensive health insurance”, “fight[ing] for the Equality Act, the Every Child Deserves a Family Act, and any other bill that prohibits discrimination against LGBT people”, “advanc[ing] policies to ensure students can attend school without fear of bullying”, “support[ing] police departments adopting policies to ensure fairer interactions with transgender people”, “fight[ing] against discrimination against LGBT people by creditors and banks” (Fighting for LGBT Equality), the movement also owns these particular demands absorbs them within its own border, and makes them a part of ‘the People’s struggle. In another
statement, the movement articulates the demands of HIV/AIDS patients who face with “the crisis of access to affordable drugs” which is “one of the great moral issues of our day […] people with HIV and AIDS are suffering and, in some cases, dying in America” (Working to create an AIDS and HIV-free generation). By comprising the victims of STDs, Sanders communicates that “We must set a national goal of ending the HIV epidemic” which is based on “reform[ing] the existing patent laws written by and for the pharmaceutical industry to boost their profits and which make medicine so expensive”. As exemplified here, different social identities such as LGBT community and STDs victims are also welcomed into the definition of ‘the people’. By negotiating with different collectives and communicating different underrepresented marginalized social groups’ demands, ‘the people’ extends its scope, procures a wider participation into the chain.

14 more statements (Table 4) on the website articulating socio-political demands in the name of ‘the People’ give out a sound of different sub-groups’ claims and congregate those sub-groups under the title of ‘the people’ by employing the same discursive patterns as in issues mentioned above. Consequently, several more collective groups join into the popular identity: The students, the poor tenants, the mothers, the veterans, the workers, the parents, the uninsured patients, the disabled people in addition to LGBT community, STDs victims, Puerto Ricans, Guamanians, the peace seekers and the campaign finance reformers.

5.1.3. The People: ‘True’ Americans

As a self-declared democratic socialist, Sanders’ political agenda has been dominated by these demands since he took the office of the Senate in 1991; and his political record (U.S Congress, 2017) shows us that, throughout his political career, Sanders has always communicated the same ideas shaped by the similar demands. The chain of equivalence between numerous identities has been built on his solid political basis. It is not possible to conclude that either Sanders have interacted with these collective groups by reasons of aggregating them into his discourse, or these groups have interacted with Sanders and joined in a constructive-communicative action. Nevertheless (even though the eponym of communicative action, Habermas26, would criticize the equivalence logic which requires ‘weness’ and ‘otherness’ in a political interaction (Mouffe, 2000), and similarly requires

26 Habermas defines communicative action as “argumentation for that type of speech in which participants thematize contested validity claims and attempt to vindicate or criticize them through argumentation” (Habermas, 1985, p. 18).
passions and indignations (antagonism) in order to construct itself and to fulfill the process of identification (Mouffe, 2000) the analysis shows us that an internal communicative action, which breeds an argumentation among participant identities, occurs to construct ‘an agreed-upon’ popular identity.

To answer RQ, The Sanders’ movement constructs a definition of ‘the people’ where certain moral values incorporate with certain political claims and come into existence with the face of Sanders. By injecting the values as moral obligations into the definition of ‘the people’ and trying to bring the morality into the political process, the movement prioritizes the political freedoms as well as economic freedoms which, as Sanders raises voice, have been ripped off resulting in leaving ‘the common people’ effectively powerless.

The movement uncovers the boundaries which limit and define ‘the People’ who is seen as the political subject of a change in a populist manner. The political persona drawn by the movement reveals the fact that the movement conceives ‘two Americas’, one of those is enjoying with the prosperity of power and political freedom, while ‘the people’ is facing with austerity, economic oppression of the elite, social and environmental injustices and structural racism. Sanders repetitively discloses this dichotomy within the social structure by expressing what Martin Luther King Jr. famously said: “This country has socialism for the rich, rugged individualism for the poor” 27

The movement positions those who lives in the other America as a political constituent communicating that they were imposed by many inadequate and substandard economic conditions, and they were plagued by having to choose between unemployment and low-wage jobs, by having to face with the structural injustice in the environmental crisis, by having to struggle with racial, cultural and religion-based discrimination, by having to be forced into living without a proper social security, by having to live without disclosing their potential. In other words, the movement takes on the larger issue of inequality to address devastation and

disappointment in the society by aggregating many unsatisfied demands into its own body. ‘The People’, in the movement’s context, gets a shape of a progressive, demanding, pro-Justitia, pro-equality persona where many different social identities integrate into.

To answer RSQ1 which addresses to the inclusivity of the created popular identity, Filc (2010)’s basic framework is employed. In this regard, the included collective identities form the basis to assess if the popular identity is an inclusive project or not. As the previous discussions lay down, a wide spectrum of the social layer has been articulated in the movement’s discourse, the mere fact that excluded groups such as immigrants, illegal aliens, religious and sexual minorities appear to be an inseparable part of ‘the People’. Contrary to widely accepted populist rhetoric mostly attached to conservative movements (Acemoglu et al., 2011; Inglehart & Norris, 2016; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012), ‘the People’ in Sanders’ articulatory practice obtains more comprehensive and definitely more inclusive meaning for itself, challenging the hegemonic meaning of the sign. By associating with signifiers such as economic equality, fairness, human rights, environmental conscience, racial and cultural openness, political equality, political participation, gender equality, the movement tries to hegemonize the meaning of the term, as well as uses it as the common denominator.

‘The People’ in Sanders’ articulation constitutes a popular identity which holds three meanings: the majority, the many transcending all class divisions and organic ethnocultural dominant identities, the common people. In Laclau’s term, it is the plebs who homogenize itself as the totality of the American populus. By providing a sense of belonging, the popular identity achieves what De La Torre says: “[giving] back to the subordinate and the poor the self-worth and recognition to be at the center of the nation” (de la Torre 1998, p. 127 in Filc, 2010, p. 14). Furthermore, the popular identity enlarges the boundaries of democracy and participation by providing a platform for subordinate groups to become political subjects. Contrary to the understanding of populist zeitgeist in 2017, the identification of popular front with inclusive stance is neither the result of manipulation by demagogues nor the expression of the false consciousness of the banal masses. Reasonably, it is democratizing process where many unsatisfied groups ally themselves with each other, consolidate under an identity and try to improve their collective material, social and moral conditions.

5.2. The Antagonistic Other: Who Do The People Contest?

Since Laclau (1996) and Mouffe (2005) advocate the construction of an extended front of equivalence, the establishment of dichotomised political space seems inevitable. As
exemplified, ‘the People’ is used to refer to the constituents of populist discourses, one side of
the dichotomy. The antagonistic Other, which stays on the other side, obtains many names such
as ‘la casta’, ‘the establishment’, ‘the system’, ‘the elites’, ‘the rich’ etc. The authors assert that
the construction of the Other, which draws lines between ‘who-we-are’ and ‘who-we-are
NOT’, is a compulsory condition for a successful articulation of a popular identity. Drawing on
the authors’ writings, this section addresses to the questions of who constitutes ‘the Other’ for
Sanders’ popular identity and who is pointed as the foe by the articulation.

Inspiring from HSS, Howarth locates two conditions for the emergence of an
antagonistic Other in a polity (2000, p. 105): “social antagonisms occur because social agents
are unable to attain their identities (and therefore their interests)” and “they construct an
‘enemy’ who is deemed responsible for this ‘failure’ ” [his emphasis]. Therefore, I build up the
analysis by considering that Sanders’ articulation generates an Other as a response to these two
obstacles pulling ‘the People’ down.

5.2.1. The Immoral Other

It was shown that ‘the People’ in Sanders’ equivalent chain incorporates with many
different collective demands (therefore identities) in order to expand the front of the articulated
identity. By doing so, the movement does not only aim to be disseminated, but also to challenge
the hegemonic meaning of ‘the People’ by striving to interpolate economic, environmental,
racial and social egalitarian, fair, moral, cosmopolitan, tolerant, peace-seeking, scientifically-
informed, cooperative values, issues and demands into ‘the People’. Similarly, social groups
such as the poor tenants, the mothers, the veterans, the workers, the parents, the uninsured
patients, the disabled people, the environmentalists, the immigrants, the LGBTs, the people of
colour, the Muslims as well as the classes such as the poor and the middle class is articulated
as ‘the American People’. Therefore, any traditional strictly ideological other (such as liberals,
capitalists, right-wingers, etc.) comes short of corresponding to ‘the People’s foe, since ‘the
People’ matches up to an identity above ideologies. That’s why Sanders’ articulation
communicates ‘a immoral other’ instead of a coterie. Whoever falls under the articulated
immoral other represents the antagonistic opponent of Sanders’ popular identity.

By negotiating politics as an ethical and moral struggle, Sanders points out that there is
a moral malignancy causing for abuse of ‘the People’. The Other is evaluated as an entity
keeping ‘the People’ from its capacity, yet so it has been conversed as a surmountable obstacle.
By communicating that the struggle is inevitable, Sanders’ articulation declares a political combat against the foe:

“... that absolutely these are very difficult and frightening times. But also understand that in moments of crisis, what has happened, time and time again, is that people have stood up and fought back. So despair is absolutely not an option” (172).

- We need an economy that is not based on uncontrollable greed, monopolistic practices and illegal behaviour (314).
- [...] speculators whose greed, recklessness and illegal behavior nearly destroyed the economy seven years ago (Making the wealthy, Wall Street, and large corporations pay their fair share)

Sanders’ articulation boldly presents greediness, insatiability, recklessness and illicitness as the traits of the Other with whom the People is engaging antagonistically; especially during constructing the economic episode of the popular identity. Signifiers such as illegalness and destruction particularly play essential roles, since the Movement emphasizes that the Other is constituted of spurious and counterfeit groups whose doings are overlooked, yet morally and financially annihilative. Here, Sanders performs a deductive process lumping every actor who owns these traits together. A closer look at the statements reveals who the foe is:

- We must send a message to the billionaire class: [...] Your greed has got to end. You cannot take advantage of all the benefits of America, if you refuse to accept your responsibilities as Americans [my emphasis] (Income and Wealth Inequality)
- We have got to demand that the wealthiest Americans and largest corporations pay their fair share in taxes. (Making the wealthy, Wall Street, and large corporations pay their fair share)
- Wall Street cannot continue to be an island unto itself, gambling trillions in risky financial decisions while expecting the public to bail it out (reforming Wall Street)

Here, the antagonistic Other gets its shape around the irresponsible and heedless act of living; greed and self-indulgent moral fibre. As a result, a few social subjects in Sanders’ articulation remark who the foe is: the wealthy or the billionaire class, the Wall Street, large corporations, too-big-to-fail institutions. Furthermore, by pointing out that “unmet needs on
“every corner of this nation” is the result of their irresponsibleness, Sanders deems the Other liable for the dissatisfaction the People faces.

Similar to the financial malignancy, a couple of other industries obtain particular interest in Sanders’ articulation of antagonistic Other. The moral attributions stay almost the same.

- **There really is no limit to the pharmaceutical industry’s greed. The entire industry is full of crooks. While Americans are making life-and-death choices on whether to pay for food or their prescribed medications, drug companies continue to rake in astronomical profits and pay their executives millions.** (342)
- **We have an energy policy that is rigged to boost the profits of big oil companies like Exxon, BP, and Shell at the expense of average Americans** (Combating Climate Change to Save the Planet)
- **The fossil fuel industry spends billions and billions of dollars lobbying and buying candidates to block virtually all progress on climate change.** (Combating Climate Change to Save the Planet)
- **Executives and lobbyists for coal, oil, and gas companies have blocked every attempt to make progress on climate change, and thrown unprecedented amounts of money at elected officials to buy their loyalty.** (Combating Climate Change to Save the Planet)

Even though Sanders focuses on the specific issue such as healthcare and environment, he maintains the same moral evaluations, epithets and discursive patterns by emphasizing that **greediness, insolence and nerviness** are the enemies of the People.

5.2.2. The Systemic Other

Sanders’ articulation gets beyond the limits of ideological categories, yet the construction of the Other is still associated with ideological apparatuses. Sanders asserts that freedom of the people and the government of, by and for the people are being impounded and controlled by special interests of a coterie in the name of individualism and liberalism. By

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28 The Supreme Court decision: the First Amendment protects *associations* of individuals, for instance political action committees, which want to spend money in order to disseminate a political agenda within the context of freedom of speech. Corporations are also seen associations of individuals; therefore, donations, regardless of volume, are constitutional and they serve to associate effectively and to speak on political issues. (Citizen United vs. Federal Election Commission, 2010)
constructing a discourse which targets the political system, Sanders presents corruption and embracery as systemic tools which are opposed:

- *the U.S. Supreme Court essentially said to the wealthiest people in this country: [...] Now, we are going to give you the opportunity to purchase the U.S. Government, the White House, the U.S. Senate, the U.S. House, Governors’ seats, legislatures, and State judicial branches as well.* (Getting Big Money Out of Politics and Restoring Democracy)

- *The Citizens United decision hinges on the absurd notion that money is speech, corporations are people, and giving huge piles of undisclosed cash to politicians in exchange for access and influence does not constitute corruption.* (Getting Big Money Out of Politics and Restoring Democracy)

- *We are talking about a rapid movement in this country toward a political system in which a handful of very wealthy people and special interests will determine who gets elected or who does not get elected.* (Getting Big Money Out of Politics and Restoring Democracy)

In these quoted passages, the movement antagonizes the structural apparatus which blockage effective right to vote in the name of freedom of speech. A closer look at articulation reveals that the movement constructs an antagonistic stance not towards donators, but the system itself.

The systemic enemy is not only limited to electioneering procedures but also found in daily practice. In Sanders’ term, so-called liberal regulations and implementations restrain the People from attaining its ability and these unregulated liberal economic policies, which only protect businesses and capital owners, are deemed responsible for the problems the People faces:

- *The current attempt by... who[m] want to deny women in this country the right to control their own bodies. [providing] the ability to deny coverage for contraception or any other kind of procedure if the employer had a “moral” objection to it.* (Fighting for women's rights)
• *In many states, it is still legal to fire someone for being gay. It is legal to deny someone housing for being transgender. That is unacceptable and must change.* (Fighting for LGBT Equality)

Another major structural otherness pointed out in Sanders’ articulation touches upon the discriminative action of the system. Throughout several statements on the website, the movement aims at embracing diversity and harnessing it for the common good. Consequently, any entity who holds anti-position towards the social groups who “are integrated into the fabric of American life” is antagonized (A Fair and Humane Immigration Policy).

- *we have eleven million people in this country who are undocumented – who came here to improve their lives, to escape oppression, to flee desperate poverty and violence – and are systematically shut out from that same opportunity.* (A Fair and Humane Immigration Policy)
- *We are far from eradicating racism in this country. [...] They are perpetrated by extremists who want to intimidate and terrorize black, brown and indigenous people in this country.* (Racial Justice)

Here, the movement illustrates the systematic discrimination as a constitutive outsider without explicitly stating the identity of the Other. Contrary to previous issues, discriminative actions are not associated with tangible groups such as the billionaires and the politicians; instead the movement acknowledges that discriminatory behaviors are performed by the cultural structure and rigged stereotypes. To reify the discriminative actors, the movement points at legal violence coming from law enforcement and physical violence coming from the police. Sanders chooses to discuss racism within the scopes of institutional boundaries.

- *We must address the lingering unjust stereotypes that lead to the labeling of black youths as “thugs” and “super predators“* (Racial Justice)
- *Blacks are imprisoned at six times the rate of whites and a report by the Department of Justice found that blacks were three times more likely to be searched during a traffic stop, compared to white motorists. Together, African-Americans and Latinos comprised 57 percent of all prisoners in 2014, even though African-Americans and Latinos make up approximately one quarter of the US population. These outcomes are not reflective of increased crime by*
communities of color, but rather a disparity in enforcement and reporting mechanisms. (Racial Justice)

Contrary to much populist rhetorics, Sanders’ articulation does not turn the state institutions all together into a target, yet portrays them as entities with false consciousness. As exemplified, the systemic attacks on ‘the people’ is conversed as traits of the Other, but also every claim of ‘the People’ is communicated as obstacles need to be addressed within the institutional order. Therefore, the movement can not be named as a collective who seeks for a government submission; instead, it is solidarity with an alternative perspective embracing subordinated ones to participate in the system as well. For instance, “Medicare for all”, “strengthen and expand social security”, “improving the rural economy”, “real family values”, “caring for our veterans” and other demands, the movement articulates, do not designate a direct enemy, yet criticize the lack of willingness in the state apparatus to address these themes by reason of free market, immunity of property and laissez-faire.

5.2.3. The Other: An Antagonized America

The antagonized one of two Americas, which is targeted by Sanders’ articulation, is communicated as a moral and systemic enemy which infests the lives of millions of people with greed, insatiability, recklessness, self-indulgent and discrimination; and keeps them devoid of food, care, education, freedom and human dignity. Even though, the articulation does not assert certain identities like the billionaires, the wealthy, the state, the judiciary, the law enforcement as the enemies of ‘the people’ only because of they are who they are, but because of they obtain detrimental attitudes and moral codes. The movement disassociates itself from the general understanding of populist behavior which harnesses the fear of outsider as well as antagonizes the elite and the institutional order by manipulating emotions and dissatisfaction. Instead of dichotomizing the country with loosely defined paradigms as Mudde (2004, 2007) suggests, Sanders poses a rhetorical question in which he defines two Americas based on ethical and moral positions the both parties choose:

“Do we continue the 40-year decline of our middle class and the growing gap between the very rich and everyone else, or do we fight for a progressive economic agenda that creates jobs, raises wages, protects the environment and provides health care for all? Are we prepared to take on the enormous economic and political power of the billionaire class, or do we continue to slide into economic and political oligarchy? These are the most important questions of our time, and how we answer them will determine the future of our country.” (Berniesanders.com, n.d.-a)
To answer RSQ2, Sanders communicates an antagonistic other in parallel with the pattern within the construction of ‘the People’. By articulating a rhetoric which emphasizes moral and ethical struggles rather than strictly tangible enemies, Sanders’ practice antagonizes ‘immoral’ and ‘unethical’ actions which opposes value and demand positions of ‘the people’. Without hesitating to give names of the billionaires, the wealthy, the Wall Street, Sanders’ articulation poses every entity who causes the larger issue of inequality as person of interest. The search for economic, environmental, social and racial justice becomes a membrane which separate ‘the people’ from ‘the Other’.

Worth noting that, the articulatory practice of ‘the Other’ also hegemonically challenges taken-for-granted suppositions that populists antagonize several sectors of society such as minorities, immigrants, the academic elite, scientists, excluded gender identities, the media elite, etc. Instead, Sanders counts these sectors of society within ‘the People’ if they construct their demands based on the common understanding.
6. Conclusion and Further Research

This thesis gets strength from the idea that how different articulatory practices give birth to different populist identities which may result in different political consequences albeit populisms share common features. Based on theoretically isolated discussions and empirically contra-conjectural observations, the thesis constitutes of an interesting case for researchers to understand how populism emerges in different locations and contexts and how it obtains different characteristics in regard to their constituents.

By trying to illustrate the bigger picture posed in RQ, the thesis lays down that the participant identities constitute the popular identity of Sanders’ movement through aggregating particular demands without leaving the boundaries of value positions which is also articulated for ‘the People’. At this point, economic, environmental, racial and social egalitarian, fair, moral, cosmopolitan, tolerant, peace-seeking, scientifically-informed, cooperative values position social groups such as the poor tenants, the mothers, the veterans, the workers, the parents, the uninsured patients, the disabled people, the environmentalists, the immigrants, the LGBTs, the people of colour, the Muslims as well as the classes such as the poor and the middle class within the popular identity.

To answer RSQ1, the thesis presents a definition for ‘the People’ which does not fit into the taken-for-granted forms and frames of mainstream discussions, rather it has an inclusive characteristic thanks to discursive practice mentioning and embracing excluded identities such as immigrants, gender identities, illegals and racial and cultural minorities.

Finally, the thesis demonstrates how Sanders communicates an antagonized identity as a persona causing inequalities and motivated by greed, insatiability and nerviness. At total, the populist rhetoric of Sanders constitutes what Laclau and Mouffe (1985) propose for the construction of popular identities: defining boundaries of the identity; accumulating different segments of society including subordinated ones through demands and values; constructing an antagonized counterpart which is the constitutive outsider.

The contribution of the thesis is to employ Laclau and Mouffe’s theory, which does not only provide a lens to analyze the construction and articulation of a popular identity, but also provide reasons and motivations explaining populism within the scope of discourse studies. The thesis elaborates the gap in the literature by addressing populist rhetoric which is on the rise all around the world. The scope of this thesis does not provide a full-scale analysis to answer all of the questions regarding populism, its relation with political communication and populist
political action given the fact that the analysis relies on the data collected; however, the thesis contributes to the literature written about populism, collective identities and political communication. Furthermore, the theoretical discussion and the analysis propose a new framework to study populist movements which have been evaluated from only one perspective so far. For sure, the analysis method is not only about populism and articulation of popular identity, it can also be employed by researchers who want to dig into identification processes of any collective structures. The theoretical discussion, and consequently the analysis, focus on the aggregation of multiple demands and values which are constructing the chain of equivalence.

For further researches, ethnographic observations which lay down how individuals or dispersed collective identities (such as DREAMers, Occupy, etc.) identify themselves with a populist movement would be an interesting option since separate subjects, who are communicated by Sanders, would interpret its attachment differently, and they would bring a specific meaning for their attachments. The thesis, at the current version, relies on how a popular identity is communicated, yet it would be an important research to look at how such communicative stances are received by the people. For instance, in-depth interviews with Sanders supporters would probably reveal the effects of Sanders communication on political constituents, and it would measure the level of involvement into the articulated popular identity. This would not only provide the operational values of Laclau and Mouffe’s lens on populism, but also a comprehensive understanding of political communicative strategies. The further researches on these extents will also substantiate how populism would be inclusive and egalitarian contrary to mainstream populism readings. Researchers who want to go on discourse studies, alternatively, may focus on an exclusionary populist rhetoric and build on this study. This kind of attempt would gratify many current scholars who work on populism from an unflattering perspective, however, provide a distinctive approach by exhibiting many possible populist realms.
Reference


Desai, M. (2010). From this bridge called my back to this bridge we call home: Collective identities and social movements. *The Sage Handbook of Identities, 421–436.*


Skocpol, T., & Williamson, V. (2012). *The Tea Party and the rem*


Appendices

Appendix A. Sources from BernieSanders.com

- Income And Wealth Inequality
- It's Time To Make College Tuition Free And Debt Free
- Getting Big Money Out Of Politics And Restoring Democracy
- Creating Decent Paying Jobs
- A Living Wage
- Combating Climate Change To Save The Planet
- A Fair And Humane Immigration Policy
- Racial Justice
- Fighting For Affordable Housing
- Fighting For Women's Rights
- Working To Create An Aids And Hiv-Free Generation
- Fighting For Lgbt Equality
- Empowering Tribal Nations
- Caring For Our Veterans
- Medicare For All
- Strengthen And Expand Social Security
- Fighting To Lower Prescription Drug Prices
- Fighting For Disability Rights
- Senator Bernie Sanders' Plan For Puerto Rico
- Standing With Guam
- Preventing A Global Race To The Bottom In The Airline Industry
- General Electric Must Pay To Restore The Hudson River
- Constitution Pipeline Must Be Defeated
- Supporting Historically Black Colleges And Universities
- Ending The Race To The Bottom
- Fighting For The Rights Of Native Hawaiians
- Improving The Rural Economy
- Fighting For Nurses
- Reforming Wall Street
- Real Family Values
- War And Peace
- War Should Be The Last Option: Why I Support The Iran Deal
- Making The Wealthy, Wall Street, And Large Corporations Pay Their Fair Share
Appendix B. Facebook posts from Bernie Sanders Account

[the inventory of the Facebook posts were too long to be enclosed in the appendices, therefore they will be sent to the opposition and the examiner through e-mail as a supplementary document]

It can be reached via the publicly reachable link below:

https://goo.gl/2Lut7Q