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Erdem Damar
Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Başkent University, edamar@baskent.edu.tr

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Can Democratic Subjectivity Be a Way Out of Recent Crisis of Democracy? The Case of Turkey

Erdem DAMAR

Department of Political Science and International Relations, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Başkent University
edamar@baskent.edu.tr

Abstract Drawing from poststructuralist perspective with a specific emphasis on agonistic democracy, this paper emphasises on the notion of democratic subjectivity as a possible way out of the contemporary crisis of liberal democracy. The two faces of this crisis will be elaborated in the first part. While the crisis of democracy is largely produced by the implementations of conservative, technocratic and capitalist politics that embrace minimalist approaches to democracy by reducing it into a set of rules to govern politics, it also gains visibility to the emergence of a wide range of counter-mobilisations contesting these neoliberal variants. In that respect, post-structuralist thought takes the notion crisis not only a destructive but also a productive moment as it leads to the emergence of new alternatives that mobilize contingently around democratic or authoritarian directions.

The second part focuses on potential modes of democratic political subjectivities by drawing from post-structuralist elaborations on the relationship between democratic politics and ethics. Arguing that democracies' democracy should be explained by examining the relationships between the democratic system at stake and its outsiders, I will point out two different ways that Ernesto Laclau scrutinises carefully in his theory of populism through which democratic modes of subjectivities are to be constructed. The first way is to create new ways of politics to articulate particular demands and expectations to the established regimes, which will eventually lead to minor or major transformations in identities and characters of established regimes themselves. The second way is to a search for the possibilities of a counter-hegemonic democratic movement through linking demands and expectations of excluded groups to mobilize against established regimes. I will discuss Turkey with an emphasis on the recent political controversies over the country's new presidential government system as an exemplary case to illustrate the second possibility.

Keywords: the crisis of liberal democracy, populism, agonistic democracy, democratic subjectivity, Turkey.

1. The Crisis of Liberal Democracy and the Emergence of Populist Moments

Over the past 10-15 years, *the crisis of liberal democracy* and *the rise of populism* have emerged as two political phenomena that were widely elaborated in the fields of political theory, political science, and comparative politics. Although there are controversies within and among these fields regarding the depth and scale of this crisis—as well as disagreements about the analytical robustness of the concepts that are employed to define it—, there also seems to be a common agreement that a cluster of concepts such as 'democratic backsliding', 'democratic decline', 'de-democratisation', 'authoritarian turn' and 'the rise of illiberal regimes' are to be used to identify a defining characteristic of contemporary times that we are living in.[1] What is more, empirical evidences allow us to suggest that the transformative impact of this crisis on political institutions and social relations is more evident especially in second- and third-wave as well as

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[1] For theoretical and conceptual debates regarding the analytical use of concepts such as democratic backsliding see, Nancy Bermeo, "On Democratic Backsliding," *Journal of Democracy* 27, no. 1 (January 2016): 5-19, https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2016.0012; David Waldner, and Ellen Lust "Unwelcome Change: Coming to Terms with Democratic Backsliding," *Annual Review of Political Science* 21 (May 2018) : 93-113, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-050517-114628; Ireneusz Paweł Karolewski, "Towards a Political Theory of Democratic Backsliding? Generalising the East Central European Experience," in *Illiberal Trends and Anti-EU Politics in East Central Europe* eds. Astrid Lorenz, and Lisa H. Anders (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2021), 301-321; Licia Cianetti, and Seán Hanley, "The End of the Backsliding Paradigm," *Journal of Democracy* 32, no. 1 (January 2021): 66–80 https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2021.0001.

unconsolidated democracies than in the first-wave or consolidated democracies.[2] It is often suggested that the crisis of liberal democracy in the so-called unconsolidated democracies paves the way to the emergence of counter-hegemonic populist movements as new alternatives to the established regimes.[3]

In that sense, scholarly concentration on the rise of populism as another defining characteristic of today's world is not unrelated to the crisis of liberal democracy. More often than not these two trends are taken into consideration as symbiotic such that they nourish and reproduce each other. Not unsurprisingly, the growing literature on populism also brings its own controversies, disagreements and tensions. Is populism democratic or authoritarian? Is it a cause, a symptom or a consequence of democracy's recent crisis? Does populism have an analytical value for political analysis? How is it possible to distinguish populist from non-populist movements? Not dissimilar than the doubts on the crisis of democracy, populism also acquires a contestable character given that political practices, discourses and movements that are labelled under this category are way too exceeding that it runs the risk of having a precise analytical meaning and a use for political explanation.

Analytical controversies regarding what is in the name of the current crisis of liberal democracy, on the one hand, and populism, on the other, as well as the excessively varying empirical evidences (which pose a challenge to scholars to make valid and reliable generalisations), make it necessary to employ theory-driven empirical investigations in order to understand and explain the relationship between these two phenomena. Although there seems to be a dominant tendency that identifies populism as the opposite of liberalism[4], this argument is partly disputed by scholars such as Mudde and Koltwasser as their findings lead them to take a more open approach to recognise the possibility of a positive relation between populism and democratic consolidation.[5] Findings similar to Mudde and Koltwasser's are interesting as they lead us to approach to the relationship between (the crisis of) liberal democracy and populism in confirmation with the possibility that populist movements can take democratic form, and that no necessary relation between populism and democratic backsliding is to be assumed. Such findings also provoke us to analyse more carefully the conditions in which populist movements may take democratic or authoritarian forms.

This paper seeks to explain the relationship between liberal democracy and populism by analysing the conditions in which populist movements may take democratic or authoritarian turns. Drawing from Ernesto Laclau's poststructuralist theory of populism, on the one hand, and the poststructuralist theory of agonistic democracy, on other, I will propound five propositions as conditions for the emergence of democratic or authoritarian populist movements. These propositions will be elaborated in relation to the case of Turkey, which is often considered as a particularly illuminating second-wave democracy wherein the crisis of democracy and the rise of populism gain strong visibility.[6]

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[2] Valeriya Mechkova, Anna Lührmann, and Staffan I. Lindberg, "How Much Democratic Backsliding?," *Journal of Democracy* 28, no. 4 (October 2017): 162-169, https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2017.0075.

[3] Vlastimil Havlik, "Populism as a Threat to Liberal Democracy in East Central Europe" in *Challenges to Democracies in East Central Europe* eds. Jan Holzer, and Miroslav Mareš (London, and New York: Routledge, 2016), 36-55.

[4] Takis S. Pappas, *Populism and Liberal Democracy: A Comparative and Theoretical Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), Ch. 1-2.

[5] Cas Mudde, and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, "Populism: Corrective *and* Threat to Democracy" in *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy?"* eds. Cas Mudde, and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 211.

[6] Bermeo, "On Democratic Backsliding," 11-12, https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2016.0012; Mechkova *et. al.*, "How Much Democratic Backsliding?; Cemal Burak Tansel, "Authoritarian Neoliberalism and Democratic Backsliding in Turkey: Beyond the Narratives of Progress," *South European Society and Politics* 23, no.2 (2018): 197-217, https://doi.org/10.1080/13608746.2018.1479945; Menderes Çınar, "From Moderation to De-moderation: Democratic Backsliding of the AKP in Turkey," in *The Politics of Islamism: Diverging Visions and Trajectories* eds. John L. Esposito, Lily Zubaidah Rahim, and Naser Ghobadzadeh (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 127-157, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-62256-9_5; S.Erdem Aytaç, and Ezgi Elçi, "Populism in Turkey," in *Populism Around the World: A Comparative Perspective* ed. Daniel Stockemer (Cham: Springer, 2019), 89-108, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-96758-5_6; Orçun Selçuk, "Strong Presidents and Weak Institutions: Populism in Turkey, Venezuela and Ecuador," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 16, no. 4 (2016): 571-589, https://doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2016.1242893; Antonino Castaldo, "Populism and Competitive Authoritarianism in Turkey," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 18, no. 4 (2018): 467-487, https://doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2018.1550948; Ihsan Yilmaz, "Islamic Populism and Creating Desirable Citizens in Erdogan's New Turkey," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (December 2018): 52-76, https://doi.org/10.1215/10474552-7345451.

2. Conditions of Possibilities for the Emergence of Democratic and Authoritarian Forms of Populisms: Five Propositions

The propositions propounded here are neither exhaustive nor are they covering the entire processes and procedures regarding the emergence of populist movements. Rather, they are deduced following an ideographic engagement with the case of Turkey in the 2000s under the rule of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*—AKP). Thus, potential generalisability of any these propositions require further testing by comparatively engaging with their explanatory powers in other relevant cases. As the literature points out that the transformative impact of populist moments are to be observed more evidently in the second- or third-wave democracies, the relevant cases for these propositions to be tested shall be initially limited to similar cases including Central and Eastern European countries (most notably Hungary, Poland and Czechia)[7], and South and Southeast Asian countries (most notably Bangladesh, Thailand, and Philippines)[8]. In addition to Turkey, these are the ones that have often been elaborated as paradigmatic cases to understand and explain the patterns of relationship between liberal democracy, democratic decline, and populist moments in so-called unconsolidated democracies.

Proposition 1: Populist moments emerge as reactions against the deficiencies of established regimes. Ernesto Laclau's post-structuralist theory of populism provides a valuable trajectory to investigate the conditions for the emergence of populist moments.[9] In his approach, populism is not a particular type of political activity, but a political logic to conduct hegemonic politics. In an age of diversity, when social fields are excessively heterogeneous and internally complex, any political project—in order to acquire the power to reconfigure the identity and relations of a polity—must, to a certain extent, positively engage with differences available at the social field. No political project can endure its power unless it accommodates a certain quality of difference and manages to represent them as a partial unity. Populism, in this regard, is a hegemonic strategy of identification that is striving for constructing a unity in a field of radical heterogeneity by regulating this field around a representative category, which is commonly marked as "the people". However, the unsurpassable heterogeneity of the social field makes pure representation impossible, which also makes "the people" potentially vulnerable to transformations, dissolutions, or reconstructions. It is these moments of contests that struggles of hegemony between opposing camps gain visibility.

In this regard, populist movements emerge at the peripheries of established regimes. These movements positively engage with demands and expectations of excluded, dominated or oppressed societal groups, and strive for mobilising them against the status quo of the so-called "corrupt elites." In other words, the deficiencies of established regimes facilitate a political ground for the emergence of populist movements. However, at that moment it is difficult to see whether the emerging populist movement will necessarily take a democratic or authoritarian form.

Proposition 2: Populist movements are likely to take democratic forms if the deficiencies of established regimes are to be interpreted as democratic deficits. This is the moment when the context-dependent natures of populist movements gain visibility. Given that populisms emerge as responses or reactions against the downfalls of established regimes, the pluralist or monolithic character of populist construction of "the people" will largely be dependent on how these deficiencies are framed, interpreted and formulated.

In the Turkish case, the AKP came into power in 2002 in a context where deep political polarisations were experienced between the secular Turkish state elites and Islamic political movements. In 1997, AKP's predecessor National Outlook movement was ruled out from politics following a military inspired state intervention. The unconsolidated character of Turkish democracy (often identified as a tutelary democracy), in which political power is confined and regulated by the military and judicial bureaucracy as well as institutional establishments, facilitated a ground for the AKP to struggle against the Kemalist Turkish state through articulating Islamic conservatism and democracy. It was an opportunity for it eased the AKP to legitimately construct political frontiers through reconstructing itself as "people's voice" in opposition to the "tutelary rule of the elites". During its first term in government, the AKP approached constructively and positively with multiple segments of the society. Regarding the secular segments of society and Western secular establishment, it maintained and achieved a limited success in improving Turkey's EU-membership process. Regarding the Kurdish segments, who have always been politically at the margins—if not outsiders—of the system, it was promising to try to reconcile the 30 years long Kurdish question in

[7] Milada Anna Vachudova, "Ethnopopulism and Democratic Backsliding in Central Europe," *East European Politics* 36, no. 3 (2020): 318-340, https://doi.org/10.1080/21599165.2020.1787163.

[8] Jasmin Lorch, "Elite Capture, Civil Society and Democratic Backsliding in Bangladesh, Thailand and the Philippines," *Democratization* 28, no.1 (2021): 81-102, https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2020.1842360.

[9] Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London and New York: Verso, 2005).

democratic ways. Regarding religious minorities and non-Muslim communities, it was promising to be more responsive to their demands and expectations which had not been responded by the established regime. And regarding the Islamic conservative segments, the AKP's main electoral base, it was promising to remove all bans that push them to the margins—if not outside—of public life. In a nutshell, the AKP was founded as a response against the authoritarian downfalls of the Kemalist regime (the rule of state elites, and exclusion of various segments of society). Democracy and pluralism were two main discursive lines that the AKP instituted its political discourse. As such, it successfully disseminated its identification of the established system as authoritarian, corrupt, elitist.

Proposition 3: Populist movements in power often strive for instituting their own versions of political system under the rubric of "people's state." This is the moment in which the potentially consolidating or coercive impacts of populist movements on democracy are to be observed more clearly. Once political power and establishment is taken under control by populist movements, the category of "the people" that these movements discursively construct may take different representative forms. Indeed, these acts of representation are determinate on whether the movement takes a democratic or authoritarian turn. Whilst a commitment to pluralism and responsiveness to various segments of society may lead to the institution of a relatively pluralist and democratic mode of governance, loyalty to the leader and efforts to rule out the opposition will eventually lead to the institution of an authoritarian populist moment.

In the immediate aftermath of its third consecutive electoral victory in 2011, the AKP became the single most important political power in managing the state and regulating socio-political relations. Although the AKP politics of ruling out the military and judicial bureaucracy from political sphere were controversial in terms of democracy, these controversies were not popularly contested for civilianisation of politics was publicly perceived as a precondition of the making of a democratic polity. However, in the immediate aftermath of the elimination of the military and judiciary from politics, the AKP mobilised to structure the 'new state' of the 'new Turkey' against the so-called old and corrupt one. During this period, the AKP took a nativist turn, in which "the people" was identified mainly with loyalty to the new state and its leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.[10] Not unsurprisingly, instead of opening spaces for opposition forces to contest and deliberation, the AKP mobilised to suppress them. The first reaction against the AKP's lack of responsiveness to a wide-range of societal demands and expectations came from urban segments of the society. The 2013 Gezi Park protests were the largest waves of protests in the entire Republican history, in which the protestors mobilised against the AKP's consumerist, commercialised, and religiously conservative urban transformation politics. Several months later, AKP's latent partner released a number of tapes that gained public visibility to corruption scandals of top-ranked ministers and their family members (including premier Erdoğan and his children). These two developments led to the rigidification of political frontiers between the AKP and various social and political segments that were positioned outside of its political centre. This was followed by the end of the peace process that AKP strived to implement to establish a democratic ground to conduct deliberations on the Kurdish question. Meanwhile, the government constantly intervened in the media and press, and the number of imprisoned journalists and opposing intellectuals gradually increased. All these dominating politics were carried out through identifying outsiders as "terrorists," "enemies of the nation," "coup-plotters," and "traitors". Thus, the nativist turn that the AKP had taken as well as its discursive investment on the strong leadership cult of Erdoğan could be considered as definite signs marking the transformation of its populist discourse into an authoritarian one. This also reveals that the process of re-making the so-called "people's state" by the populist movements in power is a critical moment to be observed in order to understand and explain the conditions through which populist movements take democratic or authoritarian forms.

Proposition 4: Democracies' democracy is to be measured by analysing the structured modes of relations between the system and its outsiders. Thus, exclusionary populisms are more likely to establish authoritarian governmentality than inclusionary populisms.[11] The radical heterogeneity of the social field that is discussed in the first proposition sets forth two challenges for any hegemonic project. First, this radical heterogeneity makes it impossible for any hegemonic project—populist or not—to fully fix and regulate the social field. Second, because of this impossibility, hegemonic projects are always potentially vulnerable to contestations, transformations and dissolutions. Taking this notion of diversity as an ontological characteristic of late-modern societies, scholars of agonistic democracy take democratisation and

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[10] For a discussion on the AKP's nativist turn, see Menderes Çınar, "Turkey's 'Western' or 'Muslim' Identity and the AKP's Civilizational Discourse," *Turkish Studies* 19, no: 2 (2019): 176-197.

[11] For a discussion on the inclusionary and exclusionary populisms see, Cas Mudde, and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, "Voices of the Peoples: Populism in Europe and Latin America Compared," Kellogg Institute Working Paper no. 378 (July 2011), https://kellogg.nd.edu/sites/default/files/old_files/documents/378_0.pdf.

pluralisation as never-ending processes.[12] Nevertheless, the processes of democratisation of democracy and pluralisation of pluralism also leave populist construction of "the people" as a negotiable and changeable entity. Accordingly, the extent to which the so-called populist establishment is open to contestations and re-negotiations of "the people" it constructed, the socio-political relations between the established regime and outsiders are to take democratic and subordinating forms. In contrast, the extent to which the contestants are discursively and politically identified as enemies, the mode of relations will take dominating and oppressive forms through which the democratic character of the populist establishment is put into question. This second possibility also leads populist movements to take an authoritarian turn.

The post-2016 period of the AKP government is a definite example of an exclusionary populism in which the political system it established has taken a form close to electoral autocracy.[13] Following the failed coup intervention in July 2016, the AKP declared a two and half year long state of emergency. During this period, massive replacements in state bureaucratic cadres took place. Freedom of press and organisation were tightened to a great extent. The most significant moment in this period was the AKP's conduct of referendum to change the parliamentary system into a presidential one, which is a political system having the characteristic similar to what Bermeo calls as executive aggrandizement.[14] The new system received significant criticisms both at the national and international arena: demolishing the separation of powers principle by the domination of the executive president; ruining the system of checks and balances; personalising politics; instituting an unaccountable government; destroying meritocracy in bureaucracy; ineffective governance especially in the fields of economics, foreign affairs, and public services; excessive privatisation; and dominating the entire civil society. Erdoğan and AKP, however, kept insisting on excluding those societal and political segments by identifying them as enemies of democracy and nation. From the lens of the government, the national security and prosperity of the country requires repressing and silencing these elitist segments. As such, the structured exclusionary populist establishment mobilised continuously to block the possibilities for the democratisation of democracy or pluralisation of pluralism.

Proposition 5: Populist establishments (regardless of their authoritarian or democratic characters) are vulnerable to be contested by the emergence of alternative movements. Thus, the paths for democratisation will remain open insofar as democracy remains as a negotiable political demand. Recent studies reveal that "the democracy-authoritarian cleavage not only emerges during democratic transition but also backsliding."[15] This means that authoritarian populist movements may lose its monopoly and domination over "the people" through the emergence of counter-hegemonic movements embracing a more inclusive and democratic identifications of popular/populist government. However, such a possibility may be concealed if practices for democratic negotiation among a wide-range of excluded groups do not take place. As emphasised by the scholars of agonistic democracy, democracy requires subjectivity modes in which different social and political groups recognise each other as legitimate actors and strive for finding certain common grounds to mobilise their movements.[16] Without such an ethical engagement with politics, social groups may run the risk of remaining isolated from each other. As such, claiming demand from the political authority becomes the mere possibility. The articulation of isolated excluded demands may also lead to certain transformations and changes within the political system. Yet, this possibility is dependent on the openness and responsiveness of the established system. The emergence of a counter-hegemonic movement, on the other hand, may mobilise to radically alter the established regime. Such a possibility requires the establishment of a chain of demands by structuring an alternative identification of the people. In cases when

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[12] See especially, William E. Connolly, *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993); and Chantal Mouffe, *Return of the Political* (London and New York: Verso).

[13] Electoral autocracy has also been continuously used in the V-Dem reports to identify Turkey's regime type. For a recent report see, Nazifa Alizada, Rowan Cole, Lisa Gastaldi, Sandra Grahn, Sebastian Hellmeier, Palina Kolvani, Jean Lachapelle, Anna Lührmann, Seraphine F. Maerz, Shreeya Pillai, and Staffan I. Lindberg, *Autocratization Turns Viral. Democracy Report 2021* (2021), University of Gothenburg: V-Dem Institute, https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer_public/74/8c/748c68ad-f224-4cd7-87f9-8794add5c60f/dr_2021_updated.pdf

[14] Bermeo defines executive aggrandizement as a common form of democratic backsliding which occurs "when elected executives weaken checks on executive power one by one, undertaking a series of institutional changes that hamper the power of opposition forces to challenge executive preferences." Bermeo, "On Democratic Backsliding," 10.

[15] Orçun Selçuk, and Dilara Hekimci, "The Rise of the Democracy – Authoritarianism Cleavage and Opposition Coordination in Turkey (2014–2019)," *Democratization* 27, no: 8 (2020): 1496-1514, https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2020.1803841.

[16] Aletta J. Norval, "Agonistic Democracy" in *The Encyclopaedia of Political Thought* ed. Michael T. Gibbons (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 41-47.

this new identity of "the people" is represented by pluralism and diversity, the counter-hegemonic movement may likely to take a democratic form.

Recent developments in the opposition segments of the political elites and society in Turkey provide some evidences regarding the processes and procedures through which democratic forms of counter-hegemonic populist movements may take place. The growing controversies on the country's new presidential government system have led the opposition parties to form alliances to defeat the AKP and President Erdoğan in the forthcoming elections. Identification of the Erdoğan administration and the new government system as autocratic, personalistic, corrupted and ineffective is the condition for this alliance to endure itself. Nevertheless, the alliance also commonly agreed with a need for a system change towards a "consolidated parliamentary system" (*güçlendirilmiş parlamenter sistem*) if democracy in the country is to be recovered and if excluded groups will reposition themselves as legitimate players in and of the system. The demand for consolidated parliamentary system has two essential roles in contemporary Turkish politics with respect to the emergence of a new construction of "the people", which carries out the possibility for the emergence of a democratic populist movement. First, it opens the possibility to enlarge the alliance by taking the consent of other opposition parties given that these parties also give voice to the democratically and administratively corrosive nature of the existing presidential system. Thus, this demand may lead to the emergence of a political pluralism through acquiring power to represent a wide-range of political parties with very diverse understandings of politics. Second, the demand for consolidated parliamentary system is discursively used to represent a wide-range of demands and expectations claimed by different societal segments: economic inequalities and backsliding, unemployment, the demise of justice and equality, the malfunctioning of judiciary, the arbitrary consequences of personalistic rule, the state's domination of over civil society, poor administrative performance of bureaucracy, the demolishing of meritocracy and of separation of powers principle, lack of effective public service, damaging consequences of so-called irrational foreign policies, corruption and patronage relations, and the system's corrosive impacts leading to the narrowing down of freedom of speech, media and organisation. These and similar particular demands and expectations are articulated and represented under the myth of consolidated parliamentary democracy through which the opposition parties produce opportunities to incorporate and mobilise highly-diverse segments of the society. It is through this process that the new system and Erdoğan administration has been challenged on the basis of democratic recovery.

3. Conclusion

What kind of future research trajectories does this preliminary work outlined in this paper offer us to think about the relationship between the crisis of liberal democracy, democracy, and the emergence of populist moments? I believe that a systematic explanation of this relationship is to be conducted by taking three important points into account. First, rather than trying to make rigid or minimal definitions of populism, we need to recognise that populism is a dominant logic of conducting hegemonic politics especially in our age of diversity where societal fields are internally complex and heterogeneous. This means that we may like to recognise that populisms may take democratic and authoritarian forms. This will eventually lead us to focus on conditions through which populisms may take democratic or authoritarian turns. Second, such a research perspective may lead us to embrace a broader vision towards democracy for the latter refers not only to an institutional structuring and a series of procedures (although this dimension is essential), but also to the structuring of modes of relations between what is included and what is excluded. Thus, studying democracies' democracy requires us to emphasise on the extent to which the relations between the system and its outsiders take oppressive, dominating or subordinating forms. Finally, democracy, democratisation, democratic recovery or democratic consolidation could only remain as political possibilities if appropriate modes of democratic subjectivities are available at the social and political fields. Democratic subjectivity shall refer not only to a deep commitment to democracy, but also an openness to engage with demands, expectations and political rationales of different societal segments or groups. In that respect, populism— given that it is mainly based on representing a wide-range of political demands and expectations under a partial unity—involves the potential to take a democratic form only if this relative openness is to be protected. Such openness, however, also contains a risk. Given that the making of "the people" is a distinctive logic of populism, openness to difference and diversity will also lead particular images of "the people" vulnerable to contestations and transformations. Thus, like any other hegemonic projects, populist movements may also haunted by two possibilities; they either discursively invest on the incontestable nature of "the people" by marginalising its contestants and acquire authoritarian forms, or do they recognise "the people" as a negotiable term, take the risk of irreducibility of disagreements and contests, and open spaces for contestations, negotiations, deliberations, and transformations. Currently, this seems to be the only option for populist projects to take democratic turn.

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