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**DISCOURSE THEORY:**   
**WAYS FORWARD, 2nd EDITION**

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THURSDAY 23 MARCH

# — Parallel Session 1 —

## Panel 1a: THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF PROGRESSIVE POLITICS 1

*Chair: Yannis Stavrakakis*

### 1. Salome Ietter (Queen Mary University of London)

#### The populism of the French ‘Gilets jaunes’: back to class? On populist and anti-capitalist (in)compatibilities

Liberals define it as anti-pluralist and anti-democratic, Marxists as compromising and misdirecting. Across the spectrum, populism inspires suspicions. Engaging with its radical left critique, and taking the case of the ongoing protests of the ‘Gilets jaunes’ in France, I will build on recent attempts at reconciling analyses of classes and perspectives of social transformation through populism in order to approach popular protests as central instances for redefining not only who ‘the people’ is, but also what ‘social classes’ are. If Ernesto Laclau’s later works have led to the militant concept of left populism and paralleled the dismissal of the centrality of class antagonisms, this paper will mobilise his earlier conceptualisation of populism (1977) as a political moment which radical and transformative power is conditioned by the articulation of both popular and class interpellations in contradiction to the power bloc. In line with Michael Bray’s recent account of populism as a ‘symptom’ of repressed class antagonisms (2015), I will argue that today’s lack of political and intellectual engagement with the double articulation of political discourse (people and class) has led recent initiatives on the left to miss much of what recent popular protests express: that class antagonisms (even considered in their discursive constitution) still inform the competing constructions of ‘the people’ in capitalist societies. This paper posits that such double articulation of political discourse is rendered visible in the Gilets jaunes’ protests and, perhaps even more importantly, in the State’s reaction to them – Emmanuel Macron’s presidency epitomising Nicos Poulantzas’ emphasis on the capitalist State as the central site where ‘the economic’ interrelate with ‘the politico-ideological’ (1968), and where antagonisms ought to be repressed. As such, not only classes are the ‘ideological raw material’ of today’s populist moments, as Laclau suggested, but class struggle itself – the struggle around the politico-ideological constitution of ‘the’ economy – is what informs the possibilities for redefining ‘the people’.

### 2. Jacopo Custodi (Scuola Normale Superiore)

#### Is There a Left Case for National Pride? The Patriotic Discourse of the Communist Party in Portugal

In the last decade the scholarly interest in Europe’s radical left parties has been relatively on the rise, leading the literature on the European radical Left to consolidate. Yet, there is an important area of research that remains mostly omitted in the existing scholarship, namely how the radical Left engages with national belonging and identity. Despite being largely overlooked in academia, this is a relevant aspect when studying radical left parties’ identity and concrete politics, because it intersects with their ideological positioning and their strategic reflections. It is an academic shortcoming that this paper tackles by focusing on the patriotic discourse of the Portuguese Communist Party, a radical left party that was founded in 1921 and is currently present in the Portuguese national parliament. Although there is scholarly consensus that national pride is far from being a common trait of the European radical Left, there are some actors of this party family that do lay claim to patriotism. Among them, Portugal’s Communist Party stands out for being a relevant parliamentary force that has historically displayed a clear-cut patriotic discourse, as their long-standing party slogan “for a patriotic and leftist politics” already evocatively indicates. But how exactly does the party articulate its patriotism? What are the meanings that Portuguese pride and identity assume in its radical left discourse? As nationalism studies indicate, national pride is not univocal, as its meanings can change, and be contested, according to different political articulations. Accordingly, this article deploys a thorough qualitative discourse-theoretical analysis in order to study how the Portuguese Communist Party engages with patriotism and articulates national pride and identity in its political communication. The corpus is based on a set of forty selected leaders’ speeches and party’s official communications. As the empirical analysis indicates, the party displays a social patriotism that defines the Portuguese nation in inclusionary terms and empathises the close bond between social policies and national sovereignty. It is a type of patriotism that finds its political legitimization in the legacy of the leftleaning 1974 Carnation Revolution, as well as in the national tradition of Portuguese communism. In the party communication, national interest coincides with the interest of the working people, which can only be achieved through patriotic left-wing policies. This notwithstanding, the patriotism of the Communist Party remains more sedimented and ritualized than politicized: national belonging emerges more as a shared sense of community rather than as a terrain of identitarian conflict against political adversaries. Cultural, symbolic and political references to Portuguese identity are frequent in the party narrative, yet they remain scarcely confrontational and thus fit into a context of low politicization of Portuguese identity.

### 3. Samuele Mazzolini (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia)

#### Left populism and institutions: lessons from Ecuador on Laclau’s antinomies

Populism and institutions have been characterized as antithetical to each other by Ernesto Laclau. Yet the Latin American pink tide has offered many instances of left populism in power, with Rafael Correa’s Ecuador representing a prime example of the enmeshment between populist rhetoric and technocratic construction. Some accounts have emerged to make room for the latter, while ultimately failing to capture much of the dynamics at play. One of the chief questions is that the simple enlargement of the State cannot be taken as a trustworthy indicator of the stability and regularity of the new institutions. In order to secure their sustainability, these need to be propped up by accountable governance and a broader cultural transformation. By neglecting such aspects, left populism in Ecuador has left behind a mixed record in terms of institutional legacy. From a normative viewpoint, populism is thus conceived as a transitional device which can usher in a new institutionality, but, if some of its ‘vices’ are excessively protracted, it may be indicative of its failure to instil a new hegemony and its institutional achievements may be subject to a swift dismantling.

### 4. Adam Dinsmore (University of York)

#### Reasons to be cheerful? Competing left futures in England’s ‘Red Wall’

The Brexit referendum was a moment of acute disjuncture for the British Left. Although nuanced debate about the compatibility of class-based struggles with racial, feminist, and ecological movements had rumbled since the 1960s, the binary nature of the referendum threw these tensions into unusually stark relief. While ‘New Left’ discourses framed EU membership as a means of internationalist solidarity contra the anti-immigration stance of the Leave campaign; significant parts of the ‘Old Left’ – including some trade unions, academics, and residents of the ‘Red Wall’ of historically Labour-supporting towns in Northern England – depicted the EU as a neoliberal technocracy binding members to an austere, one-size-fits-all economic programme. In the terms of Poststructuralist Discourse Theory (PDT) the two camps constituted distinct hegemonic regimes advancing two apparently incommensurate discursive fields. The resulting 2-to-1 Remain/Leave split among Labour voters divided the British Left, fatally constraining the discursive options available to the left-wing Corbyn opposition as Brexit dominated parliament in the years following the referendum. As Remain/Leave subject positions became sedimented throughout the electorate, prospects of a viable progressive coalition looked remote. However, signs of reconciliation have appeared as the salience of Brexit has receded; a resurgent trade unionism making overnight celebrities of pro-Brexit union leaders amid much cheerleading from Left-Remain commentators. Persuading some scholars that the lessons of the Brexit disjuncture may render the white whale of Mouffe’s ‘Left-populism’ – a chain of equivalence linking the ‘new social movements’ with class-based democratic demands – achievable in post-Brexit Britain. This paper maps the prospective terrain of British left-populism via interviews with ‘Red Wall’ residents, examining the mis/alignments between left-wing Leave and Remain hegemonies and the competing political futures they represent. The findings raise important questions regarding the past, present, and future of progressive politics in the UK and beyond.

## Panel 1b: THE POLITICS OF SEX, GENDER AND THE BODY 1

*Chair: Théo Aiolfi*

### 1. Jenny Gunnarsson Payne (Södertörn University)

#### Why does kinship matter to politics? A discourse theoretical approach to the study of kinship

What *is* kinship? And what may it become the wake of current developments in biomedicine, (unevenly) changed attitudes to non-heterosexual family constellations and gender equality – and recent backlashes against the same? Keeping in mind that kinship, as feminist anthropologist Marilyn Strathern (1992) has put it, is “not just [about] the ways in which relatives interact with another, but how relationships as such are held to be constituted” this paper argues that it is a domain of human co-existence to which political discourse studies ought to pay more attention. Kinship remains a dominant ‘structuring principle’ not only for how people organise their everyday lives, how they identify, how they feel for (and are normatively expected to feel for) each other – but also for access to welfare provisions and essential political rights such as the right to citizenship and migration. Today, its political centrality has become all the more perspicuous, not least in ongoing geopolitical battles about ‘traditional’ or ‘modern’ values – battles which have particularly stark consequences for women and sexual minorities, but whose cultural and political ripple effects nobody can avoid. Against this background, this theoretical paper presents the author’s theoretical approach to kinship, which draws on the discourse theoretical tradition of the Essex School (also called political discourse theory) as well as ethnographic and feminist and queer theorisation of kinship, presenting how some of the former’s central insights and ideas are crucial for fully understand the intertwinement of kinship and politics, in our times and beyond.

### 2. Aino Koskenniemi (University of Helsinki)

#### Extremely intimate and incredibly public – Free menstrual products and the problem of menstruation in the Finnish public discourse

In December 2021, the city council of Helsinki decided to start a trial for providing free period products in schools and educational institutions. The decision follows similar decisions on city and state levels internationally aiming to decrease social inequality and destigmatize menstruation. This research paper draws on poststructuralist policy analysis to examine the Helsinki city policy and the public debate that ensued the motion. The paper utilises Carol Bacchi’s (2009) “What is the problem represented to be?”-approach to policy analysis to explore the construction of menstruation within the Finnish public discourse. The research materials include policy documents, council discussions, online news articles, and over 3000 comments on online discussion fora and social media. The analysis demonstrates how the Finnish debate on menstrual policy constructs menstruation simultaneously as an extremely intimate phenomenon and a central public issue of the welfare state. In both cases, the menstruating body is constructed as the problem requiring solution. On the one hand, menstruation is represented as an embodied, painful, or uncomfortable problem experienced by individuals, while on the other hand, the debate redefines menstruation as a public problem generating social inequality. Based on the analysis, the paper argues that the proposed policy and the policy debate both enforce and challenge the menstrual stigma. The paper demonstrates how the stigma is enforced by the overwhelming focus on menstruation as the problem rather than the social structures stigmatising menstruators. As positive views of menstruation remain scarce, even the most well-meaning arguments for the free provision of products build on a view of the menstruating body as a problem requiring solution. However, the analysis also shows how the redefinition of menstrual bleeding as a public issue may challenge the menstrual stigma by defying norms of menstrual invisibility and silence in public discourse.

### 3. Mark Wilkinson (Lancaster University)

#### ‘Spreading’, ‘trending’ and ‘soaring’: How the sedimentation of LGBTQ representation in The Times between 1957-2017 discursively constructed the queer subject as a social pathogen

This paper considers how, through a process of discursive ‘sedimentation’ (Norval 2000:328), LGBTQ identities have been discursively constructed in The Times. Beginning from the premise that there is no pre-discursive lesbian, gay, bi, trans or queer subject that exists outside of representation, it will be argued that the appearance of fixed sexual and gendered identifications are the result of consistent choices in representation that occurred over a sustained period of time. The discursive construction of a sexualised/gendered Other is, therefore, not only historically contingent, but also necessarily produces an unmarked heterosexual majority. By combining an analysis of nodal points (Laclau and Mouffe 1985) with corpus linguistic approaches to diachronic language data between 1957-2017, it will demonstrated that, while the signifiers used to represent queer identities in The Times have changed, non-normative desire and sexual practices have been consistently represented as a social pathogen and a threat to the ostensibly heterosexual population. This argument is predicated on a comparison between three historically significant time periods (1957-1967, 1979-1990, and 2003-2017). Using concordancing software, the most statistically significant key terms are identified in each sub-corpus. By considering both historical and statistical significance, it is argued that the terms homosexual conduct, Aids, and gender identity act as nodal points that bind together a ‘system of meaning’ (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000:11). Frequent collocations and contextual analysis for each nodal point are then analysed in order to ascertain to what extent these signifiers (re)produced political responses to an increasingly visible queer population in the UK. In conclusion, while the privileged position of certain signifiers within The Times can only gesture at broader discursive structures within the British media, the consistent representation of queer subjects as a social pathogen reveals how discursive sedimentation renders what is contestable as common sense and what is contingent as fixed (Laclau and Mouffe 1985).

### 4. Nadia Feshari (Södertörn University)

#### Frames of (unborn) human life - Imaginaries of unborn human life in Swedish abortion politics 1935-2021

My dissertation project takes theoretical inspiration from Judith Butler who argues that the question of “life” could be considered as one of feminist theory and philosophy’s most important questions. Inquiries such as: “How we decide when life begins and ends, and how do we weigh one life against another? Under what conditions should life come into being, and through what means?” (Butler 2001:2) are, according to Butler, important to pose in order to make visible how society values and protects lives in often unequal ways. Connecting to Butler’s reflections, I mean that an analysis of the state’s construction and protection of fetal life in terms of what qualities of human life are valued and protected, and which are not, tell us something about how society structures and values its population around idea(l)s of for instance race, sexuality, sex, and functionality. The purpose of my dissertation is to study how the fetus has been constructed and produced as a (un)protectable unborn human life in Swedish abortion politics between the years 1938-2021 through a combined discourse theoretical and psychoanalytical perspective. The discourse theoretical perspective posits that there is nothing given in how the fetus is framed as a valuable and protectable being. Through a re-reading of the history of Swedish abortion politics as exceptions to the illegality of abortion, I want to study what assumptions of fetal value and protectability underpin Swedish abortion politics. More specifically, I will examine under which conditions the fetus can be recognized as a valuable being and entitled protection and rights, and what values and ide(l)s of human life are produced and upheld in discussions and policy documents addressing and regulating women’s access to abortion and the protectability of the fetus.

## Panel 1c: DIGITAL TRANSFORMATIONS

*Chair: Nico Carpentier*

### 1. Michael Lithgow (Athabasca University)

#### Aesthetic discourses & digital resistance: Using discourse analysis to map early interventions into algorithmic cultures

Computer art in the 1950s and 1960s reflects the earliest instances of computer technologies engaged in artistic practices. In its earliest forms, computer art was both celebrated as harbinger of a new era of aesthetic creation and vilified as capitulation to the military and industrial systems of instrumental rationality from which computational technologies emerged (Taylor 2014). Computer art can be understood today historically as some of the earliest aesthetic forays into the scientific and engineering discourses from which computer technologies emerged. Social orders are explicated and made more actionable through discourse analysis by increasing understanding of the constituent relations of power within which utterances are rendered legitimate (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999; Foucault 1972). A sometimes undervalorized element of discourse is aesthetic experience, which can play a key role in shaping the legitimacies of utterances (Lithgow 2012). Aesthetic discourse analysis focuses on the aesthetic dimensions of discourse and their implications within relations of power. One source of tension to emerge in digital cultures are changing perceptions of human subjectivity (Papacharissi 2019; Savat 2012; Risam 2018). Equating computational intelligence with human consciousness (i.e. the singularity, artificial superintelligence, etc.) elides a wide range of human experiences essential to human subjectivity, but which have little relevance to the instrumental purposes for which most algorithms are designed (Millar 2021). Ignoring the implications of sexuality and racialization, for example, can produce troubling outcomes such as algorithms whose analytics reinforce and extend racist and sexist social norms (Noble 2018). Responding meaningfully to the biopolitics of these algorithmic discourses has emerged as a key territory of social resistance and transformation (Karpf 2016; Katz 2020; Trere 2018; Yeung and Lodge 2019; Zuboff 2019). In this paper, I argue that an aesthetic discourse analysis of early computational art works reveals their significance in the foundations and emergence of resistance to the biopolitics of algorithmic cultures, and that in particular computational art’s unique epistemic-cum-aesthetic interventions into the discourses of code, engineering and fine art suggest overlooked and undervalorized strategies for (re)shaping human subjectivities within the protocological frameworks of digital systems.

### 2. Gian Hernandez and Emma van Bijnen (University of Amsterdam)

#### Outreaching inclusion/exclusion: Trends start here? A Comparative Analysis of Museum TikTok Accounts

Social media are a powerful tool for education, outreach, and community building. Institutions like museums have adapted to the educational landscape by employing social media (Suess & Barton, 2022) to discursively construct the past, present, and future (Phillips & Podmore, 2020). However, little research has been done on how museums in/exclude various communities through representation. Research on museum social media outreach provides a unique insight into how museums situate themselves within sociocultural systems (Huebner, 2022) and construct collective racial, cultural, and national identities. This paper illuminates underlying ideologies in the construction of colonial imaginaries of social inclusion/exclusion (Hernandez, forthcoming) by employing a discourse theoretical analysis framework (Carpentier, 2017). Specifically, the paper is situated in a tradition of political analyses of discursive possibilities, identifying the horizons of socially allowable discourses in public space (Howarth, 2014). As such, the paper identifies the discursive and material aspects of communication strategies employed by institutions to construct societal belonging and non-belonging. Drawing on a comparison of the TikTok accounts of two museums in Amsterdam, Holland (Rijksmuseum and the Amsterdam Museum), this paper incorporates insights from visual analysis (Schilperoord & Cohn, 2021) and semi-structured interviews with social media specialists at the respective institutions to pay particular attention to the role of European identity in social in/exclusion practices. The analysis offers a decolonial critique of contemporary modes of representation and contributes to an emerging body of literature addressing the role of cultural institutions in the construction of a European sense of Self.

### 3. Outi Puukko (University of Helsinki)

#### Productive Power in Digital Constitutionalism: Analyzing Civil Society Actors’ Definitions of Digital Rights

Recent research on digital constitutionalism highlights civil society actors’ bottom-up strategies in entrenching fundamental rights in governing the Internet and other digital technologies, and in limiting corporate and state power. However, few studies have examined how civil society actors’ multiple perspectives contribute to emerging digital rights discourses. This paper examines definitions of digital rights and identifications with these rights in the context of civil society actors’ work. The paper discusses findings from a discourse-theoretical analysis of 12 semi-structured interviews with civil society actors who participated in transnational digital governance. The analysis demonstrates that the concept of digital rights can be viewed as a “floating signifier” on one hand, partially fixed to human rights. On the other hand, digital rights function as a site of discursive struggles that highlight openness and contestation of norms, rights, and principles in relation to the Internet and other digital technologies. The findings also show that particular civil society subject positions were connected to exclusion from transnational debates around emerging norms and marginalization in rights discourses. The paper suggests that the very definitions of norms, rights, and principles related to Internet and other digital technologies not only limit, but also produce power, providing a novel perspective to digital constitutionalism.

## Panel 1d: THEORETICAL ADVANCES

*Chair: Jason Glynos*

### 1. Allan Dreyer Hansen (Roskilde University)

#### Re-articulating radical negativity in discourse theory: from ontological primacy to hauntological effects

Discourse theory questions any notion of a positive ground and instead ‘bases’ itself on the ‘presence’ of radical negativity. In the development of the theory there was a movement from antagonism to dislocation (or lack or heterogeneity) as the ‘founding’ concept(s) by which to think radical negativity. Laclau however, never quite made up his mind whether it was antagonism or dislocation which was the more basic category. This allowed him to maintain the famous thesis of the ‘ontological primacy of the political’. In contrast I argue we must re-articulate negativity in a more radical manner than antagonism. Antagonism is, as Laclau sometimes confirmed, a way of ‘positivation’ (i.e. articulating) the other as an enemy. Negativity ‘as such’ cannot be experienced directly, it cannot even be ‘shown’, it can only be traced in it’s disturbing, or haunting, effects. This move is better captured through Derrida’s notion of ‘hauntology’, developed in Specters of Marx. Laclau presented a very strong – and affirmative – reading of the (deconstructive) distinction between ontology and hauntology (“Time is out of joint”) without drawing the full consequences. He maintained the notion of ontology, which allowed him to maintain the distinction between the ontic (often understood as ‘content’) and the ontological (‘form’) as when he e.g. claimed an “ontological need to express social division” which was “stronger than its ontic attachment to a leftwing discourse.” (On Populist Reason, p. 88). Expressing social division, however, is a ‘positive articulation’, and cannot be elevated to an ontological level. In order to avoid such language games the theory should re-articulate the effects of negativity in terms of hauntology, generalising the logic of the spectre, to which politics is only one possible – contingent – answer. In order to show some of the analytical consequences of a move towards hauntology I analyse four concepts (all constitutive for the theory of populism): heterogeneity, demands, equivalence and the empty signifier (/naming).

### 2. Nikola Venkov (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences)

#### Enter the discursive social actor: extending Post-Foundational Discourse Theory

For a number of years now calls have been made to endow post-foundational discourse theory (PDT) with a set of middle-range concepts that would allow it to become more versatile, systematic and powerful tool for studying the social concretely. While PDT offers a sophisticated ontology of the political, it is as yet less well equipped to analyse politics as action (the ontic level). We need theoretical tools that can understand how in practical terms a subject (rather than The Subject) relates and reacts to a landscape of polycentric discourse production. One provocative way to go about this is to re-construct a world of transactions between social actors (agents) while staying firmly grounded in a post-foundationalist understanding. To this end, I introduce the concept “discursive social actor”, inspired by Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of practice and especially the notion of habitus reworked through a discursive lens. A theoretically interesting corollary emerges from its exploration: identity is established not only through fantasmic identifications but through articulatory practice – a “practice” in the sense of exercising multiple articulatory acts. I discuss the analytical implications of this observation and construct further concepts that let me zoom out of the individual actor: “discourse circulation” (within a population of communicating social actors) and “access to discourse”. Such a population-based perspective reveals for instance that a discursive formation could be produced, made relevant, and, ultimately, made hegemonic only through a process of discourse circulation. Such an Extended PDT toolbox would be fruitful for rethinking the impact of strategic discursive production on contemporary societies, as well as phenomena such as populism, propaganda, polarisation – as it would allow a better assessment of the agency of the “masses” in creating, reproducing and amplifying discourses.

### 3. Adria Porta Caballe (University of Barcelona)

#### The Void in Psychoanalysis from Freud to Lacan and beyond: towards the “Institutionalisation of Lack”

Arguably, the void can be considered the central topic of radical democracy theory. For Lefort, democracy itself is defined as “the empty place of power”1 . For Laclau, populism implies the “discursive production of emptiness”2 . For Badiou, the void not counted in the situation renders possible the event3 . Finally, for Rancière, the police, as opposed to the political, represents “a distribution of the sensible where the principle is the absence of any void or supplement”4 . So, the four main post-foundational political thinkers place “the void” at the very heart of their theories on radical democracy. And clearly, one of the main theoretical bases for this recent political move comes from psychoanalysis, which is what allows Stavrakakis to unite these thinkers under the banner of a “Lacanian Left”, with the “institutionalisation of lack” as their main objective5 . Now, in this presentation we will try to expand the focus and we will explore the thesis that Lacan’s emphasis on “lack” only represents the culmination of a broader development in the history of psychoanalysis which originally goes back to Freud’s theory of castration, and then goes through a plurality of moments which are not as well know: such as Klein’s theory of sublimation and Winnicott’s notion of the “empty self”. We hope that this broader historical genealogy will help clarify and deepen what we mean when we say that radical democracy implies the “institutionalisation of lack”, to place a void at the centre of our coexistence together.

### 4. Carola Schoor (Leiden University)

#### Clusters of political concepts: bridging the gap of meaning

All signification circles around the impotence of language to close the gap between the discursive and the material, between signifiers and signifieds; an impotence described by Deleuze and Guattari as the only existing closed meaning in language (1988, p. 8). This paper scrutinizes discourse through the lens of the language theory of De Saussure ([1916] 2015) and the discourse approach of Deleuze and Guattari (1988). De Saussure divided a sign into two parts: a signifier (the symbol in language) and a signified (approximately the “thing” to which it is referred). The relationship between the two is arbitrary, and meaning is created in the interplay between signifiers. Inspired by the rhizomatic approach of Deleuze and Guattari, this paper further explores this interplay, not only between signifiers and signifiers but also between signifiers and signifieds. This exercise demonstrates that the interactions between these semiotic units simultaneously call into existence the various dimensions involved in every discourse. In this interplay, lines of flight are drawn between concepts that temporarily team up in clusters of signification, knots of related meanings constructing circular and complex relations between concepts. These knots of meanings are shown to be extremely helpful in political analysis; although they can never close the gap of meaning, they can – as a team of concepts – deliver a more complete picture of a political context. These clusters are recognized in related concepts such as democracy-autocracy-technocracy; populism-elitismpluralism, or; liberalism-conservatism-socialism. In their mutual relationship, these concepts can temporarily bridge the gap of meaning. This quality makes them useful for political analysis, but only and necessarily if they are used in direct relation to each other.

# — Parallel Session 2 —

## Panel 2a: THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF PROGRESSIVE POLITICS 2

*Chair: Yannis Stavrakakis*

### 1. Thomas Jacobs (Université Saint-Louis - Bruxelles)

#### ¡Hasta la victoria siempre! A discourse-theoretical typology of left-wing political strategy

This paper contributes to the debate on contemporary left-wing political strategy. Its point of departure is Sam Adler-Bell’s contention that all too often, left-wing activists and politicians settle for being ‘beautiful losers’, preferring noble and righteous defeat to a shot at actual political victory (Adler-Bell 2017). He maintains that glorifying the failed ideals, attempts, and analyses of the past risks blinding us to the possibilities for political change in the present and the future (Brown 2002, 458). Together with the so-called ‘crisis of Marxism’ (Althusser 1977), the failure of existing socialism, and Marxism’s inherent teleological streak (Jacobs 2022), this overinvestment in extant lines of thinking led to what Bensaid (2006) called “an ‘eclipse’ in the debate about strategy” that lasted several decades. But this ‘eclipse’ seems to be coming to an end. Engagement with questions of progressive political strategy has picked up in the French-speaking world (Durand 2006; Bensaid 2006; Garo 2019) and especially Anglo-Saxon academia (Gilbert 2008; Srnicek & Williams 2015; Williams & Gilbert 2022), having never really faded in the Latin American world to begin with (Ellner 2005; Harnecker 2005). This paper hopes to participate in this increasingly dynamic and vigorous debate, by proposing a polemical typology of progressive political strategy. More specifically, it distinguishes four archetypes of left-wing political strategy: cargo-cultism, utopianism, historicism, and Machiavellianism. To do so, it deploys a discourse-theoretical point of view, that interprets and analyses political strategies as discursive pattern (Jacobs 2022). Concretely, this paper typifies and characterizes the four approaches that it conceptualizes, it enumerates their strengths and weaknesses, and overviews concrete instances of each approach to left-wing political strategy. In doing so, it is very explicitly makes the case for left-wing Machiavellianism, a flexible, context-driven approach to politics that is focused on the achievement of as much progressive political change as is feasible, and that heeds to political power of discourse and the importance of successful political communication.

### 2. Freddie Larden (Queen Mary University of London)

#### La Fanfichon: humour and identification amongst supporters of Jean-Luc Mélenchon in the 2022 French elections

What is the role of the ‘people’ in populism? Populism has often been characterised and denigrated as the manipulation of the masses by a leader. While Laclau reappraised populism in terms of the representation of the ‘people’, this process still appears top-down (2005). The role of supporters in populism therefore remains overlooked. However, supporters do not behave as passive recipients of discourse; they directly and creatively intervene in their own identifications. In this paper, I argue that an understanding of humour within populism can address this gap in the research. I articulate Laclau’s populism with McGowan’s comedy theory (2017) to theorise how supporters use humour to shape discourse. I identify where humour might arise within the political logic of populism, bringing a new understanding of the role of humour in negotiating the tension between particularity and universality in populist demands, and engaging ironically with populist fantasies. I develop an accompanying methodology, building on Wiggins’ work on internet memes (2019) and approaches to visual rhetoric, for analysing populist memes. To show how this works in practice, I then investigate these points of convergence in a Facebook group of Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s supporters during the 2022 French presidential and legislative elections. I analyse how supporters used humour to construct Mélenchon as an empty signifier through an interplay of proximity and distance, and an ironic engagement with fantasy. Similarly, I explore how the group discursively constructed his adversaries, and the newly formed NUPES alliance. I then analyse the role of humour in the group’s social critique. Finally, I analyse how inwardly focused humour mocked the group’s own excessive investment in Mélenchon, allowing them to negotiate multiple identifications and enjoy their identification with Mélenchon. These functions show how populist supporters, far from being passive recipients of discourse, actively shape their own popular identity through humour.

### 3. Jonathan Dean (University of Leeds)

#### ' You’ve Read Karl Marx and You’ve Taught Yourself to Dance’: Mapping the Intersections of Neoliberalism, Left Politics and Social Media Influencer Culture from a Post-Marxist Perspective

In a context marked by an increasing convergence of celebrity culture and everyday democratic politics, this paper analyses the contested intersections of British left politics and influencer culture/micro-celebrity, adopting a broadly post-Marxist, discourse-theoretic approach. In so doing, I suggest left politics and micro-celebrity/influencer culture intersect in several important ways, but most clearly in the phenomenon of influencer activism: that is, social media influencers for whom politics and activism are central to their personal brand. The first part of the paper is an empirical analysis of competing discourses in British left-ofcentre media about influencer activism and influencer culture. The dominant discourse, I argue, casts influencer activism as symptomatic of a more generalised retreat into individualistic “identity politics” at the expense of a more collective left politics. In response, the latter part of the paper then offers two more theoretically-inflected arguments. First, drawing on Foucault’s The Birth of Biopolitics alongside Glynos and Howarth’s logics-based approach, I contextualise the contested discourses surrounding influencer activism within the logics of competition, individualisation and brand-optimisation characteristic of neoliberal political culture. Second, drawing on Lacanian psychoanalysis, I suggest that the frequent casting of the figure of “the influencer” as a kind of pariah figure should be read as a form of ideological fantasy which serves to entrench the grip of (a particular modality of) neoliberal ideology. Overall, the paper offers a series of provocations about the forms of subjectivity and antagonism that constitute contemporary left politics, as well as reflecting on the potential value of (post-)Laclauian discourse theory for understanding politics in the digital age.

## Panel 2b: THE POLITICS OF SEX, GENDER AND THE BODY 2

*Chair: Jenny Gunnarsson Payne*

### 1. Anne Steinhoff and Rebecca Warren (University of Essex)

#### Building agonistic solidarity: campaigning against misogyny

Drawing on Laclau and Mouffe’s (1985) concept of antagonism, this article unpacks the politics of community organising. We unravel the complexities and nuances of community organising through two key theorisations: agonistic solidarity and an antagonistic difference. For Laclau and Mouffe (1985), conflict, and as such antagonism, is inevitable in pluralistic and democratic societies, as there will always be multiple and conflicting ideological positions and identities, power asymmetries and challenges to political decisions that cannot be fully resolved (George et al.,2021). However, this opposition or difference does not have to always be antagonistic (George et al., 2021). Instead, opposing relations can be regarded as a conflict between adversaries rather than enemies (Mouffe, 2009). These adversarial actors forge to establish an alliance built on the common democratic values of ‘liberty and equality for all’ through hegemonic struggles (Mouffe, 2013, p. 7). To explore these tensions, we focus on the campaign by Citizens UK to make misogyny a hate crime and the performed counter accounts that are constructed through this campaign as counter hegemony. In 2014, Nottingham was the birthplace of a UK-wide campaign to ‘bring diverse communities together to find shared solutions to hate, harassment and division’ against women (Citizens UK, 2018). Since then, the campaign has grown into a full ask to recognise misogyny as a hate crime by police forces in England and Wales. This paper draws on the accounts and actions of a group of students and academics who have been involved in the execution of the campaign in a local community in England over the past three years, speaking with and reporting to local police and politicians. We demonstrate how political alliances can be forged between unlikely allies through the use of performed counter accounts, enabling a persistent and growing collective movement that challenges the status quo.

### 2. Aylon Cohen (University of Chicago)

#### Discourse, the Body, and the Historiographies of Radical Democracy: Towards a Queer Political Theory of Praxis

This paper considers the possibilities of re-centering the material body as a site of and resource for the history and theory of radical democracy. The paper revisits readings of the bourgeois revolutions of the long 18th century put forward by Claude Lefort, Chantal Mouffe, and Ernesto Laclau. I argue that Laclau and Mouffe, drawing on Lefort’s influential reading of Ernst Kantorowicz’s The King’s Two Bodies, view democracy as the destruction of a monarchical regime that consolidated political power in the physical body of the king. The emergence of the category of ‘The People’ releases political power from the hegemony of the king’s body and becomes, as Lefort calls it, an ‘empty place’ oriented around the symbolic power of discourse. I contend that this historiographic understanding of democracy as entailing the rupture of the king’s two bodies has ensured that a certain linguistic understanding of politics, one that centers politics around language, speech, and discourse, has consequently obscured the political role of the material body in democratic life. While acknowledging the material effects that discourse can produce, the paper aims to better attend to the political role and signifying logic of the material body. To do so, the paper presents an alternate historiography of democracy by turning to Michel Foucault’s History of Sexuality, Vol. I (HS). While the conception of power developed in HS has been widely influential among radical democrats and discourse analysts, Foucault’s insights are rarely read in the context of his larger discussion on sexuality. By attending to Foucault’s historical account of sexuality, I show how the reorganization of sex, gender, and the body in the 18th century played a key role in the formation of a democratic bourgeoisie in Western Europe. The paper thus rethinks the relationship between the body politic and the material body and proposes queer insights for the study of democratic politics.

### 3. Michael Chisnall (University of Canberra)

#### Rethinking Political Antagonism in an “Unhinged” Age

Explanations of extreme political antagonism based on the conflicting claims of homophilic groups, mask a more fundamental split in the way people relate to the Real. This more radical split can be referred to as “difference” and manifests particularly in the idea of “sexual difference” but is more generalizable into an understanding of the way people think and engage in collective trans-subjective behaviour. Such an understanding begins to shed light on the failure of “progressives'' to defend against successful authoritarian populist incursions, rapidly increasing political polarisation and “unhinged” discourse seemingly beyond the possibility of deliberation. Here, I engage with a number of critical scholars, particularly through the work of Alenka Zupančič, on the ontological “messiness” of sexuality and apply it more generally to politics. This is used to suggest explanations of what has happened and the value of new ways of thinking and speaking which, while encompassing the impossibility of ever resolving what is a logical impasse and the inherent contingency of politics, allow us to progress beyond “unhinged” antagonism.

## Panel 2c: THE DISCURSIVE AND THE MATERIAL

*Chair: Savvas Voutyras*

### 1. Nico Carpentier and Vaia Doudaki (Charles University)

#### European border assemblages: The entanglement of the discursive and the material in the Dutch VPRO documentary 'Along the Borders of Turkey' and its YouTube comments

This paper uses a discursive-material analysis (Carpentier, 2017) to study two episodes of the Along the Borders of Turkey documentary series, on Cyprus and Greece. The series was produced and broadcast by the Dutch public broadcaster VPRO in 2012, and later, in 2017, the VPRO web team uploaded these episodes on YouTube, also allowing for viewers to comment on these episodes. Supported by a theoretical reflection on the Europeanity discourse and its contingencies, and on the (semi-)hegemonic articulations of this discourse (with a central role allocated to European benevolence), this paper analyses the discursive-material interactions in relation to the borders in Cyprus and Greece, where border assemblages generate material obstacles and discursive re-articulations while attempting to deal with the material dislocations caused by different migration flows. The discursive-material analysis shows how the episodes represent the contradictions between European benevolence on the one hand, and popular intolerance and the workings of the border apparatus on the other. Most importantly, the episodes show the disruption of the semi-hegemonic European benevolence discourse, where the abandonment and despair of Turkish Cypriots is visualized and thematized, as they are abandoned by Europe--in this case the EU--finding themselves on the wrong side of the buffer zone. The Greek episode is even more tragic, as it combines a portrayal of the suffering of migrants, with the indifference and plain hostility of (some of) the Greek inhabitants, worsened by (some of) the comments of YouTube users, and the material enclosure of Europe by the creation of a border apparatus. At the same same, Along the Borders of Turkey is seen to actively and critically intervene in the struggle over the articulation of the Europeanity discourse. The episodes thus become both a representation of, and an intervention in, an unresolved discursive-material struggle over what being European means.

### 2. Paul Sambre (University of Leuven)

#### A Calabrian public company’s response to mafia threats: from discursive plans to multimodal material and community exaptation

This talk examines the discursive and material response to business threats imposed by the ‘ndrangheta, one of Italy’s prominent global mafias rooted in Southern Italy, by one of its victims, Calabrian entrepreneur Antonino De Masi. The central notion explored is how business strategy and production processes contribute to the positive counterhegemonic expansion of a regional territory in a global business reality, using material exaptation and the constant reinvention of local business capital, no longer dominated by social consensus about crime. The central theoretical issue deals with how to conceive of the discursive-material knot (Carpentier 2014) connecting business strategy and product innovation in expanding space (Cap 2021). We combine insights from post-Gramscian counterhegemonic thinking (e.g. as in dalla Chiesa’s (2014) Gramsci’s rereading of the Questione Meridionale in Italian sociology of crime) and a cognitive linguistic framework for the conceptualization of (regional versus global) space (Chilton 2014). Our multimodal approach (Hart 2017) analyzes field interviews, corporate website info and YouTube promotion materials and zooms in on the relation between words, gestures and images. Our main finding is that antimafia business reactions to mafia racketeering lead to innovation in both corporate finance structures, business networks and mobile sustainable architectural solutions. In doing so, strategic thinking and material project planning, setting up alternative business structures and malleable products go hand in hand with disrupting traditional thinking about crime and local business, and the material recycling and reuse of existing machine parts. This process of material and community exaptation, i.e. the bricolage and transformation of previously underexplored business resources and community expertise, simultaneousy allows the deconstruction of traditional community stereotypes, and aligns local resilient communities with global ethical and sustainable business values which do not exclusively offer a response to global crime, but, more importantly, to major challenges such as resilient communities dealing with climate change.

### 3. Eva De Smedt (Erasmus Brussels University of Applied Sciences and Arts)

#### 'Would it make a cute ruin?': Exploring discursive images of the futures for KANAL-Centre Pompidou in 2042

Cityscapes do not simply ‘exist’ in themselves, but are dynamic entities continuously brought into being in and through mutual and complex interactions between urban spaces and its publics, between institutional structures and daily agency, between context and text, between macro and micro, between the material and the discursive, to name but a few. This paper takes the symbiotic and dialogic relationship between these levels as crucial fertile ground for delving into a case study on preferable futures for KANAL-Centre Pompidou (hereafter KANAL), Brussels’ brand-new museum of modern and contemporary art to be opened in 2025 in the iconic former Citroën-building in Brussels’ city centre. The paper deconstructs the discursive and material complexities in which KANAL is embedded by focussing attention on how the institution’s futures are varyingly imagined for the year 2042. It combines the strengths of critical discourse analysis, performativity theory, and futures studies to arrive at a compiled theoretical and methodological lens through which the articulation of images of the futures – and their underlying antagonisms and assumptions – become open for analysis. The case study builds upon a threefold corpus of (1) the design bundle of the winning architectural team of KANAL’s renovation; (2) the Belgian press coverage on KANAL in 2017-2018; and (3) transcripts of ‘strategic conversations’ – a form of in-depth interviewing – with a dozen of Brussels-based experts in the fields of urban planning, culture, and architecture. The study shows that product-oriented notions commonly associated with traditional museum discourse make way for a performative, process-oriented ‘stage’-discourse centralising hybridity, dynamic materialities, the ‘undone’, and experiment as preferable for KANAL by 2042. The paper argues that imagining today desired spaces for tomorrow forms a critical discursive vehicle (e.g. Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 242) through which future preferabilities can be articulated and acted upon – i.e. ‘performed’ – in the present.

## Panel 2d: POLICY, HEALTH AND EDUCATION

*Chair: Jason Glynos*

### 1. Tuomas Tervasmäki (Tampere University)

#### Anticipatory policy rhetoric: exploring ideological fantasies of Finnish higher education

The question of uncertain and open future has characterized the government of modern societies. Endeavours to secure valued life from endangerment and to steer human action towards desired futures has been called anticipation (Adams, Murphy & Clarke 2009; Anderson 2010; Robertson 2022). In policy-making anticipatory action tend to articulate a horizon of expectations based on hypothetical possibilities that can include calculation of risks, forecasting and narration of alternative futures. From the discourse theoretic perspective, anticipatory rhetoric tries to get a grip of subject’s desire and usher one further into identification with the objects it has emphasised (Glynos 2001; 2021; Stavrakakis 2008). In this research I provide an empirical case study of anticipatory policy rhetoric. I will focus on the Finnish higher education policy reform 2017–2019 called “Vision development 2030” by Sipilä Government. What makes this case interesting is the concurrent use of austerityridden politics and anticipatory ideological fantasy: while the one hand advanced major economic cuts in higher education sector, the other depicted beatific illustrations of significant growth of resources of higher education and harmonious working life in its’ institutions. The aim of this study is twofold: Firstly, I examine the roles that fantasies play in Finnish anticipatory politics of educational futures. I analyse the ways in which subjects are captivated to relate with fantasmatic objectives of policy vision and its’ normative assumptions concerning future organization of higher education. In this way ideological foundations and affective rhetorics of persuasion in Finnish higher education policy can be placed under critical evaluation and ponder implications of such policy doctrine. Secondly, the research connects to methodological development of post-marxist discourse theory (e.g. Marttila (eds.) 2019). Based on Jason Glynos’ and Yannis Stavrakakis’ work, my intention is to further elaborate the concept of fantasy in empirical analysis and therefore explicate how critical fantasy studies can be applied in policy analysis.

### 2. Lars Ørjan Kråkenes (Volda University College)

#### The Political Dimension of Democratic Education in Norway

In recent years, Norwegian education has gone through curricular changes making democratic education an interdisciplinary goal cutting across the traditional divide between disciplines. The change comes from an awareness that democracy is not just about knowledge, but about subjectivity. The goal is to give the pupils experiences constituting them as democratic subjects, contributing to the future of the Norwegian democracy. From the viewpoint of radical democracy, this paper raises the question of how we might understand democratic subjectivity – constituted through the articulation of contestable antagonisms – in relation to the traditional purpose of education as the mediation of more or less uncontested knowledge. The Norwegian case serves as a fruitful backdrop for a wider theoretical discussion in both political discourse theory and didactics of democratic education. The discussion in this paper draws from the political discourse theory of Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau's in their works on hegemony, radical democracy and populism, and more specifically the later developments made by the Essex school of discourse theory. I make an effort to use the framework developed by Jason Glynos and David Howarth in Logics of Critical Explanation in the context of democratic education, in order to show why political subjectivities comes into being through a reference to some form of contestability, through the political dimension. If the goal of the democratic education is to constitute some specific form of political subjectivity, one should discuss the relationship between this contestability and traditional understandings of the school as an uncontested conveyor of knowledge. There are of course a number of views in the discourse of democratic education with concern to what we should understand by ‘democracy’. One of the main discussions is between those following, to put it in somewhat simplified terms, a consensus-oriented deliberative model on the one hand, and those following the conflict-oriented agonistic model on the other. One of the challenges in this discussion is to account for the actual difference between the two camps, because both conflict and consensus plays an important role in both of them. The important difference is of course with regard to what the political dimension means. Deliberative theorists are inclined to understand this dimension as what democracy is meant to solve, while agonistic theorists emphasize how this 2 dimension constitutes democratic society as such. This distinction is often made unclear because, I would argue, agonistic theory still has some explaining to do in terms of this dimension. The Norwegian case triggers the discussion about what the political dimension actually entails for education, since democratic experiences becomes something strived for both in social science disciplines and natural science disciplines, both inside and outside the classroom. If the political dimension is about contestability, then what role should democratic experiences play in for example mathematics? This leads into the, perhaps underdeveloped, question within agonistic theory: Is it the case that democracy can only be radical if the subject is successful in articulating (ant)agonisms escaping the status quo of the existing social order? And is it the case that every deliberative attempt at compromise and consensus is synonymous with the post-political? Furthermore, these questions play into the field of political discourse theory and the question of how we are to conceive of Laclauian categories such as the political, antagonism and dislocations. The framework of Glynos and Howarth makes it possible to map out how these categories can aid our understanding of democratic subjectivities and I use this to theorize how such subjectivities relate to the traditional mediation of knowledge in education.

### 3. Ewen Speed and Konstantinos Roussos (University of Essex)

#### Problematising participatory practice in service and policy design: identifying barriers and opportunities

This chapter explores the discourses and repertoires of social movements and grassroots struggles that emerged as responses to the recent economic crisis and austerity reforms in Greece. We offer a snapshot of the novel practices of solidarity that constitute these responses and highlight their broad transformative potential. We argue that they should be assessed in terms of the ethical re-imagining of social relations they enable, as well as the partial bringing into life of these relations. We take as a case study the Metropolitan Community Health Clinic at Helliniko (MCCH), a social solidarity clinic set up at the peak of the economic crisis in Athens. Cases like the MCCH, we argue, are experiments that emerged within the crisis context and attempt to expand democratic imagination and conceptions of social justice. We draw on the literature of prefigurative politics, community economies, psychoanalysis, and fieldwork research, as we aim to highlight key aspects of such new ethical practices in grassroots welfare provisioning. MCCH, just like other struggles that emerged in response to austerity, revealed and challenged the function and reproduction of neoliberal logics – in this case, their expansion into the sphere of welfare and social care. However, they were not simply ‘defensive’ responses, nor did they merely redirect their demands to the realm of institutional politics. Rather, such initiatives have been productive of new forms of social life and organization, prefiguring in this way alternative institutions and relations in the present. Cases like the MCCH allow us to discern practices and visions that do not simply contest hegemonic politics but rather reimagine society through experimentation with new forms of social organization.

### 4. Ellen Russell (Wilfrid Laurier University)

#### Uncertainty and the Justificatory Attributes of Expert Economic Texts: an Austerity Case Study

Economists play an extensive role in offering predictive guidance in public debates. This prominence in journalistic and policy circles enables them frame economic possibilities to “raise the salience or apparent importance of certain ideas, [and activate] schemas that encourage target audiences to think, feel, and decide in a particular way" (Entman 2007, p.) Because expert economic discourses shape understandings of the economically necessary, possible and desirable, they render some economic options intelligible and legitimate, and deter other avenues of experimentation and aspiration. This presentation employs Critical Discourse Studies to investigate how expert economic discourse can have the appearance of neutrality, yet be operating to hegemonic effect to encourage the affirmation of (or at least resignation to) the economic and political status quo. (Wodak & Meyer, 2009 p.8) One attribute of mainstream economic analysis that contributes to its legitimating/delegitimating possibilities is the way in which elements of uncertainty are (or are not) presented, litigated and resolved. Economic uncertainties – include the likelihood of economic crises, dislocation, growing inequality etc. - are emotionally and materially perilous. Economists gain influence if we view them as sources of “epistemic authority” (Kruglansiki et.al., 2005) that mitigate unknowability in tumultuous times. Thus in part, their influence is predicated on discursive attributes which enhance the credibility of their expert foresight. This research investigates expert economic texts of Alberto Alesina that formed the rationale for imposing austerity following the 2008 crisis. It examines the authorial decisions on what is/is not germane to assessing the implications of austerity, how these elements were assembled to encourage certain conclusions and discourage others, and the invocation of scientific authority to legitimate these argumentative avenues. These elements combined to contributed to these texts’ promissory assertions concerning the beneficial outcomes of the imposition of austerity, and rendered alternative interpretations of austerity much less accessible, intelligible and legitimate.

# — Parallel Session 3 —

## Panel 3a: DISCOURSE THEORY AND POLITICAL ORGANISATION

*Chair: Samuele Mazzolini*

### 1. Martin Nonhoff, Lazaros Karavasilis, and Seongcheol Kim (University of Bremen)

#### Using discourse theory to study political organisation: Social movements and political parties at the intersection of radical democracy, populism, and hegemony

Since the emergence of the movements of the squares in the early 2010s, the academic discussion has revolved around how different forms of hegemony, radical democracy, and populism manifested themselves in these movements. Equally importantly, the experience of the square movements raises the question to what extent new and established political parties have sought to integrate these protest discourses and/or actors via new forms of political organisation, thereby creating new intersections and transitions from radical democracy to hegemony, from horizontality to verticality, and from movement to party. While the literature has covered extensively the theoretical discussions on the square movements themselves, there has been little systematic work on how the afterlife of these movements has been variously inscribed in the discursive and organisational practices of political parties. The purpose of this paper is to present a new theoretical framework for exploring the intersections between radical democracy, populism, and hegemony in the discursive afterlife of the square movements in party politics. Following primarily the Essex School of postfoundational discourse theory, this paper presents theoretical reflections on different perspectives for conceptualising the role of radical democracy, populism, and hegemony at the interface of movement and party politics. These considerations, in turn, can provide a basis for case-specific analyses and typology-building, drawing on the conceptual toolkit of Laclau’s and Mouffe’s theory of radical democracy, Laclau’s theory of populism as well as Martin Nonhoff’s approach to hegemony analysis. Drawing on previous and ongoing work by the authors, this paper seeks to advance theoretical, methodological, and empirical discussions alike on conceptualising new forms of political organisation such as ‘movement parties’ from a discursive perspective.

### 2. Seongcheol Kim (University of Bremen)

#### Movement Parties of the Left, Right, and Center: A Discursive-Organizational Approach

This paper draws on the post-foundational discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe as well as previous work by the author to propose an original discursive-organizational approach to the study of movement parties, understood as a distinct form of party organization characterized by horizontal integration of autonomous social movement actors as decision-making agents and constituent subjects within a party. In contrast to the interactive-mobilizational approach that has established itself in the literature based on Kitschelt’s conceptualization, the perspective outlined here goes beyond parties’ involvement in protest activity as the core definitional criterion for a movement party and foregrounds instead the organizational dimension of the concept. In their privileging of horizontal coordinative links between organized movements, movement parties become distinguishable from what I call Volksparteien of a new type (such as Podemos and France Insoumise), characterized by vertical plebiscitary links between a centralized leadership and a broad, undifferentiated popular base. Based on these considerations, I analyze three recent examples of movement parties of the radical left, center, and far right, respectively: the CUP in Catalonia, Együtt in Hungary, and the Right Sector in Ukraine. All three cases illustrate the inherent organizational precarity of the movement party form, but also the willingness of these actors to maintain a movement party structure in high-stakes institutional contexts and their ability to exert recognizable political weight within these settings.

### 3. Emmy Eklundh (Cardiff University)

#### Questioning European democracy? Versions of representation in the 15M movement and Podemos

In the wake of the significant social movement mobilisation after of the 2008 financial crisis in Spain, many would like to argue that this has given rise to a new wave of left-wing political representation, mainly in the form of left-wing political parties such as Podemos. Leftwing populism is often seen as the natural continuation of the protest movements and is hailed as reinvigorating democracy by creating new forms of representation for the previously ’unrepresented’. This article questions this narrative and argues that the forms of political subjectivity espoused by Podemos are, in fact, hailing from a long European tradition which is built on certain conceptions of rationality, masculinity, and nationalism. By providing a critical reading of the term representation, the article traces the exclusionary genealogy of this central concept. In opposition, the political subjectivities practiced by the many branches of the 15M provide a more novel and creative critique of the European democratic system. As such, the article questions the claims to democratic innovation by Podemos and argues that without a closer engagement with how current party practices reinforce different forms of exclusion, the democratic promise of left-wing populism may be weaker than previously thought.

## Panel 3b: JOURNALISM AND THE FAR RIGHT

*Chair: Jana Goyvaerts*

### 1. Kinga Polynczuk-Alenius (Polish Academy of Sciences)

#### Thinking beyond ‘junk news’: Right-wing ‘identity journalism’ as a power/knowledge system

This paper posits that fixing on veracity of journalistic ‘knowledge’, as in concepts of ‘junk’ or ‘fake’ news, may detract us from the ways in which journalism reproduces, or challenges, power relations. To explore an alternative approach, I deploy the Foucauldian formulation of ‘power/knowledge’, whereby power relations are seen as supporting and supported by particular types of knowledge, in a study of ‘identity journalism’. ‘Identity journalism’ is an emic term invented by right-wing journalists in Poland to describe journalism geared towards constructing identities and strengthening communities. Unlike other forms of journalism, conservative identity journalism stakes no claims to factuality, neutrality or objectivity: for ‘identity journalists’, news is less about providing wellresearched, veritable information than about amplifying ideas and views that integrate and mobilise conservative communities while reinforcing their sense of righteousness and belonging. As a power/knowledge system, right-wing identity journalism generates, from a conservative viewpoint, a knowledge about the world that reflects and serves to uphold conservative power relations by catering to and producing conservative subjects. To explore this proposition empirically, this paper interrogates selected programmatic texts by the key figures in Polish identity journalism, such as Paweł Lisicki and Jacek Karnowski. In addition, it draws on the results of my empirical research on a digital-born, paradigmatic identity medium, wPolityce.pl. The paper uncovers that identity journalism propagates a ‘contrarian’ brand of knowledge, which maintains that Poland – and the conservative, nationalist, and Catholic values it is taken to represent – is continuously under attack by various forces, ranging from Putin’s Russia to EU institutions. This knowledge is geared towards producing conservative subjects to power exercised by the state apparatus. Thus, in the hands of identity journalist, journalism mutates from an instrument of control over state power into an element in a state apparatus of power/knowledge, albeit produced by independent, professional journalists.

### 2. Maximilian Grönegräs (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

#### The adoption of journalistic genre elements in political communication: A scoping review

This paper presents the results of a scoping review (Arksey & O’Malley, 2005; Colquhoun et al., 2014; Levac et al., 2010) that aims at answering the following research question: How is the adoption of elements of journalism in the production of political communication by political actors conceptualised by scholars from the fields of journalism studies and political communication? The contemporary nexus between media and politics is characterized by multidirectional interactions and interdependencies between different types of political actors and citizens, across what scholars describe as “emerging new complex media ecology” (Gurevitch et al., 2009, p. 176) or “hybrid media system” (Chadwick, 2013, p. 3). An intrinsic element of this hybrid space are the increasingly porous boundaries between the hitherto differentiated genres of political and journalistic discourses (Chadwick, 2013). The intersections of journalism and political communication have received substantial scholarly attention in the fields of journalism studies and political communication respectively, with a focus on for instance the political positioning of journalists or the performance of politicians in journalistic formats. What has been missing, however, is interdisciplinary research that combines insights from political communication, journalism studies and genre studies to shed a holistic light on the specific phenomenon of how political parties use journalistic genre elements in their political communication. Noteworthy exceptions to this trend are for instance Hillje (2021)’s conceptualization of Propaganda 4.0 as well as Ekman and Widholm (2022)’s proposition of the term parasitic news, meaning “a particular political communication style that relies on established journalistic formats and genres” (p. 3). Both terms, however, fail to capture the emerging of hybrid genres through the integration of journalistic genre resources into political communication. Bridging journalism studies and political communication, this paper proposes the term pseudo-journalistic political communication to describe this particular phenomenon. With the goal of grasping the breadth of research in journalism studies, political communication and genre studies on this previously understudied form of political communication as well as of justifying the need for its own name, this paper conducts a scoping review, a form of knowledge synthesis that is “aimed at mapping key concepts, types of evidence and gaps in research related to a defined area or field by systematically searching, selecting, and synthesizing existing knowledge” (Colquhoun et al., 2014, p. 1294). Preliminary results of the review include a four-fold definition of the term genre, which will serve as an indispensable ground layer for further establishing of the concept of pseudo-journalistic political communication as well as developing research strategies for studying it.

### 3. Sabri Derinöz, Elena Louazon, and Lise Ménalque (Université Libre de Bruxelles)

#### A journalistic construction of racism, race and “the other” in the midst of a denunciation of racism in francophone Belgium

In the French-speaking Belgian media, in 2018, a Black weathercaster’s video denouncing racism led to a unique moment when a large number of articles carried “antiracist” discourses. Based on a press corpus focusing on the event (261 articles), we decided to use critical discourse analysis in order to observe the social representations that are conveyed by the journalistic discourse. We developed an analysis grid based mostly on the literature to understand how those discourses pictured alterity, race and racism. In a constructivist approach inspired by Nancy Fraser’s (1992) view of the public sphere, media discourses can be seen as a reconfiguration of representations and social beliefs reflecting an unequal social structure, consequence of a disparity of access and participation (Cervulle 2013). According to Van Dijk (1993; 2012) journalists are part of a symbolic elites (along with politicians, scholars, etc.) that have the most influential public discourses, thus contribute to the reproduction of dominant knowledge and ideologies in society, including racism. Some discourses on a possible “post-racial era” emerged in the past decades and accelerated after Barack Obama’s election in 2008 (Behrent, 2016) where Western societies would have achieved a state of non-racism. Different scholars show different tendencies of how racism is depicted: among others, de-historicized racism (Lentin, 2016), universalization of the experience, seeing it as moral deviations from individuals (Titley, 2019), and not as a system that keeps stratifying societies (Goldberg, 2004). As a consequence, it is not uncommon to find discourses labelled as “antiracist” perpetuating a racist representation of society. Antiracists discourses are part of the social representation of the group in most of Western societies, in which tolerance towards the “other” is promoted and blatant forms of racist behavior banned (Van Dijk 1992; Archakis 2021). Nevertheless, in the antiracist's discourses started on cases of racism in the public sphere there are different types of arguments that can deny racism and at the same time, create racism (Lentin, 2015).

### 4. Kait Bolongaro (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

#### The Brussels Press Corps’ Coverage of Populist Radical Right Parties in the Italian Election in 2022

This paper uses a qualitative content analysis to apply a conceptual framework for understanding the relationship between Europe’s populist radical right political parties (PRRPs) and the Brussels Press Corps, through the lens of the media’s impact on the process of mainstreaming/pariahing of these parties. Firstly, the paper draws on research about what has been called the ‘mainstreaming’ (Brown & Mondon, 2021; Buarque, 2021; Mondon & Winter, 2020) and the ‘pariahing’ (Van Spanje & Van Der Brug, 2007) of the far right to develop the framework. It focuses on the role that media plays in casting PRRPs as either legitimate, and as such, mainstream, or as illegitimate, a pariah (Moffitt, 2021; Murphy & Devine 2020; Schmidt, 2020). Secondly, it builds on literature examining the role of media in boundary maintenance between the mainstream and the fringe, and the acceptable and the unacceptable within a democracy. This paper primarily considers Hallin (1986)’s notion of different ‘spheres’ of coverage, particularly his argument about what he calls the ‘sphere of deviance’ when journalists leave aside the typically objective stance to condemn or exclude what they consider deviant political actors who reject and challenge the political consensus of appropriateness. It applies the framework to articles from Brussels-based journalists about the Italian General Election in 2022, focusing on coverage of two candidates and their political parties: Matteo Salvini and the Lega, as well as Giorgia Meloni and the Brothers of Italy. It uses a qualitative content analysis to identify patterns in their coverage, specifically on the terms used to describe PRRPs and the themes that emerge from the texts. The aim is to provide insight into the role of EU correspondents in mainstreaming/pariahing PRRPs in Europe, and the power it wields over the narrative surrounding them and their inclusion and/or exclusion in the European political sphere.

## Panel 3c: DISCOURSE THEORY AND METHODS

*Chair: Eva De Smedt*

### 1. Katy Brown (University of Bath)

#### Towards a methodological tree: combining Discourse Theory, Critical Discourse Studies and Corpus Linguistics

Discourse studies as a broad field has demonstrated openness to incorporating mixed methodologies and perspectives to provide a range of insights into complex phenomena. This paper seeks to propose a new framework which brings together the diverse traditions of Discourse Theory (DT), Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) and Corpus Linguistics (CL). While there are some excellent examples of work combining two of these approaches, particularly CDS and CL (e.g., Subtirelu and Baker, 2018; Baker, 2012), and a growing discussion around the potential compatibility of DT and CDS (Brown, 2020; De Cleen et al., 2021), or DT and CL (Wilkinson, 2022; Nikisianis et al., 2019), there have been very few attempts to bring them all together into a coherent research programme. The aim here then, expanding on recent studies conducted using this framework (Brown and Mondon, 2020; Brown, Mondon and Winter, 2021), is to develop a detailed account of how this combination can be achieved and what benefits it brings to the field of discourse studies. To do so, the article first establishes the methodological tree, an analogy used to represent the differing yet overlapping roles played by each approach in the framework. By visualising their individual contributions through the features of a tree (roots, trunk and branches), their interconnected nature is emphasised, reflecting the way their respective strengths can mitigate one another’s potential limitations. This more abstract elaboration of the framework lays important groundwork for the second section of the article, which focuses on practical application in discursive analysis. A flexible analytical structure is proposed which combines the values, concepts and techniques offered by each approach. To demonstrate the way this can be implemented in textual analysis, examples are drawn from a study of far-right Brexit discourse and the process of mainstreaming. It is hoped that this article can stimulate further discussion about the way that DT, CDS and CL can be combined, with potential for the framework to be refined and expanded on within the field.

### 2. Théo Aiolfi (CY Cergy Paris University)

#### Analysing Discourse Beyond Text: The Political Performance Analysis Questionnaire as an Interdisciplinary Methodological Tool to Study Politics in Motion

One of the main limitations of discourse analysis in political science is its logocentric bias: its tendency to primarily focus on text and ignore or minimise every other aspect of what constitutes a political event. Although poststructuralist approaches to discourse analysis, whether they take inspiration from Laclau or Foucault, adopt a holistic definition of discourse that also includes non-textual components of discourse, this theoretical premise is too rarely applied in practice. Furthermore, neither Laclau nor Foucault provided a systematic set of methodological tools that could provide transferable guidelines to capture the non-textual elements of discourse. I argue in this paper that a productive way to tackle this limitation is to engage with the discipline of performance studies, which is particularly suited to capture the embodied, theatrical and ephemeral aspects of discourse. Drawing on Patrice Pavis’s famous questionnaire for performance analysis, I will make the case for an adapted version of his comprehensive methodological tool to analyse politics as performance. Because theatre plays fundamentally differ from political speeches, I will discuss the distinction between artistic and social performances, based on a shift from acknowledged artificiality to performed authenticity. To capture this shift, I then adapt Jeffrey Alexander’s constitutive elements of social performances to coin a set of four elements of political performance: symbols & scripts, actor, audience and mise-en-scène. After offering definitions of each of these elements, I will conclude by synthesising these insights into questions and compiling them into what I call the Political Performance Analysis Questionnaire (PPAQ). Then, drawing on examples from my own work on populism, I will make the case for the PPAQ as a methodological tool that can both stand independently as a way to get a “thick” understanding of a political performance or act as a complement to more traditional text-based forms of discourse analysis.

### 3. Craig Love (University of Essex)

#### Exploring the Accents of Discourse – Q Methodology and Discourse Analysis

As Howarth (2005) has noted, within discourse theory, methodological questions tend to play something of a Cinderella role, desperately searching for the right fit. Discourse analysis as a discipline, has at its disposal a variety of research methods and techniques that can be employed in empirical research. As the influence and reception of the Essex School of Discourse Analysis has grown, so too has the need to develop the means of ‘operationalizing’ its methodological principles and research strategies in non-positivist ways. (Glynos et al, 2021) This paper argues that one such particularly fruitful research method that can be applied to the Logics framework and discourse theory more generally is Q-Methodology. The paper will outline the key theoretical underpinnings and assumptions of Q Methodology, namely Operant Subjectivity, before outlining the process of conducting a Q-Method study. Following this, the paper will provide a discussion of the compatibility and complimentary nature of Q-methodology with discourse theory research and the Logics approach, both in terms of their theoretical insights and in terms providing a means for operationalizing these insights in a robust empirical research method. In doing so, the paper will also consider some contributions from outside discourse theory as a means of enhancing the understandings that can be drawn from the results of Q-method studies as well as informing its application. By supplementing the understanding of subjectivity in Q-method with a discursive conceptualization, the paper seeks to push and open the boundaries and possibilities for both Q-methodology and discourse theory. It aims to facilitate a deeper and nuanced understanding of political events, topics, and issues from the subjective expressions of those individuals who are active participants as well as expanding the horizons and empirical tools available to discourse analysts.

### 4. Cristóbal Sandoval (Universidad Diego Portales)

#### Articulating political discourse analysis and network ethnography: New Possibilities for Discourse Theory

Political discourse analysis and poststructuralist discourse theory must go forward in a world with more complex political and social phenomena. Challenges such as the Covid-19 pandemic, global warming, globalization, new technologies, economic and political representation crisis, and many others made it necessary to question the central assumption of discourse theory. This paper seeks to contribute to this discussion by an ontological and methodological articulation between, on the one side, discourse theory and actor-network theory and, on the other side, political discourse analysis and network ethnography. By articulating their ontological and epistemological premises, I consider that actor-network theory offers post-Marxist materialism that can supplement the main assumptions of discourse theory. Primarily, I focus on the role of networks or assemblage of human and non-human agencies and the formation of association nodes in which political discourses can circulate. Additionally, this work considers the methodological consequences of this articulation, discussing the contribution of political discourse analysis and network ethnography in critical policy studies and expanded to political discourse analysis and discourse theory. Finally, the paper illustrates their major discoveries with the example of the study of the dynamics of diffusion and global circulation of populist discourses between Chile and Spain and the logic of translation as an explanatory narrative for the emergence and stabilization of populist phenomena.

## Panel 3d: CRITICAL FANTASY STUDIES

*Chair: Jan Zienkowski*

### 1. Thomás Zicman de Barros (Sciences Po Paris) and Sebastián Ronderos (Fundação Getulio Vargas)

#### Critical Fantasy Methods, or how to study the role of desire in populism

The last two decades have seen the development of a particular branch of populism studies, a branch that explores the articulation between politics and psychoanalysis. The efforts in this tradition may be distinguished under what Jason Glynos has lately named "Critical Fantasy Studies", stressing the importance of studying the affective power enlivening and sustaining the articulation of social and political reality. In this vein, various authors have defended the use of notions such as 'fantasy' and 'desire' to think of the construction of populist movements in particular and political identities in general. However, despite these valuable contributions, we find a persistent gap in the literature regarding adequate methods to analyze the role of desire in populist movements. While Glynos and Howarth's logics approach may provide a fruitful hermeneutical framework for thinking of fantasy in collective identities, they leave the door open for the exploration of adjacent idioms so to develop specific methodological strategies to conduct empirical research. Based on our previous research, our paper aims to propose a double approach to the deployment of desire in methodological terms in the study of populism-the first focusing on document analysis and the second training the attention to psychosocial interviews.

### 2. Joshua Hurtado Hurtado (University of Helsinki) and Jason Glynos (University of Essex)

#### The grip of degrowth: Inquiring into the psychic dimension of the degrowth uptake

Degrowth scholars emphasise the need for socio-ecological transformation. Calls for degrowth often focus on the biophysical incompatibility of growth-dependent social systems (e.g., capitalism) with natural ecosystems, thus contributing to a climate and ecological emergency (Gunderson et al., 2018; Trainer, 2021). Moreover, the normative justification for degrowth highlights the indifference of growth-dependent social systems to democracy and well-being, and affirms that degrowth societies should be premised on needs-satisfaction, reciprocity, and conviviality (Paulson, 2017; Büchs & Koch, 2019). Degrowth proposals are not taken seriously at the moment, remaining marginal in mainstream media, social practice, and policy discussions. In this context, mainstream proposals to solve environmental and social problems tend to promote technological and market-based mechanisms that take growth imperatives for granted (Bonnedahl & Heikkurinen, 2019). Any political strategy aiming to enact meaningful socio-ecological transformation must surely draw attention to the contrasting structures of nature and political economy, and to the contrasting values implied in growth and degrowth regimes. However, the literature pays less attention to unconscious processes and their explanatory and critical contribution to the way we characterise the challenges and possibilities of socio-ecological transformation. In this paper, therefore, we focus on the psychic dimension of intersubjective relations, asking how it can shed light on the way degrowth discourse grips its supporters and practitioners. We draw on post-marxism’s psychoanalytically-inflected discourse theory (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Howarth, 2000; Glynos, 2001; Glynos & Howarth, 2007; Glynos, 2020) to interrogate data obtained from public documents, reports and interviews from two degrowth organisations in Europe. The presence of enjoyment and fantasy in the data point to a strong desire to see the realisation of an idealised ecological regime, where alienation is replaced by strong bonds of mutual care and belonging. Through the analysis of this data, we explore how paying attention to the psychic dimension of degrowth discourse can complement existing accounts of the challenges and possibilities of socio-economic transformation.

### 3. Konstantinos Roussos (University of Essex), Jimena Vazquez (Anglia Ruskin University), and Savvas Voutyras (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

#### Surviving crises by prefiguring futures of solidarity: reflections from grassroots healthcare provisioning in Greece

This chapter explores the discourses and repertoires of social movements and grassroots struggles that emerged as responses to the recent economic crisis and austerity reforms in Greece. We offer a snapshot of the novel practices of solidarity that constitute these responses and highlight their broad transformative potential. We argue that they should be assessed in terms of the ethical re-imagining of social relations they enable, as well as the partial bringing into life of these relations. We take as a case study the Metropolitan Community Health Clinic at Helliniko (MCCH), a social solidarity clinic set up at the peak of the economic crisis in Athens. Cases like the MCCH, we argue, are experiments that emerged within the crisis context and attempt to expand democratic imagination and conceptions of social justice. We draw on the literature of prefigurative politics, community economies, psychoanalysis, and fieldwork research, as we aim to highlight key aspects of such new ethical practices in grassroots welfare provisioning. MCCH, just like other struggles that emerged in response to austerity, revealed and challenged the function and reproduction of neoliberal logics – in this case, their expansion into the sphere of welfare and social care. However, they were not simply ‘defensive’ responses, nor did they merely redirect their demands to the realm of institutional politics. Rather, such initiatives have been productive of new forms of social life and organization, prefiguring in this way alternative institutions and relations in the present. Cases like the MCCH allow us to discern practices and visions that do not simply contest hegemonic politics but rather reimagine society through experimentation with new forms of social organization.

### 4. Claudia Mohor Valentino (University of Essex)

#### From subject of demand to subject of desire: a Lacanian contribution to the study of political organization in times of new mobilisations

This paper seeks to investigate how the category of demand has to be taken as central for the study of the social and political theory. Although there is a mainstream use of the category of ‘demand’ within the political and social field which usually refers to individual and collective requests or articulated claims, it hasn't received much attention as other concepts such as democracy, freedom, equality, and so on. Yet especially related to the context of mobilisations, riots and protests, the category of demand has been studied to shed light on questions of participation in the social movement field (Buechler, 1995; Jenkins, 2001; Klandermans, 2007; McAdam et al., 2003; Snow, 2007; Tarrow, 2013; Tilly, 2005) and also been problematised in the study of rights and politics of recognition (Cooke, 1997; Fraser, 2018; Fraser et al., 2003; Habermas, 1994; Habermas, 2009; Honneth & Rancière, 2016; Huddy, 2001; Reicher, 1996; Rosenau, 2006; Taylor, 1994; Weeks, 2009), and political organization and identity (Laclau, 2005; Zicman de Barros, 2020; Gerbaudo, 2017; Eklund, 2015). I will concentrate on this latter field, which has seen with the recent global mobilisation as Occupy, Indignados and the Yellow Vest, a reactivation in the study of demands, bringing to the foreground question of leadership, social bond, and political organization. I will suggest that we are facing a new kind of protests, especially related to the way in which demands are being performed, which urges a revision of the social and political category of demand. Drawing upon the Laclauian theory of demand (2005), I will show how current protests fail to be explained in the mainstream form of hegemony, being less stable, and short lived (Eklundh, Gerbaudo) and that a turn to Lacanian psychoanalysis, and especially to his notion of social bond elaborated in his “four discourses” theory (1969) could help us to shed light to current debates on leadership and political organization.

FRIDAY 24 MARCH

# — Parallel Session 4 —

## Panel 4a: DEMOCRACY AND AUTHORITARIANISM

*Chair: Savvas Voutyras*

### 1. Giorgos Katsambekis (National Centre for Social Research, Greece)

#### Advancing a discursive understanding of (mainstream) authoritarianism: preliminary insights from the Greek case

Authoritarianism, as a concept, has a long history in the social sciences. Traditionally, it has been studied mostly within two paradigms: (1) through the lens of social psychology, based on the assumption that there is a distinct type of personality that favours strong authority and facilitates the emergence of authoritarian leaders/regimes; (2) through the lens of political science, that sees authoritarianism as a form/category of regime located on a spectrum at the very opposite of (liberal) democracy. More recently, authoritarianism has been brought to the fore of political research anew in a bid to understand the ideological profile of the far right. Here, the focus is mostly on the relation and interaction of authoritarianism (as a set of ideas) with other ideological/discursive phenomena, notably populism, nationalism and nativism, illiberalism. What seems to be missing, however, are scholarly works that look at authoritarianism as a discursive phenomenon. Notions such as authority, that of an ordered society, compliance and hierarchy, located at the core of authoritarianism, do not have a predefined meaning/essence. They are always discursively constructed, framed and contextualised, corresponding to various events and circumstances. By conceiving authoritarianism as a discursive practice one can avoid the limitations of binary (‘in/out’) categories making it able to examine the varying degrees and forms of authoritarianism that may manifest across the political spectrum and within both democratic and undemocratic regimes, employed both by radical/extreme actors but also by actors (parties, leaders, etc.) that are seen as moderate or mainstream. Such an approach may contribute to a fuller understanding of the phenomenon, in all its diversity, while drawing attention to ‘softer’ or non-systematic forms of authoritarianism that often go unnoticed, thus contributing to a fuller understanding of democracy’s challenges and a more alert democratic culture. This paper presents a provisional framework for a discursive understanding of authoritarianism, looking also at the interaction of discourse and political praxis in the form of policy implementation and presents preliminary findings from the Greek case and the study of the centre-right party New Democracy in particular.

### 2. Emilia Palonen (University of Helsinki)

#### Beyond disinformation: Lying and Belief in community building

This paper takes a discursive approach to democracy, drawing on the hegemony theory of Laclau and Mouffe, but also engaging with contemporary takes on political theory and focusing on the case of Hungary. It takes the Mouffean-Rancièrian starting point that democracy relies on disagreement or agonism, but explores how does this disagreement get manifested in polarised contexts. One of the key objects of inquiry in discourse studies in the last decade has been the rise of dis- or misinformation. The praxis of conspiration theories is deeply antagonistic one and it generates epistemic communities which are formed around particular understandings. Often these discourses are clearly articulated against something to oppose that unites the heterogeneous and even incompatible claims and demands. A recent edition of Hannah Arendt’s work On Lying and Politics edited by David Bromwich, engages with the idea of lying as a practice in Arendt and takes it to the present (c.f. Bromwich 2022; Arendt 2022). The paper claims that there is some communal value of this practice, in collectivity building – lying as a community-making practice. The other side of the coin with lying is belief and the need to believe and the revelations of the nakedness beyond lies, which is a traumatic experience. Examples, such as Hungary show how the idea of the 'lying other' are used as the counterpoint that can mask over the lies that follow through hegemonic practices and institutionalised lies.

### 3. Dana Trif (Babes-Bolyai University)

#### Protests, Social Movements, and the Visual Turn: Reinventing “the People” in Romania’s 2017 Pro-Democracy Protests

The 2017 anti-corruption protests in Romania are the largest since 1989. This paper analyzes the discourse and visuals emerging during these protests. The slogans and visual artifacts the protesters used are evidence for a paper asking how hegemonic reconfigurations of meaning led to a new discursive reconstruction of the “people”. The theoretical and methodological frameworks of this analysis rely on Poststructuralist Discourse Theory (PDT). While PDT are mostly employed to trace the discursive mechanisms behind the reconfiguration of the “people”, this paper relies as well on photographic evidence of these protests. It offers therefore not only an empirical unpacking of the discourse which shaped a foundational political moment in Romanian politics, but also a methodological reflection on how “discourse” as (re)contextualized visual practice can converse with its hegemonic brethren developed by PDT.

### 4. Aurélien Mondon (University of Bath) and Seongcheol Kim (University of Bremen)

#### From objectivist bias to positivist bias: A constructivist critique of the ‘populist attitudes’ literature

This paper undertakes a critique of the ‘populist attitudes’ literature which has become increasingly influential in the field of populism research and is centered on survey-based operationalizations of populism as a set of attitudes, usually featuring items that gauge respondents’ support for the voice of ‘ordinary people’ over that of politicians. Our critique of this strand of research is threefold: 1) by fixing the construction of ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’ to make them operationalizable for survey analysis, the ‘populist attitudes’ approach displays a positivist bias that pervades empirical social research more generally and ultimately runs contrary to the constructivist underpinnings of the ideational turn within populism research (including the post-foundational discursive approach grounded in Ernesto Laclau’s work, but also Cas Mudde’s original ideational definition): namely, the recognition that ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’ are contingent constructions by political actors rather than objectively determinate locations in the social structure; 2) this positivist bias, in turn, goes hand in hand with a tendency to reify ‘the people’ as an unmediated aggregate of survey-based public attitudes; and 3) in doing so, it obscures power imbalances and top-down processes inherent to the formation of public attitudes. In this manner, the positivist bias that characterizes the newly emergent mainstream in populism research paradoxically mirrors the objectivist bias of modernizationbased approaches to populism in the 1960s and 70s – which reduced the identity of ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’ to determinate socio-structural categories such as the peasantry – and stands in contradiction to the constructivist underpinnings of the ideational turn in a broader sense.

## Panel 4b: NATIONALISM, RACISM AND THE (POPULIST) FAR RIGHT 1: NORMALIZATION AND CHANGE

*Chair: Maria Avraamidou*

### 1. Pedro Camelo and Michał Krzyžanowski (Uppsala University)

#### Independence or else: Normalization of Authoritarian Neoliberalism and Right-Wing Populism in Brazil

On the brink of the 2022 elections, Brazilian democracy appears to be at a critical junction. With the final year of Jair Bolsonaro’s presidential term, the ultraconservative president has not only decided to fight for re-election but also to do so while combining Brazilian authoritarian neoliberalism (Gomes & Tanscheit 2021) and right-wing populism (Renno, Avritzer & Carvalho 2021). In the process of campaigning for his re-election along these lines, Bolsonaro has also repeatedly raised doubts around the trustworthiness of the Brazilian electoral system, thus posing ever more obvious threat ‘from within’ to the future of Brazilian democratic system. Drawing from such context, our paper delves into underlying features of Brazilian right-wing radicalization under Bolsonaro through an integrated framework combining discourse-theoretical approaches to populist mobilization (Laclau 2005) and the discourse-historical work on far-right normalization of nativism and exclusion performed within Critical Discourse Studies (Krzyżanowski 2018, 2020 a,b; Krzyżanowski & Ekström 2022). Empirically, the focus of the paper is on events surrounding right-wing celebrations of the 2022 bicentennial of Brazilian independence. While throughout Bolsonaro’s presidency, these celebrations become transformed into a critical day in Brazilian politics with annual, highly-attended bolsonarista rallies, particularly great expectations surrounded the Independence Day in 2022 coinciding with the 200-year anniversary of the Declaration of Independence as well as taking place less than a month before the presidential elections. In our study, we analyze speeches by Bolsonaro in the two Independence Day demonstrations, in, respectively, Brasília and Rio de Janeiro. Beyond the content of speeches, we reflect on symbolic and historical contextualisation of those events, as well as the key discursive traits of how a combination of authoritarian neoliberalism has been normalised by affordances of Brazilian, Latin American and transnational variants of far-right populist discourse.

### 2. Omran Shroufi (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

#### Continuity and change in far-right discourse: The case of far-right support for Israel

Much has been written about the changing nature of far-right discourse in Europe, with many scholars suggesting that many of today’s successful far-right parties embody a new type of politics, one that sets it apart from the ultranationalist and explicitly racist far-right politics of old. In many ways, the pro-Israel discourse of numerous West European far-right parties, including inter alia the Dutch Partij voor de Vrijheid, the Flemish Vlaams Belang and the German Alternative für Deutschland, would suggest these parties have moved out of the shadow of their ideological predecessors and need to be understood in new ways, indeed ‘unreformed’ far-right parties such as the Neo-Nazi Greek Golden Dawn or German Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands remain very hostile towards Israel. However, through an in-depth theoretical discursive analysis of parliamentary debates, both at the European and national level, my paper shows how the discourse of several ‘modern’ far-right parties, whilst no doubt novel in its celebration of ‘our’ Judeo-Christian values, nonetheless contains a set of logics that is as extreme and exclusionary as that propagated by many ‘old’ far-right parties, albeit it focused on a more ‘acceptable’ enemy, the Muslim ‘other’. As such, I argue that the far right’s discourse on Israel needs to be seen as a novel manifestation of ‘classic’ far-right politics, rather than as evidence of a fully revamped ideological transformation.

### 3. Alexander Alekseev (University of Helsinki)

#### Democracy in Populist Radical Right Discourses: What Helps the Populist Radical Right Normalise Its Conceptions of Democracy

Taking the inspiration from Begriffsgeschichte, the history of concepts in the spirit of Reinhart Kosellek, and combining it with the methodological toolkit of critical discourse analysis, this paper explores how the European populist radical right constructs, conveys and instrumentalises the concept of democracy in the current EU context. It identifies key discursive mechanisms deployed by PRR parties in electoral contexts that allow them to normalise and mainstream theirs eemingly marginal conceptions of democracy. To highlight the common core of PRR conceptions of democracy, the paper takes the cases of two very dissimilar PRR parties in government (Polish Prawo i Sprawiedliwość) and in opposition (French Rassemblement National). It focuses on the analysis of electoral speeches given by the two party leaders, Jarosław Kaczyński and Marine Le Pen, in the run-up to the 2019 European elections. To deal with the texts, this paper relies on a combination of the discourse-historical approach (Reisigl and Wodak, 2016) and the discourse-conceptual approach (Krzyżanowski, 2016) to critical discourse analysis. While the DHA allows reconstructing the content of the concept of democracy, the DCA helps place it in its wider semantic field. The paper demonstrates that rather than simply adhering to liberal democratic conceptions of democracy, the European populist radical right has creatively redefined democracy as an ideological complex (Hodge, 2017): PRR conceptions of democracy are discursively constructed as essentially populist but diluted with some liberal democratic elements. Moreover, democracy in PRR discourses is conceptualised in a purely populist vein and does not acquire truly far-right connotations until the PRR clarifies its nativist and authoritarian interpretations of the people. These discursive mechanisms along with certain flexibility of political concepts allow the PRR to strategically orchestrate discursive shifts and normalise its views and positions. By highlighting (formally) populist and liberal democratic elements in its conceptions of democracy, the PRR stresses the normality and acceptability of its discourses and positions, while by constructing these elements as fuzzy ideological complexes, the PRR redefines their meanings in line with its ideological core of nativism, authoritarianism, and populism.

## Panel 4c: ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE AND NATURE 1

*Chair: Andreja Vezovnik*

### 1. Liv Sunnercrantz (University of Stavanger)

#### Spectres of The Climate Crisis

While a climate spectre haunts Europe, something is rotten in the state of Norway. Fossil fuels and petroleum extraction run deep and divide generations. It is a nation haunted by both past and future. Two Derridean ghosts manifest in our post-foundational discourse analysis of Norwegian media discourse (2021-2022): that of a High-Carbon Past; and that of a Low-Carbon Future. In fiction, the ghost appears as a lament for a utopian past in national TV’s “State of Happiness”, as a performative projection of the traces of history (cf. Wolfreys, 2010). Glorification and naturalisation of “the Oil adventure” – a soon-to-be-lost past – renders politics and culture impotent (cf. Goodwin & Taylor, 2009: 23), hoping only for a cyclical revival by way of finding “the new oil”. Now, Norwegian culture and society is polarised along generational divides. The younger generation “Greta” is being haunted by the ghost of a high-carbon past from which there is no escape. It comes back to haunt them and their (possible) future. Their future is thus haunted by a spectre from the past, foreshadowing a dystopian coming-to-pass. The older generation “Petro” is being haunted by the ghost of an anticipated low-carbon future whose features are clouded by the mist of uncertainty. Their past/present is haunted by a spectre from the future. For both generations, fear is a key and mobilising affect but in different ways: a fear of losing the privileges of the past/present for generation Petro, and a fear of losing a liveable planet for generation Greta.

### 2. Alina Bychkova (Nottingham Trent University)

#### Climate change discourses in Central Asia: economic interests, image concerns, and the traces of Soviet legacies’

This chapter explores the discourses and repertoires of social movements and grassroots struggles that emerged as responses to the recent economic crisis and austerity reforms in Greece. We offer a snapshot of the novel practices of solidarity that constitute these responses and highlight their broad transformative potential. We argue that they should be assessed in terms of the ethical re-imagining of social relations they enable, as well as the partial bringing into life of these relations. We take as a case study the Metropolitan Community Health Clinic at Helliniko (MCCH), a social solidarity clinic set up at the peak of the economic crisis in Athens. Cases like the MCCH, we argue, are experiments that emerged within the crisis context and attempt to expand democratic imagination and conceptions of social justice. We draw on the literature of prefigurative politics, community economies, psychoanalysis, and fieldwork research, as we aim to highlight key aspects of such new ethical practices in grassroots welfare provisioning. MCCH, just like other struggles that emerged in response to austerity, revealed and challenged the function and reproduction of neoliberal logics – in this case, their expansion into the sphere of welfare and social care. However, they were not simply ‘defensive’ responses, nor did they merely redirect their demands to the realm of institutional politics. Rather, such initiatives have been productive of new forms of social life and organization, prefiguring in this way alternative institutions and relations in the present. Cases like the MCCH allow us to discern practices and visions that do not simply contest hegemonic politics but rather reimagine society through experimentation with new forms of social organization.

### 3. Ben Glasson (Monash University)

#### Capitalist contradictions individually managed: Exploiting the resilience of the fragmented subject

A mantra of discourse theory is that the subject exists between dislocation and the decision. Subject positions, by contrast, are socially spaced, post-decision moments that belong to instituted regimes of signification. Yet even hegemonic discourses are always partially dislocated and identities never fully constituted. Subject formation is therefore ‘spatial’ as much as temporal and is continually underway, even in settled social spaces in the form of competition for influence and authority between established institutions and discourses. Contradictions between individually held subject positions reflect the contradictions between the social institutions that interpellate them, with individuals forced to make constant ‘choices’ between their conflicting roles. In this paper I explore how environmental politics plays out in this intra-psychic realm. Greta Thunberg is an example of an individual not bearing the contradiction between subject positions they are recruited into. But what her case reveals is that self-contradiction and hypocrisy are, for most people most of the time, well tolerated. Nobody ever died of a contradiction, as Deleuze and Guattari noted. I analyse the environmental discourse of the United Nations and leading environmental states to show how subjective fragmentation is exploited by polysemous interpellations where climate-ecological discourse is interposed with anti-ecological ‘micro-interpellations’ to subject positions that hark back to discredited progress myths. My contention is that these interpositions are a key capitalist strategy of rendering capitalist ecological contradictions manageable, something that would not be possible without functionally fragmentary, resilient individuals -- antitheses, that is, of Greta Thunberg.

# — Parallel Session 5 —

## Panel 5a: BLIND SPOTS IN POPULISM RESEARCH

*Chair: Emmy Eklundh*

### 1. Lazaros Karavasilis (University of Bremen)

#### What we talk about when we talk about ‘the elite’: theoretical and empirical understandings of an often-neglected term in populism studies

Populism studies have almost exclusively focused on understanding the phenomenon of populism based on how ‘the people’ are constructed as a political subject. Indeed, most of the existing literature on populism, revolves around the different connotations that ‘the people’ have -including the people-as-nation and the people-as-class- and under which conditions do ‘the people’ become a populist subject in a political actor’s discourse and practices. At the same time, the other term that comprises the concept of populism, the term of ‘the elite’, has received surprisingly minimal attention. While there have been studies that focus on the anti-elitism aspect of populist actors, only a few have provided an in-depth examination of ‘the elite’ term. It is this gap in the literature that the current paper will address. This paper aims to offer a theoretical and empirical understanding of what populist parties mean when they talk about ‘the elite’ and how the different connotations of the term can clarify the degree of populism in political parties. Employing a discourse analytical perspective, the paper will examine the meaning of ‘the elite’ in the discourses of SYRIZA and Independent Greeks in Greece and The Left Party and Alternative for Germany in Germany, from 2009 to 2019. The goal of the paper is to promote the analytical use of ‘the elite’ in an equal manner to that of ‘the people’ and highlight its use in populism studies. Alignment with Colloquium themes: Nationalism, racism, and the (populist) far right; Discourse theory, critique and practice; Discourse, class, and political economy.

### 2. Benjamin De Cleen (Vrije Universiteit Brussel) and Juan Alberto Ruiz Casado (Academia Sinica Taipei)

#### Populism of the privileged: the use of underdog identities by comparatively privileged groups

This paper explores how and with what effect the populist identity of ‘the people-as-underdog’ can, counterintuitively, be discursively articulated by those who occupy comparatively privileged positions within society, often as a strategy for maintaining their positions of privilege and dominance. Thinking through the notion of a ‘populism of the privileged’, there are three steps to our argument. First, drawing on the literature on privilege and critically assessing the taking for granted of underdog identities in studies of populism we identify intersections between populism and privilege on the level populist leaders, support for populism, and beneficiaries of populism. We call these populism by, with and for the privileged. Secondly, drawing on a discourse-theoretical approach to populism and further deepening its constructivist perspective as well as sociological sensitivity, we locate the notion of populism on a discursive-strategic plain and entirely uncouple it from any assumptions about populist politics being necessarily undertaken by, supported by, or favouring what could be disadvantaged groups in terms of sociological profile or political representation. Thirdly, building on this we develop analytical strategies for the study of the ‘populism of the privileged’, zooming in on the study of ‘the people’, ‘the elite’, the sociological directionality of populism, the layeredness of privilege and un(der)privilege, ‘crisis’ and ‘unmet demands’, and the role of discourses about populism. In conclusion, we reflect on the broader implications of the ‘populism of the privileged’ for the study of populism as well as for discourse theory more broadly.

### 3. Yannis Stavrakakis (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki)

#### Populist Discourse: The Psycho-social Horizon

Populism research is currently facing important challenges: epistemological, conceptual, methodological, etc. The mainstream is trying to cope, but, trapped within Cold War stereotypes, it often reproduces a reflexive deficit that triggers the dynamic development of important alternative approaches, like the discursive one. After a brief presentation of the basis of a discursive orientation, this paper focuses on the need for its further elaboration in a psycho-social direction, drawing on psychoanalytic theory (Freud and Lacan). This prospect is already present in Laclau’s late work on populism and is currently enriched by a multitude of new interventions. Crucially, it offers an opportunity for continuous (and self-reflexive) renewal, encompassing what is within discourse more than its symbolic dimension itself. In particular, special emphasis is placed on three dimensions: (1) The centrality of the notion of ‘demand’ in capturing the formation of populism as an always partial project; (2) The importance of affectivity and enjoyment energizing populist (and anti-populist) discourses; (3) The negative (ontological) horizon marking the politics of hegemony throughout.

## Panel 5b: NATIONALISM, RACISM AND THE (POPULIST) FAR RIGHT 2: IDENTITY AND EXCLUSION

*Chair: Maximilian Grönegräs*

### 1. Kristina Vasic (Central European University)

#### Discursive construction of the Other – the case of Slovenia under Janez Janša

In this paper, I analyze Slovenia’s ex-Prime Minister’s (Janez Janša) tweets, as well as those of his party, which I take as proxies for discourse, and determine the demands of “the people” and “the elite” (Other) constructed in these Twitter accounts. Populist logic of articulation is apparent in Janša’s hegemonic strategy, always offensive, because of his victimization politics (where he and “the people” he claims to represent are victims of leftists, corrupt politicians, “their” media, and civil society).The period I focus on in my analysis is from April 24th (when he lost in the parliamentary elections but still held formal power until June 1 st) until August 1 st , for which I have created a discursive map and found that the main cumulative demands (per Nonhoff) of “the people” and “the elite” as a constitutive outside are: “media freedom,” opposed to “biased media” (supposedly, of the left), then “traditional political institutions” vs. “CSOs” (which are blamed for Janša’s loss of power), then “paying taxes” vs. “corrupt elite,” and then, at the periphery of the chain of equivalence, we have “national identity” vs. “left internationalism” and “national security” vs. “migrants,” as well as “Christianity” vs. “atheism” , “traditional gender and family roles” vs. “alternative families” and, lastly, “heteronormativity” vs. “gender and LGBT ideology”. Based on these results, I argue that, at this point in time, his and his party’s discourse shows a populist strategy (understood in the tradition of Laclau), a right-wing one at that, but also coarticulation with nationalist and anti-LGBT discourses. Nevertheless, we should not conflate discourses and terms, as nationalism, particularly, is more of a context of the construction of “the people”, is at the periphery of the signifying chain, and its horizontal logic is not dominant here (Stavrakakis and De Cleen, 2017). Rather, vertical dimension of hierarchy is central in Janša’s discourse, and he mentions migrants only when blaming “the elite” for disregarding the rights/security of “the people.” Thus, the attack is not explicitly directed at non-members of the nation, but at the perceived elite. This makes populism his main strategy, but with possible nationalist demands.

### 2. Maria Avraamidou (Erasmus University Rotterdam) and Maria Ioannou (University of Groningen)

#### Antimigrant debates on Twitter and their affinity to European border politics and Discourses: #IStandWithGreece

The connections between extreme antimigrant, and mainstream EU migration discourses and policies need to be drawn at this conjuncture during which the death of migrant others at Europe’s land and sea borders is becoming a banal occurrence and racialized notions of European solidarity predominate. To this end, the study offers an in-depth analysis of the antimigrant discourse by far-right elite and non-elite Twitter influencers organized around the seemingly innocent, not blatantly antimigrant hashtag #IStandWithGreece, and reflects, on the extent to which their tweets offer a more overtly racist expression of official EU discourses about migration. Namely, #IstandwithGreece, created in the midst of a less known, European border crisis, in the post-refugee ‘crisis’ years, became trending in Twitter early 2020 coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic. Around it a “network of intolerance” was organized strategically promoting ideologies ranging from white supremacism to Greek nationalism and glued together by broader antimigrant positions. This study focuses on the discourse promoted by the network on Twitter (e.g., Katie Hopkins, Generation identity) and via this, it offers an in-depth analysis of transnational boundary making, its relationship to Greek nationalism, and European border politics. In explicating boundary making in the tweets studied, we primarily focused on nomination and predication that is the representations of actors and their characteristics and the representation of positive self and negative other, looking simultaneously for unanticipated insights. Although focusing on broader meanings, the study sheds light on discursive instances promoting Us/Other binaries adhering to the tradition of critical discourse analysis as it is via discourse that exclusionary practices are legitimized. Then, we reflect and argue that this exclusionary discourse by extreme antimigrant twitterers is legitimizing EU border practices and politics and, conclude that networks of intolerance, like #IStandWithGreece, function as Europe’s alter-ego mouthpiece, saying the unsayable using social media and their affordances.

### ​3. Tilemachos Iatridis (University of Crete), Theofilos Gkinopoulos (University of Crete), and Irini Kadianaki (University of Cyprus)

#### Who plays the populist card? ‘Diversity’ in right-wing parliamentary discourse in Greece and Cyprus over the past 20 years

Right-wing populism is seen as a political discourse centred on the issues of sovereignty (targeting the elites) and ingroup boundaries (targeting migrants and other minorities), the latter including an aversion towards diversity (e.g., Staerklé & Green, 2018). In this paper we focus on the use of the term ‘diversity’ by right-wing parties in parliamentary records, in Greece and Cyprus, from 2000 to 2019. We analysed the data using the tools of rhetorical social psychology (Billig, 1991) and critical discursive social psychology (Wetherell, 1998, 2007). We identified mainstream liberal celebrations of pluralism; rhetorical strategies commonly associated with right-wing populism such as condemning diversity as an elite culture; and certain positive significations and re-appropriations of ‘diversity’ resembling Alt-right discourses. Interestingly, those strategies were employed by almost all right-wing parties, rather than corresponding to the political classification into ‘populist’ (e.g., the Greek Popular Orthodox Alarm, LAOS) vs. ‘non-populist’ parties. What is more, the analysis identified certain temporal patterns in employing and dismissing each of those strategies, depending on the party in question being in government or in opposition, political competition, and the broader political context in each country offering unique opportunities for political differentiation. These findings speak to the theoretical debate on whether ‘diversity’ is a distinct ideology with unique legitimizing effects or a ‘keyword’ that may receive different meanings by political opponents such as liberals and conservatives (e.g., Berrey, 2015; Mayorga-Gallo, 2019), as well as to the related literature on the different meanings associated with diversity by liberal and conservative individuals (Howard et al., 2021). In this contribution, the discussion of the findings will mostly focus on implications arising from the availability of right-wing populist discourse as an alternative resource for political meaning-making and selfdefinition, beyond mainstream classifications into ‘populist’ and ‘non-populist’ parties.

## Panel 5c: ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE AND NATURE 2

*Chair: Jenny Gunnarsson Payne*

### 1. Andreja Vezovnik (University of Ljubljana)

#### Discourses on Meat in the Age of Biocapitalism: Risky Meat, Clean Meat Fix, and Green Governmentality

Recently, one of the greatest environmental burdens has been attributed to the agricultural sector, especially the meat sector. Scientific and political debates about the impact of the meat system on the environment were followed by media reports about the problem. Around the same time, a small segment of the food industry began using biotechnology to develop high-tech meat alternatives. They used biotechnology to produce meat from animal stem cells and named the product »cultured meat«. Cultured meat and similar meat alternatives first emerged in university laboratories and later in startups in Silicon Valley and other parts of the world. Soon, cultured meat was touted as a future solution to the global protein supply. Supposedly, cultured meat has less impact on the environment or animal welfare, and seems to be the ultimate capitalist dream that preserves the environment while still allowing humanity to eat as many burgers as it wants. The aim of this paper is to shed light on the "ideological" background of hightech food solutionism. To this end, the Foucauldian approach is used. First, it examines how meat is constructed as a problem for the environment. To this end, the political and media texts on meat are examined showing how meat has been constructed as a risk. Second, it examines how the securitization of the environment is leading to the development of the "new meat industry" that seeks to solve the environmental impacts of meat with biotechnological innovations such as cultured meat. To achieve this goal, the analysis looks at PR and promotional texts releised by the "new meat industry." Ultimately, the analysis shows how biotech solutions are embedded in capitalism and how the new food techno-fixism has become an important feature of a particular expression of capitalism, namely biocapitalism. Finally, the paper looks at green governmentality, a concept that explains the governance and commodification of life forms such as animals, their cells and tissues, for the purpose of making cultured meat a new food product allowing further profit and market expansion.

### 2. Kirill Filimonov (Uppsala University) and Nico Carpentier (Charles University)

#### Can the material speak? Nature as an object and subject of discursive regulation in a Swedish TV documentary

The paper is based on an article recently published in the Journal of Language and Politics and analyzes the discursive struggles around nature, as represented by the Swedish TV documentary Tvångsförflyttningar – Bággojohtin. The program narrates the history of forced displacements of the Indigenous people of Sami in northern Sweden in the early 20th century, where the environment became one of the key elements of political contestation. The paper is positioned at the intersection of discourse theory, political theory and environmental communication. Our discursive-material analysis of the documentary goes into two directions: (1) how antagonistically positioned discourses of the state and Indigenous people sought, in very different ways, to regulate and integrate nature; (2) how nature, through a series of subversive acts, resisted both the environmental governmentality of the state and the counter-hegemonic environmental knowledge of the Sami. The documentary juxtaposes the discursive framework of the state, co-articulated with capitalism and colonialism, against the ecocentric-indigenist discourse. The latter is (shown to be more) respectful and less exploitative towards nature, but nevertheless remains a humandriven discursive-material framework. However respectful this approach is, the Sami still take a central position in speaking on behalf of nature, and the documentary legitimatizes this regulatory framework. More fundamentally, Tvångsförflyttningar – Bággojohtin represents the difficulty of thinking outside the human-nature matrix, and of imaging nature without human (discursive) regulation. At the same time, nature withholds agency, forcing Sami and especially the state to find new ways to protect the consistency of their respective discourse. Traces of the dislocations caused by the material become sufficiently visible to enable for a reflection about nature beyond human regulation. The paper contributes to the understanding of the multiple discursive struggles around the environment, articulations of human-nature relations, and shows the importance of the material and its agencies.

### 3. Dora Matejak (University of Ljubljana)

#### Constructing organic farming through political governance: evidence from EU and Slovenia

This paper analyses the organic farming political governance at the EU level, and consequently, at the level of Slovenia. The agriculture sector accounts for around 10 % of greenhouse gas emissions in Slovenia and causes various environmental issues, from pollution to the loss of biodiversity. The environmental implications of the current food production system are recognized by the policymakers, and the targets and potential solutions to the agri-environmental problems are inscribed into the European Union food policies as well as Slovenia’s political framework, especially after the adoption of the European Green Deal. One of these identified solutions to enable the transition to a sustainable food system is switching from conventional farming to organic agriculture production. However, instead of imposing obligations and enforcing organic farming, a complex assemblage of governance is developed to facilitate the (re)shaping of farm-level practices in a way to align them with the policy goals. Through the theoretical underpinnings of governmentality studies and the multiple governmentality typology, this paper explores the discursive “rationalities” and practical “technologies” behind the organic agriculture policy framework. The aim is to identify and analyse governmental strategies that intend to (re)direct farmers’ behaviour and action. By conducting the post-structural policy analysis of the legislation, strategies, action plans as well as the communication around these policies, this paper demonstrates the complexity of diverse strategies and rationalities that formulate the understanding of what organic farming is and how it should be practiced appropriately. These strategies combine governance through regulations, education, monitoring and incentives but also through norms and knowledge around them. Furthermore, the paper emphasizes that these multiple governmentalities have the potential to complement and justify each other. However, they might also contradict each other, creating multiple paths for farmers’ self-development.

## Panel 5d: DISCOURSE THEORY, CRITIQUE AND PRACTICE

*Chair: Jason Glynos*

### 1. Penny Panagiota Koutrolikou (National Technical University of Athens)

#### Constructing European ‘Souths’ through crises: reflections of the case of Greece

Crisis has been one of the most popular words in Europe since the turn of the millennium, exemplified by the the "Eurozone crisis", the so-called "refugee crisis", the covid-19 health crisis and the latest energy crisis. An abundance of analyses, commentaries and research have explored the causes, repercussions, governance arrangements and enforced 'remedies' concerning these crises. Furthermore, significant contributions critically interrogated how each crisis was framed, legitimized through its own truth regimes or challenged. Within this repertoire of crises, and particularly within their governance arrangements, diverse Others are identified as 'culprits' or as different to the European core. Drawing on critical analyses of crises and on imagined geographies of Otherness, discourse analysis of key political actors as well as on analysis of representations, this paper aims to discuss how diverse 'Souths' are produced within the aforementioned entangled crises in/of Europe and what significations these Souths bear for Europe as well as for themselves. In doing so, it examines how in the Eurozone crisis the European South, and particularly Greece, signified an 'under-developed' South that 'needed' to be disciplined and guided in order to become European whilst becoming the 'shield' for Northern banks. Second, within the so-called Europe's 'refugee crisis', it will explore how the European South is simultaneously constructed as the 'example' of solidarity, the failed gate-keeper and the de facto prison guard of the European heartlands. Through these shifting significations in crises, the South emerges as an Other crucial for the hegemonic project of the European Union and, discursively materially and affectively, the territory of necropolitical apparatuses 'shielding' the European heartland from threats.

### 2. Thomas Siomos (Aristotle University Thessaloniki)

#### Crisis Discourse, from dislocation to opportunity?

With this paper we are aiming to compare the global financial crisis (2008-2010), and the health/pandemic crisis of (2020-2022) according to the crisis management process, the flow of information, the role of both new and traditional media, the people’s demands, the rise of extreme right-wing discourses and the issue of trust. We are investigate the radical contingent notional space between the meaning of crisis either as dislocation or opportunity. When, why and for who a dislocation leading to societal changes can be opportunity? Applying this comparison, we aim to shed light to the crisis mechanisms approaching them either as a mode (cybernetics) or a symptom (psychoanalysis), the role of information in such situations, and the human agency (post-humanism). As a conclusion/finding we aim to set up of an “discursive algorithm” suggestion that may be applicable to any crisis Our methodological basis is Discourse Theoretical Analysis and our theoretical framework combines cybernetics, systemic thinking, Lacanian political psychoanalysis and posthumanism.

### 3. Reid Kleinberg (University of Essex)

#### Traversing Laclau: the Challenge of Fantasy to the Discursive Theory of Populism

A major thread in Discourse Theory, the Essex School of Discourse Analysis (ESDA) advocates for leftwing populism as a democratic, transformative, and progressive politics (Laclau 2005; Katsambekis and Stavrakakis 2014; Mouffe 2018; Eklundh 2018). Yet a point of contention, obscurity, and potential theoretical and political weakness in this link is its grounding in Lacanian psychoanalytic concepts of identity (de Barros 2022). This paper tries to reconsider the theoretical paradigm connecting the ESDA and populism by critically assessing Ernesto Laclau’s landmark systemization of a discursive theory of populism and his murky incorporation of the Lacanian concepts of drive, sublimation, and objet petit a to explain discursive hegemony (2005). The paper advances through a method of textual comparison, interpretation, and analysis. I compare Laclau’s deployment of Lacanian concepts with key texts in psychoanalysis. Significantly, while Laclau acknowledged his debt to Lacanian theory, he recognized that the concept of fantasy was not well accounted for in his work (Laclau 2008). The paper contrasts Laclau’s account of identity formation (sublimation) in populism with the Lacanian theory of subject formation as the emergence of a co-originality of fantasmatic discourses and discourses of identity. This traditional Lacanian account of ‘stubborn’ identity is revealed to be problematically obscured by Laclau. Finally, I consider the political ramifications of Laclau’s insufficiency regarding fantasy and some possible new directions for democratic politics. Namely, by ignoring the role of fantasy left-populist movements may inadvertently try and mobilize discourses- nationalism, historic memory, free-speech, secularreason- that trigger intense feelings of institutional support undermining the intended attempt to build a transformative and novel hegemony. As well, my account introduces the notion that populisms or other articulatory progressive politics should center a ‘traversal of the fantasy’ to achieve plural social identities, opening new dimension for thinking psychoanalysis, discourse theory, and progressive politics together.

### 4. Julius Schneider, Rebecca Warren, Anne Steinhoff, and Jason Glynos (University of Essex)

#### Community Organising from a radical democratic point of view

Drawing on the US civil rights tradition, Community Organizing (CO) as a specific kind of sociopolitical activism has a long and diverse history. However, while many ideas prominent in CO praxis are also central to political theory, CO is strangely overlooked in political theory scholarship. Recent work suggests interesting overlaps between CO practices and the ideas of political philosophers such as Arendt and Foucault, but these remain underdeveloped. We engage with, and build on, this literature, suggesting there are good reasons for exploring CO from the perspective of post-marxist discourse theory and radical democracy, as elaborated by Laclau & Mouffe. We put these traditions into dialogue with each other from both a conceptual and case-based perspective. For example, it is instructive to probe and test affinities regarding their respective conceptions of leadership and their approach to relational types of power-building that support ‘fiercely non-partisan’ demand-making, while avoiding both fruitless antagonistic conflict and empty consensus. We propose to explore such affinities also with reference to a case illustration, involving the most prominent CO organisation in the United Kingdom, Citizens UK, and the way its principles have been put into action in a variety of campaigns, including in the context of university modules structured around the principles and praxis of CO. In the first instance, we use the case in an illustrative capacity to identify affinities with post-marxism’s general theory of hegemony. However, we also seek to establish how a more systematic probing of these affinities can benefit from, and contribute to, theoretical and critical debates about radical democracy concerning, for example, compromise and consensus, strategy and ethics, emotion and agonism.

# — Parallel Session 6 —

## Panel 6a: ANTI-POPULISM: IDEOLOGY AND BEYOND

*Chair: Yannis Stavrakakis*

### 1. Savvas Voutyras (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

#### From liberalism to anti-populism: a rhetorical approach to an ideological transformation

During the last decade, we have experienced the polarisation of political life, highlighted in conflicts over issues like immigration and economic agendas, the decline of trust towards institutions, established parties and elites, and the instability of political systems. ‘Populism’ is the force often blamed by politicians, media, and analysts for these negative developments and their causes. However, what remains strikingly understudied is the specific ways in which the traditional liberal centrist political and media forces have been trying to counter populism and the challenges it presents – i.e., anti-populism. This is particularly important, if we consider that virtually no political actor claims to be a ‘populist’, and that ‘populism’ usually serves as a negative label attached by centrist actors to their opponents of all political orientations. But the issue with ‘populism’s’ use as a framing device in this way is not simply about questions of accuracy or inaccuracy. Such uses have their own performative effects on political communication and political conduct more generally; most importantly, the emergence of ‘anti-populism’ as a distinct political discourse. This paper combines insights discourse theoretical and rhetorical approaches to political ideology to make sense of anti-populism, including its rhetorical style and forms of appeal. The paper supports that anti-populism should be understood as an ideological transformation of the liberal centre. A key insight is that an ideology – understood in rhetorical-discursive terms, rather than as a fixed set of principles – changes according to the way in which it constructs its opponents (i.e., ‘populism’) and the arguments it deploys against them. Two tasks the paper attempts to carry out, then, is to flesh out the core features of this transformation, and to critically highlight its implications for politics and democracy, focusing on Europe.

### 2. Sebastián Ronderos (Fundação Getulio Vargas) and Jason Glynos (University of Essex)

#### Anti-populist fantasies: interrogating Veja's discursive constructions, from Lula to Bolsonaro

In this paper we draw on the concept of fantasy and the principles of political discourse theory to develop an analytical framework for the study of Veja’s anti-populist discourse. As one of Brazil’s most influential publications in elite policy-making circles, Veja exerts considerable influence over the way populist politics is portrayed and understood. By tracking the signifiers ‘populis\*’ in the pages of this weekly magazine, our study affirms the distinctive virtues of adopting a psychoanalytically-informed perspective on political antagonism and ideology, treating fantasy as a core concept in the study of discourses about populism. Far from remaining above the fray in its opposition to the discourses of both Luiz Ignacio Lula da Silva (and the Workers’ Party) and Jair Bolsonaro (and the Social Liberal Party), our critical fantasy study shows how Veja’s pronouncements were both ideologically invested and normatively inflected.

### 3. Jana Goyvaerts (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

#### Journalism, Populism and Democracy: Conceptualizing the Public Debate and Discourses about Populism

What does populism mean? Many academic works on populism reflect on this, and often start with stating explicitly that there is no consensus on what populism really means. Yet despite these conceptual debates and ambiguities, ‘populism’ is a concept that is very often used in public discourse – we might even speak of a populist hype. And when it is used in day-to-day language, it is (unsurprisingly) rarely accompanied by a definition. So what do various actors in the public debate actually mean when they talk about populism? I decided to embark on a mission to map the different meanings of populism and investigate what lies underneath. Looking through the lens of mainstream news media, I looked at how different producers of discourses about populism – academics, politicians and journalists – used the term ‘populism’. I analyzed all articles containing the word ‘populism’ in Belgian newspapers from both 2002 and 2018, separated in three separate analyses: how journalists use populism, how academics use the term and how politicians use it. I found that the overall meanings were quite similar: ‘populism’ is used very pejoratively, to signal all kinds of threats to society and to democracy. However, it soon became clear that not every actor defined ‘democracy’ the same way. Different types of democracy were defended, against different aspects of populism. This was the case for both journalists, academics and politicians, although their own relation with and role in democracy impacted the way they articulated their critique of populism. In this presentation, I bring these findings together to conceptualize how populism’s meaning is constructed in these three spheres of meaning-making. How do these different conceptions influence each other? Which mechanisms are at play? Which power do journalists, academics and politicians have in these conceptual discussions?

### 4. Raylene Abdilla (University of Malta)

#### The Fantasy of European Governmentality: The EU's Response to 'Grexit' and 'Brexit'

This paper adopts Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s notion of hegemony (1985) and Michel Foucault’s notion of governmentality (1978) to analyse the hegemonic and governmental practices utilised by the European Union (EU) in dealing with dissenting member states. This paper looks at two instances where populist political parties in government – Syriza in Greece and the Conservatives in the UK – held referenda on questions of EU governance. These two case studies are of particular relevance because they do not only represent two instances where populist parties in government took issue with EU governance but, more importantly, they represent instances whereby the EU had to directly engage with populist dissent. While one can find a significant amount of academic literature dealing with how populist portrayed the EU as the enemy of the people around the ‘Grexit’ (Andreadis & Stavrakakis, 2019) and ‘Brexit’ (Mandelbaum, 2020) referenda in 2015 and 2016 respectively, there is little literature exploring the discourses governing the practices of the EU in dealing with this form of populist dissent. This paper directly tackles this issue by offering a comparative study of the way the EU managed and negotiated the Greek and British crises. In doing so, this paper is sensitive to the identifications and affective investments which framed the antagonistic terrain between the respective populist parties and the EU. The methodological approach adopted in this paper follows Jason Glynos’ and David Howarth’s (2007) logics of critical explanation which is sensitive to both Foucault’s work on techniques of government and Lacan’s work on fantasy or jouissance. In doing so, this paper is sensitive to the fantasies which inform the governmental practices at play in the EU in dealing with the populist dissent present in these two case studies. By engaging with EU public documents and statements emerging from and around the Greek and British negotiations respectively, I suggest that although the political events leading to the fear of Grexit and the eventuality of Brexit, seem to be on completely different planes, we can still trace an underlying governing fantasmatic logic adopted by the EU which informs not only potential and actual forms of dissent, but the very heart of European governance.

## Panel 6b: NATIONALISM, RACISM AND THE (POPULIST) FAR RIGHT 3: CULTURE WARS

*Chair: Omran Shroufi*

### 1. Ferruh Yilmaz (Tulane University)

#### Critical Race Theory, Gender instruction, and “culture wars”

Political struggles of our time are often subsumed under the general label of ‘culture wars’ by both the right and the left. The latest iterations of ‘culture wars’ are said to be the massive assault on Critical Race Theory and Gender instruction in schools in both the US and Europe (and other places). In several states in the US, the far right groups push for banning books about race and gender/sex. I suggest that the commonsensical use of the label ‘culture wars’ itself is indicative of the populist far right’s success in pushing political struggle onto terrain of culture where the antagonism between ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’ is imagined to be cultural in essence – a strategy that moves the focus onto the so-called cosmopolitan, cultural, and intellectual elites as the main threat to social cohesion. I propose re-considering populism as a rhetorical strategy for hegemonic interventions, and moral panics as a central element in the far right’s populist strategy. The success of the populist far-right depends on the existence of an external threat to the well-being of ‘the people’. A successive, global series of controversies and moral panics are necessary for producing the experience of an ongoing crisis. The far-right actors are often the initiators of these panics and controversies. This presentation will look at the controversies or moral panics about race, gender, and culture in different countries. The tragi-interesting part of the assault on race, gender and postcolonial research is that it has found support from both left and right. In France, Macron condemned these researchers for splitting the country into two basically falling in line with the far right. In Denmark, the Social Democratic government joined the fray against academic research on race and gender. In the US, 23 states already passed laws forbidding critical race theory in public schools. I take these moral panics as both the typical examples of rightwing populist rhetorical strategy that has managed to change the ontological vision of societies, by making race, gender and thus culture the central terrain on which social divisions are imagined and sanctioned.

### 2. Jan Zienkowski and Laura Calabrese (Université Libre de Bruxelles)

#### Articulations of ‘Cultural Warfare’: analyzing the metapolitical implications of right wing culture war discourse for civil society actors in Flanders, Belgium

This paper analyzes the metapolitical dimension of right-wing culture war discourse and its implications for civil society organizations in Flanders, Belgium. The author proposes to enrich discourse theory and populism studies with the notion of metapolitical conflict. In metapolitics, distinct imaginaries over what politics is and should be clash (Zienkowski 2019; Zienkowski and De Cleen 2020). The author provides a qualitative, CAQDAS supported discourse analysis of statements on cultural warfare, published on Doorbraak, a radical Flemish nationalist online medium. He focuses on articulations of cultuuroorlog (cultural warfare) and cultuurstrijd (cultural struggle) with(in) problematizations of Flemish civil society actors. He draws on post-foundational discourse theory (Marttila 2016; Jason Glynos and David Howarth 2007) and linguistic pragmatics (Verschueren 2011). He shows that Flemish culture war discourse is articulated with(in) controversiesranging from debates over subsidies for artistic and minority CSO’s, the ideological neutrality of higher education, or school strikes of Youth for Climate. The term expresses anxieties over a seemingly expanding range of identities norms, values, and practices called into question by ideological opponents. It signals a sense of dislocation and constitutes others as warmongers: ‘woke social justice warriors’ and ‘cultural marxists’ vs ‘far right’ and ‘conservative zelots’ (see Phelan 2019). In the case of right-wing culture war discourse, ‘left-wing’ CSO’s constitute one category of culprits. It chimes with Flemish conservative discourse advocating the ‘primacy of (party) politics’, which labels CSO’s as un-democratic partisans of minority interests (Oosterlynck e.a. 2020). Academics adopting the term also tend to worry about ‘excessive’ politicisation processes. They hold that in cultural warefare politics becomes a reflection of deeper cultural dispositions, beyond our ability to reason about them (see Hartman 2019; Hunter 1991). In contrast, the paper argues that far right culture war discourse is articulated with(in) political imaginaries undermining the concept and legitimacy of civil society.

### 3. Archibald Gustin (Université de Liège)

#### The gender politics of the far right. The case of Vlaams Belang

Unlike other aspects of far-right discourses, such as populism or nationalism, the gender politics of the far-right have received little attention in political science. (Niels Spierings et al. 2015, 3; Mudde 2007, 90). In recent years, however, the topic has been explored by a series of scholarly works (Spierings and al., 2015; Erzeel and Rashkova, 2017; Dietze and Roth, 2020; Hakola and al., 2021). Furthermore, due to the salience of issues such as women and LGBTQIA+ rights in these countries, most research in political science addresses the case of Eastern Europe, and in particular Hungary and Poland (Graff and Korolczuk, 2022). This paper therefore offers the prospect of a first study of far-right gender politics in Western Europe from a Discourse Theory perspective (Laclau and Mouffe 1985) by analyzing the case of Vlaams Belang. More precisely, this paper will aim to empirically mobilize the discourse-theoretical approach to conservatism (De Cleen 2018), which defines conservative politics as “articulating demands as conservation, envisaged as a process of ensuring a desirable continuity of the social order between past, present and future, in opposition to a (demand for) change that is argued to constitute a dislocatory threat to the continuity of the social order”. From this perspective, we will show how the femonationalist (Farris 2017) and homonationalist (2004) discourses of Vlaams Belang, which claim to defend the rights of women and homosexuals for racist and xenophobic purposes, allow Flemish society to be presented as largely emancipated and egalitarian. We will also show how feminism and LGBTQIA+ movements are defined as threats to the Flemish gender order, by proposing a challenge to traditional gender identities (Graff and Korolczuk 2022; Kuhar and Paternotte 2018). Finally, the paper will conclude by showing how the construction of Islam, feminism and LGBTQIA+ activism as dislocatory threats allow the Flemish gender order to be portrayed as equalitarian, and the demands to protect it to be constructed as demands for conservation.

### 4. Susan de Groot Heupner (Griffith University)

#### Fantasies of hatred in far right and islamist politics: A relational approach to studies of discourse

This article draws on recent contributions in the discourse-theoretical tradition aimed at developing the psychoanalytic dimension of discourse through the concepts of affect, fantasy and desire (e.g., Eklundh 2020, Glynos 2021, Palonen 2021, Stavrakakis 2019). In focusing on the theme of hatred in the discursive practice of two opposing ideologies, namely islamism and the far right, the article renders visible the entanglement of nationalist, racist, and islamist fantasies. These ideological fantasies, as I postulate, reveal the experience of ethnic otherness in what is lost, forgotten, or stolen. Focusing on the shared investments in the experience of ethnic otherness through fantasies of hatred, the article demonstrates the mutual cultivation of a social polarisation that creates, sustains, and deepens the embodiment of hatred. Following discourse-theoretical premises, it examines fantasies of hatred underlying the counter-hegemonic political, social, and cultural institutions that far right and islamist parties aspire to build. It focuses on the Netherlands where the far right Forum for Democracy is working towards establishing their own media, education, and political institutions, and Hizb ut-Tahrir—a transnational islamist group—is advocating for an institutional revolution that adheres to dogmatic Islamic hermeneutics. For its empirical data, it examines the discursive foundations of the initiated (Forum for Democracy) and imagined (Hizb ut-Tahrir) institutions. Textual ideological resources, such as the writings of Hizb utTahrir's founder Taqiuddin Al-Nabhani (1914-1977) and Forum for Democracy's (2017-) leader Thierry Baudet, are used to examine the fantasmatic elements of hatred. Through the constitution of a relational constellation, initial discourse data forms the basis for further analysis of the fantasmatic realities that conceal, and thereby legitimise, politics of hatred. Bringing to the foreground the co-constitutive dimension of fantasies of hatred, the article contributes to constructivist and post-structuralist studies that aim to understand the widespread adherence to anti-democratic and anti-pluralist discourses and politics.

## Panel 6c: FANTASIES, DISCOURSES AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS

*Chair: Aysem Mert*

### 1. Julia Maria Charlotte Feine (Stockholm University)

#### The role of fantasies in reaching “the Oceans We Want”

Oceans are embedded in a nexus of social-discursive processes that carry non-trivial signifying effects. The United Nations announced the Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) under the motto „The Science We Need for the Oceans We Want“ to find solutions to the multiple crises global oceans are facing. This points to a hegemonic struggle regarding how future oceans are envisioned. Following Behagel and Mert’s (2021) suggestion to study fantasies of nature, this article aims to understand what role fantasies play in global ocean governance. Employing the concept of fantasmatic logics (Glynos and Howarth 2007) and using participant observation, text analysis and insider interviews this article identifies three main beatific fantasies of the future ocean: ‘the known ocean’, ‘the ocean as saviour’ and ‘re-connecting with the ocean’. By gripping the political subject and speaking to different desires these fantasies pull the ocean governance discourse in different directions. Building upon the instrumental value of the ocean and the separation between society and nature, the fantasy of ‘the known ocean’ is driven by the desire to predict and control the ocean. The fantasy of ‘the ocean as saviour’ shifts the gaze from the problems oceans are facing to the oceans’ potential to solve humanity’s crises. This is contrasted with the fantasy of ‘re-connecting with the ocean’, mostly expressed by civil society actors outside official discourses, which attributes a relational value to the ocean and does not separate society from nature. These findings show that underlying social norms and the values we place on nature influence fantasies of the future ocean but also that fantasies can act as drivers of political change. By focusing on the fantasmal this article contributes to a better understanding of how fantasies of the future give energy to certain discursive struggles and prevent other discourses from securing dominance.

### 2. Jelle Behagel (Wageningen University)

#### Fantasizing about the world and nature

Global political processes aimed at the conservation and use of nature and biodiversity predominantly take place under the flag of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), one of the sister conventions to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Its aims include the conservation of nature, biodiversity, and natural resources, as well as sustainable use and access to and equitable benefit sharing of each of these. From the perspective of goalattainment, the convention is a clear failure (just like UNFCCC), as natural habitats continue to disappear in alarming rates, biodiversity declines, and resources are depleted at a global scale. The most recent attempt to overturn this loosing streak is the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), to be adopted in Montreal by the end of 2022. Negotiations leading up to the GBF are shown to harness multiple political fantasies about the world and nature that mobilize unconscious desires to support specific discursive content. Currently, the most dominant of these fantasies is the “30 by 30” proposal, aiming to have 30 percent of the earth surface established as a protected area by 2030. 30 by 30 is shown to fantasmatic as it appeals to a specular image of a green earth that can be grasped via a singular imaginative act, i.e. that of establishing protected areas. Second, it offers support to a societal subject that remains unchanged, while it satisfies a deep desire to have a livable planet remain in the future. I argue that to understand such a relation between political object and societal subject, the function of fantasy as articulated by Jacques Lacan offers key insights into why global goals for nature remain fleeting and attempts to change the relationship between nature and society keep meeting strong resistance.

### 3. Elise Remling (University of Canberra)

#### Putting the world back on track: political fantasies of “recovering” the SGDs in the face of multiple crisis"

At the 2022 UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF), the annual platform for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, economist Jeffrey Sacks pointed out that due to the Covid-19 pandemic there was “tremendous dislocation underway”. As the HLPF convened, the agendas’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were indeed challenged by multiple crises: Covid19, conflict and climate change. With less than eight years left to achieve the goals, competing ideas about the right kind of recovery and ‘building back better’ from these crises circulate. Drawing on the Logics Approach (Glynos and Howarth 2007), this paper critically examines through a qualitative analysis of UN documents and participatory observations at the 2022 HLPF, the emergence of “recovery” as an empty signifier in post-Covid-19 global environmental governance, paying particular attention to its fantasmatic hue. It finds that the signifier is filled by divergent camps oriented around pre-existing political projects, with some groups, tinted by their geopolitical positions, foregrounding the importance of specific SDGs or elevating particular values that should drive the recovery. In addition, four different “Covid narratives” are evoked. First, Covid-19 is portrayed as a “wake up call” laying open previously unseen injustices. Second, Covid-19 is seen as disrupting previous progress on the SDGs. Third, the impact of the pandemic on the goals is downplayed, as progress was already off track before the pandemic. Fourth, the Covid crisis is portrayed as a crossroads and opportunity for systemic change. By examining the interplay between the pandemic and the SDGs, the paper provides novel insights into global sustainability governance narratives in the post-coronavirus world. The resulting mapping shows through what narratives the called-for changes are justified and how “recovery” becomes an expression of different groups’ desires, thereby contributing to a growing body of work that highlights the role of psychic factors in environmental governance.

## Panel 6d: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, CONFLICT AND WAR

*Chair: Vaia Doudaki*

### 1. Mazlum Kemal Dagdelen (Charles University)

#### Little Mujahideen and Militarised Childhood: A Discourse-Theoretical Analysis of the Militarist Discourse in Turkish Cypriot Children's Magazines

In the twentieth century, Cyprus witnessed armed conflicts shaped by two ethnicnationalist movements. These movements materialised in two paramilitary organisations in the 1950s. The Greek Cypriot EOKA, advocating unity between Cyprus and Greece (enosis), initiated its armed struggle against British rule in 1955. Soon afterwards, the Turkish Cypriot TMT, which aims to ethnically separate the island to create a homogenous Turkish state (taksim), was established in 1957. Becoming increasingly prominent in the late 1950s and the 1960s, the inter-/intra-communal armed conflicts profoundly influenced the lives of every woman, man, and child on the island. Children's magazines published in this period reflect the intense violence and the hegemonic nationalist discourse that exacerbated the conflicts on the island, as well as the ways in which militarism intersects with childhood. This paper analyses the militarist discourse in the Turkish Cypriot children's magazine, Çocuk Dergisi (Child Magazine), published by the Cyprus Turkish Board of Education between 1955 and 1961. The selected data comprise seven issues published in April of each year between 1955 and 1961. This month is specifically selected because April is when National Sovereignty and Children's Day is celebrated in Cyprus. This research mainly relies on Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory (DT) developed in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy (1985). As a part of a poststructuralist tradition, DT approaches the concept of discourse using a macro-textual/contextual position (Carpentier, 2017: 16-17) that sees discourse as a framework of intelligibility that provides meaning to social phenomena. In order to analyse the selected texts, this research uses Carpentier and De Cleen's (2017) discourse-theoretical analysis (DTA), strengthened by multimodal analysis techniques and supported by a discoursetheoretical rereading of the literature on childhood and militarism. This research deploys a retroductive approach (Glynos and Howarth, 2007) with iterations between theory and empirical research. However, for practical reasons, this paper first sketches the theoretical framework and then reports on the analysis of how the discourse of militarism is articulated in the selected magazines.

### 2. Olga Baysha (National Research University Higher School of Economics)

#### Silencing Oppositional Voices: Ukraine’s War on Two Fronts

On March 20, 2022, President Zelensky signed the decision by the National Security and Defense Council (NSDC) to ban eleven oppositional parties. Highlighting the importance of a “unified information policy” under martial law, he also launched the telethon “United News #UARAZOM,” which all national TV channels had to broadcast. The goal of my research was to trace how the Russia-Ukraine war was interpreted by Zelensky and oppositional journalists/bloggers silenced through this “unified information policy.” What oppositional meanings were excluded? To answer this question, I analyzed Zelensky’s YouTube addresses from February 24 to March 20, 2022, and social-media posts made by three oppositional bloggers: Dzhangirov and Tkachev (before their arrests in March), and Shariy, who lives in Spain and whose media channels are forbidden in Ukraine. A discourse-analytical method informed by Laclau and Mouffe’s theory of discourse was employed. As my analysis shows, the oppositionists had been articulating the Russia-Ukrainian war (an empty signifier) by linking it to (1) Russia’s imperialism, its propaganda, and war crimes; (2) the geopolitical ambitions of the West dragging Russia into a war of attrition and ignoring its cost— Ukrainian lives; and (3) Ukraine’s inability/unwillingness to prevent the war (its radicalism and nationalism; unprofessionalism, and immorality of power), as well as its repressions against dissenters. Out of all the story lines highlighted by the opposition, Zelensky employed only one, Russia’s imperialism. In his account, the ongoing war appeared as a final fight between civilization and barbarism/democracy and freedom. All other oppositional themes were ignored. The main argument presented in the paper is that discourse analysts need to put more effort into the recovery of silenced voices to restore excluded meanings and consider all the possibilities of bringing global peace—not only those propagated by the ruling neoliberal powers.

### 3. Roumaissa Nora Sayoud (University of Limerick)

#### Legitimating a “humanitarian” military intervention: a critical discourse analysis of the political discourse of David Cameron (the 2011 Libyan Arab Spring rebellion as a case study)

A plethora of studies addressed the doctrine of R2P from various International Relations-based theoretical approaches like geopolitics. Conversely, most of the established literature displays scant academic production that drifts from the mainstream theoretical directions aiming to unfold the positioning of R2P vis-à-vis Western states (US, UK and France)’s foreign policy practices, the discourse of legitimation of humanitarian interventionism, and militarisation of morality via discursive hegemony. This research examines the framing of the ethical/moral claim and the British domestic interests in the political discourse of David Cameron to legitimise his pro-military interventionist foreign policy in the 2011 humanitarian Libyan crisis. To this end, the primary research data are Cameron’s speeches that are historically situated within the 2011 Libyan crisis. The study aims to show how pro-interventionist policy is deeply rooted in the foreign policy practices of Great Britain. Thus, it focuses on the function of language in the social world. In mundane terms, CDA seeks to unscramble the matrix of ideologies and power relations embedded in the discourse and denaturalize what is communicated as common sense (or the taken-for-granted). CDA, therefore, represents the working theoretical paradigm of this research. At a narrower level, the discourse-historical approach, an interdisciplinary variant of CDA, is arguably the most pertinent approach to this study. It is problem-oriented and contextually-driven. It focuses on the exploration of the historical, the social, and the political to trace the meaning dwelling in social events and phenomena occurring in a specific spatiotemporal frame. A preliminary analysis shows that R2P was used as a vehicle to legitimise the intervention vis-à-vis the UN and the public opinion domestically and internationally. It can also be argued that Cameron, supported by France, exercised a form of hegemony over the UN and the UNSC using a reservoir of manipulative and persuasive linguistic mechanisms to convince the UN members about the necessity to intervene in the crisis. Accordingly, he pictured the intervention as a collective will (a multilateral involvement in Libya) and as a collective interest represented (the security of the international community). Moreover, Cameron expressed criticised vis-à-vis Blair’s pro-war policy. Nonetheless, although he is substantially a Conservative, his foreign policy is more inclined to be equated with Blair’s. Therefore, one can preliminary speculate that either Cameron’s ideological affiliations are not connected to the Conservative party or that the Cameronite foreign policy has been influenced by external factors such as the ConservativeLiberal coalition government and the age of austerity. In sum, the study seeks to analyse the D/discourse in its spatiotemporal context to discern the ideologies and power relations weaved in it.

### 4. Fani Giannousi (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki)

#### Warrior, victim, monster. Gendered identity construction in conflict

In recent decades gendered dynamics in crisis have received wider acknowledgement, illustrated on the continuous codification in international frameworks and academic research. In particular, in the context of conflict we see a series of norms and stereotypes constructed around media narratives, academia and public discourse centered on female images. The contemporary culture that develops around the role of women in conflict extends to the symbolic, economic, and the political, fields that require extensive investigation. As certain types or stereotypes have emerged so did a feminist critique accusing such constructions of essentialism (reducing women to victims), selectivity (applying a gendered lens to certain conflicts only), and failure to challenge the war system from a feminist perspective. The hegemonic discourse around female identities in conflict has been further challenged by critical scholarship from cultural studies and political theory, denoting its neoliberal, neocolonial and racist bias and its spectacular and propagandist character. From the war in Yugoslavia to the recent conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Ukraine we see demonstrated in the most direct way the political power of media narratives in constructing identities and ideology and influencing global institutional policies. Reviewing the transformations of women’s identities during recent conflicts – Syria, Iraq, and Ukraine- this paper discusses, based on corpora of media accounts and international normative frameworks, how these feed into a broader discourse; questioning whether these constructions only create “cosmetic individual changes” while leaving intact issues of structural discrimination and power inequality. Using feminist theory, and insights from discourse analysis this paper will attempt to explore the conceptual relationships between gender, war and militarism. As well as, how gendered understandings of war and militarism are deployed in time of conflict not only as tool for the cultural governance of identity, but also as strong-arm tactics in global politics.