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Introduction

The vertiginous increase in references of the word 'populism' seems to be a contemporary phenomenon. Indeed, it is hard to deny the power and significance associated with this signifier today, as it provokes heated debates in politics, the media, and academia. Not only is 'populism' omnipresent in our daily discourse, but it has also been taken as the index of our political age (Mudde, 2004; Mouffe, 2018). However, the meteoric rise in the uses of the word 'populism' is far from being a merely contemporary social phenomenon. This signifier had already occupied the pages of newspapers at some moments in the late nineteenth century and beyond (Stravakakis 2017a; 2017b; Jäger 2021; 2017). Furthermore, recent works have indicated an early explosion of discourses about populism during Brazil's Fourth Republic (1946-1964), a period often referred to as the 'Populist Republic' (Ronderos & Zicman de Barros, 2020; Zicman de Barros & Lago, 2022). More than an anecdote, however, the Brazilian case offers a great opportunity to further develop and better integrate approaches to studying what we refer to as 'populism discourses' – a designation that includes both populist discourses and discourses about populism.

In recent years, intrigued by the avalanche of uses of the word 'populism' in academia, the media and politics, political discourse scholars have argued that contemporary debates on the concept of populism tend to neglect the role the signifier 'populism' itself plays in political debates. Whereas populism may be understood as a political concept, a growing number of scholars also point out how populism – understood as a signifier - is mobilized as a means of formulating distinctive forms of political antagonism and, in so doing, shape the character and content of political debate. This calls for the need to study populism as both a concept *and* as a signifier.

With this understanding in mind, the appeal to Anthony Giddens' double hermeneutics has been identified by some authors as a promising theoretical reference (Stavrakakis, 2017a; 2017b; De Cleen and Glynos, 2020). Following Giddens, discourse theory scholars have argued that one should study how the intellectual commentaries on populism feed into and impact media and politics. However, empirical studies adopting this approach remain speculative and open-ended, with scholars inviting further research rather than undertaking it themselves. Our case study of Brazil's 'Populist Republic' contributes to filling this gap in the literature, while also seeking to advance our understanding of the dynamic interactions between populism discourses. It illustrates that while the double-hermeneutical approach is fruitful, it must nonetheless be incorporated within a broader framework that stresses how

discourses circulate and are constructed through discursive interaction between the sphere of politics, media and academia.

This paper is divided into two parts. In the first part, we discuss recent approaches to the study of populism as a concept and as a signifier and the double-hermeneutics perspective, but also the need to better integrate them. In so doing, we seek to advance these insights further by developing a multi-sited discursive approach to the study of populism discourses and their dynamic interactions. This analytical framework allows us to operationalize these ideas in a way that can bring out in greater detail the dynamic interplay between populist discourses and discourses about populism in a variety of fora. In the second part, we present the case study of Brazil's 'Populist Republic' and the complex interaction between populist discourses and discourses about populism. Through a detailed exploration of the interaction between political, mediatic and academic ideas and actors, we showcase the way the signifiers 'populism' and 'populist' circulated in Brazilian politics and the broader public sphere, provoking responses by political pundits in the media, and inflecting the way scholars sought to theorize populism. In short, we argue that the political and journalistic uses of the term, coupled with the way actors travelled between the spheres of politics, media, and academia, had a decisive impact upon the way actors sought to grasp the populist phenomenon.

Expanding the Scope of Discourse Theory in Populism Studies

The idea of a multi-sited discursive approach to the study of populism discourses and their dynamic interactions builds on and expands previous efforts in discourse theory to study populism and to integrate insights from ethnography. This first part is divided into four sections. In the first section, we will present the advances in discourse theory to study populism as a concept and as a signifier in an integrated manner, but we also point to pathways yet to be explored. The second section introduces our multi-sited discursive approach to the study of populism discourses and their dynamic interactions. In the third section, we summarize what we call synchronic and diachronic processes of discursive interaction. The fourth section explains how our multi-sited approach can be translated into a research strategy for the study of populist politics and the politics of discourses about populism.

Discourse theory and double hermeneutics

At its root, discourse theory suggests that meanings undergo a constant sliding as signifiers are articulated or performed in different contexts. This is certainly true for signifiers such as 'populism' and 'populist' (hereinafter collectively referred to as 'populis*'), as they are enunciated in discussions in politics, the media or academia. Therefore, the theoretical presuppositions of the discursive approach to populism studies already point to the need to supplement concept-centred analyses of populism with analyses that treat populism as a signifier, thereby opening up pathways for the study of discourses *about* populism.

In an academic context there is always an attempt to pin down a concept as much as possible, trying to establish sufficient definitional clarity and stability so as to permit analytical and critical insights to emerge from this. As a branch of discourse studies, for example, the Essex School of discourse theory suggests that the concept of populism is best understood in terms of a *populist political logic* that divides the discursive field vertically into two antagonistic groups: the 'people' as underdog, versus the dominant, illegitimate 'elite' (Laclau, 2005). There are, however, other ways in which academics have sought to conceptualize populism, for example as a thin ideology, as a style, or as a strategy. We do not intend to rehearse the debates between advocates of these different theoretical perspectives. Instead, we focus on efforts to move beyond debates about the best way to conceptualize populism. And yet we have chosen to situate our own approach in relation to the work of discourse scholars because they have been most vocal in calling for an expansion in the field of populism studies to include the study of discourses *about* populism, crucially encompassing anti-populism as well.

Whereas the distinction between concept and signifier is helpful, such a distinction on its own cannot address the challenge of elucidating the complexity underpinning the dynamic interaction between populist discourses and discourses about populism. To overcome this shortcoming discourse scholars have begun to enlist the help of other theoretical and analytical resources. In this respect, Giddens's notion of the double-hermeneutic stands out (Stavrakakis, 2017a; 2017b; De Cleen and Glynos, 2021). In developing the idea of a double hermeneutic, Giddens directs our attention to the way ideas used by social scientists to understand people's practices can be taken up by the people themselves to readjust their own self-understandings. Following Giddens, some have pointed out the key role played by intellectuals in transforming understandings of populism outside academia, and explained how it acquired the pejorative meaning that is currently hegemonic (Stavrakakis, 2017a; 2017b; Jäger 2021; 2017).

Other scholars have pointed out that the idea of the double hermeneutic should not be restricted to studying the impact academia has on the media and politics. One should recall Giddens' understanding that a double hermeneutic perspective captures the way concepts used by social scientists can come to shape lay ideas and self-understanding(s) *and vice versa*. Moreover, it can be applied beyond the relationship between social science and the practices it studies. Following on from this, some have suggested the need to study the way the signifiers 'populis*' travel between sites in the spheres of politics, media, and academia, and how these intra- and inter-sphere travels produce signifying effects of important normative and ideological significance (De Cleen & Glynos 2021; De Cleen, Glynos & Mondon 2021, 2018; Brown & Mondon 2021; Goyvaerts 2021).

Scholars have already pointed to some promising ideas in terms of which to grasp these processes in the media-politics-academia complex (Stavrakakis 2017; Goyvaerts 2021; De Cleen, Glynos, Mondon 2021, 2018; Glynos & Mondon 2016; De Cleen & Glynos 2021; Goyvaerts and De Cleen 2020; Goyvaerts et al. forthcoming 2023; Csigo 2017). However, while these studies are highly suggestive, these dynamics are still under-researched and under-theorized, and empirical case studies remain underdeveloped. There are still interesting

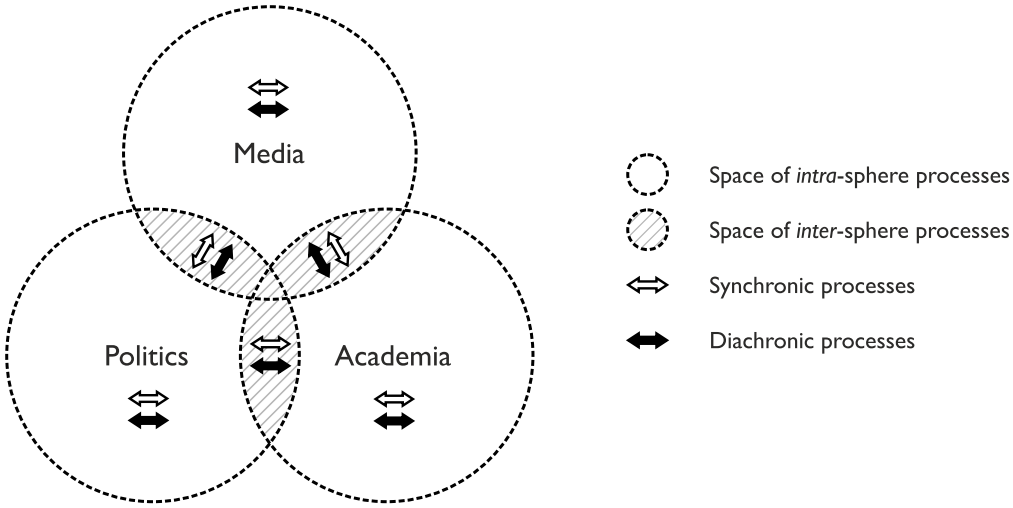
context-specific questions pending, such as: Which sites in the media-politics-academia complex take on privileged roles, and how might this affect the dynamics within and across spheres animating the articulation of populism discourses? How should we think about the character and status of the intra- and inter-sphere processes that constitute these feedback dynamics? In what follows, we attempt to provide a research framework to address these questions and in this way help to advance the study of populism both as a concept and as a signifier.

A multi-sited approach to the study of populism discourses

As Glynos & Howarth note, the idea of a double hermeneutic resonates with, and can thus be further elucidated by, a number of other cognate terms. A key notion, for instance, is Foucault's 'transcendental-empirical' doublet, 'which arises from the famous "doubling of [wo]man" in the modern episteme, where the figure of '[wo]man" appears in the "ambiguous position" of being both "an object of knowledge and […] a subject that knows"' (Foucault 1970: 312 *apud* Glynos & Howarth 2007: 156, see also 48, 210). The more abstract formulation of the transcendental-empirical doublet helps us see that the idea of the double hermeneutic can be applied to any attempt by anyone to make sense of any practice that is receptive to interpretations about itself. This describes for us a relation of *mutual constitution*, whereby the ideas and meanings of one discourse help constitute another discourse: populist discourses help constitute discourses about populism, and *vice versa*. While there may be some heuristic value in characterizing populist discourses as first order discourses and discourses about populism as second order discourse, it is important to emphasize that this distinction is rather context-dependent and unstable, not least because of the often rather complicated feedback loops mediating those discourses.

Therefore, while it is true that the academic domain represents for some a privileged sphere in which discourses about other discourses abound, it is also true that the academic sphere has no *a priori* monopoly on the production of second-order discourses, as they can be produced at any site in any sphere, often treating academic discourses as first order discourses. For this reason, we draw on existing work that affirms this assumption (Goevaerts & De Cleen 2020) to develop a multi-sited discursive framework comprising three key spheres: academia, politics, and the media.

Figure 1. Dynamics of Inter-Sphere and Intra-Sphere Interaction



Our multi-sited discursive framework also takes inspiration from earlier efforts to bring discourse theory into dialogue with ethnography (see, especially, Karakatsanis, 2012). It is loosely based on what George Marcus calls a multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1995), an approach that develops 'a strategy or design of research that acknowledges macrotheoretical concepts and narratives of the world system but does not rely on them for the contextual architecture framing a set of subjects.' Nor does it remain 'focused on a single site of intensive investigation'. Instead, it traces discursive formations by following such things as people and metaphors 'across and within multiple sites of activity', examining 'the circulation of […] meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space'. This enables the researcher to construct 'the lifeworlds of variously situated subjects', as well as 'aspects of the system itself through the associations and connections it suggests among sites' (Marcus, 1995: 96). In a similar fashion, we suggest that the dynamic complexity of discourses can be understood in terms of the processes that animate relationships within and across spheres, comprising both intra-sphere and inter-sphere processes, applying this analytical framework to elucidate the complexity and dynamics of populism discourses.

In terms of *inter-sphere* processes, the politics-media-academia complex can be unpacked by paying attention to the significance of some sites of activity in one sphere compared to sites in other spheres, which can vary depending on the context. In some contexts, sites in the media sphere may be considered central and dominant. For example, certain media institutions or personalities will command considerable authority, and be able to exercise non-trivial influence upon the discourses and practices in other spheres. In other contexts, journalists and academics may be more deferential to certain political institutions or personalities. In yet other contexts, certain academic institutions or personalities may be held in high esteem and might thus have significant suasive force in influencing the discourses of other spheres.

In terms of *intra-sphere* processes, we can add more nuance to the politics-media-academia complex by paying attention to the significance of particular sites compared to

others *within* a given sphere: for example, specific media outlets in the media sphere; certain academics (or academic disciplines) within the sphere of academia; or particular personalities or political orientations within the sphere of politics.

We suggest that tracing both inter- and intra-sphere processes are important in untangling the shifting relational significance and influence of particular discourses. We suggest therefore that a multi-sited discursive approach enables the construction of a wider and better grounded picture of the dynamics underpinning the interaction among populism discourses.

So far, we have suggested that the intra-sphere and inter-sphere processes that constitute and transmit discourses vary as a function of the character and relational significance of multiple sites of activity. In doing so, we have used the term 'site' in a rather open-ended way, encompassing potentially any activity involving subjects and their interactions, including institutions, disciplines, agents and personalities, whose 'spheres of influence' are, in turn, a product of socio-historical context. In fact, as we will see later, a lot of our own multi-sited analysis will focus on key personalities, whose institutional positions have made possible an amplification of the significance of their articulated discourses. We emphasize, therefore, that there is no one way to understand the idea of 'site of activity': a lot depends on the specific research problem and context, and thus is best understood as a question of research strategy.

Processes of discursive interaction

Before we consider the question of research strategy more directly it is worth pausing to reflect on how best to characterize the process of discursive interaction in more general terms. So far, the character of such processes has been described exclusively in terms of the idea of *mutual constitution* which, as we recall, generalizes the insights of the double-hermeneutic -– i.e. where ideas/meanings in a discourse are parasitic upon the ideas and meanings of another discourse.

The above elaboration of a multi-sited discursive framework, however, points to a need to be more precise about the way we conceptualize processes by which populism discourses interact with one another. The process of mutual constitution emphasizes the way elements in different discourses relate to one another. In describing a process of mutual constitution we foreground the way that the meaning and significance of those elements emerge out of their relation to one another. For example, we can show how an anti-populist discourse draws on elements in a populist discourse in order to contextualise it, comment on it, or judge it. We could thus say we are emphasizing the synchronic dimension of the process of discursive interaction, or perhaps we could simply qualify this type of discursive interaction as a *synchronic process of mutual constitution* (corresponding to the white arrows in Figure 1). These processes aim to capture the way ideas relate to one another, the way ideas are articulated by politicians, journalists and academics to comment on or make a judgement about other ideas. Discourses *about* populism, for example, are discourses that discuss, comment on, and often normatively judge, populist discourses, which means that these

discourses can assume both anti-populist or pro-populist guises. Equally, populist discourses themselves may refer to various discourses about populism in order to comment on them or judge them. Such synchronic processes of mutual constitution thus have an important role to play in shaping the complexity and dynamics of populism discourses within and across spheres.

However, the idea of mutual constitution does not exhaust the processes that connect populism discourses to each other. Processes beyond mutual constitution are related to what we call 'enabling conditions', or simply 'enablers'. These terms aim to grasp aspects of a practice or regime wider than populism discourses themselves, that make possible the constitution of those discourses, including those conditions that can help us account for their relative significance and strength. 'Enablers of discursive constitution' is a potentially expansive category that would include, for example, the presence, emergence, movement, or transformation of sites and subjects of activity within and across spheres. Beyond the *articulated* elements of discourses, therefore, we can also look to the *articulators* of those discourses, their institutional source and context, exploring the role personalities or authority play in making their constitution possible.

Another way to capture what is at stake in the notion of an enabling condition is to note how the focus here is not so much on the conditions that make possible the *meaning* of discourses (their synchronic-relational character), but rather on the conditions that make possible the *articulation* of discourses. This aims at something Foucault called discursive conditions of existence: the conditions that make possible the production of particular discourses, including the logics that bestow authority on the articulators (journalists, politicians, and academics). We call these types of discursive interactions *diachronic processes of mediation* (corresponding to the black arrows in Figure 1) – processes that have a role to play in the production, transmission, perpetuation, and transformation of discourses. What is distinctive about such processes is that they are not defined primarily by the explicit reference to, or exchange of, ideas and meanings associated with, in our case, populism discourses. They are 'adjacent' to them, in the sense that they are contingently related to them. Here, in other words, we identify processes that might promote or amplify aspects of populism discourses and their inter-relation that are not reducible to features of those discourses. For instance, scholarship production and publication dynamics – such as editorial and peer-review processes – help to shape the character of different institutional sites within the academic sphere, and thus the character of intra-sphere and inter-sphere interactions. They foreground distinctive intra-sphere logics, conveying diachronic interactions that can exert an important influence over other sites within and across spheres. In our case study we point to a particularly salient aspect of such diachronic processes of mediation, in particular the movement of people through networks – whether professional, social, or other sorts of networks – showing how this movement of people can take place within and across spheres. *Within* the sphere of politics, for example, we find politicians moving between different sites (political parties) or entering into unexpected alliances. But we also find people moving *between* the spheres of politics, media, and academia. In a multi-sited discursive approach, therefore, enablers of discursive constitution help us offer a fuller account of the character and dynamics of discursive constitution, beyond mutual constitution.

Research strategy

In what follows, we demonstrate the added value of the above framework by elucidating key aspects of our case study – Brazil's 'Populist Republic'. We showcase in greater detail and nuance the significance of key moments in this period. We identify the spheres, sites and processes of discursive interaction at stake, tracing and articulating the dynamic production and evolution of populism discourses. To do this, we adopt Marcus's methodological postulate of 'following' - following the people, or the thing, or the metaphor, or the plot, etc. As he puts it, multi-sited research 'is designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some form of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites that in fact defines the argument of the ethnography (Marcus, 1995: 105). In our case, we have opted to 'follow the signifier' as a useful way to access and build our empirical account of populism discourses by unpacking synchronic processes of mutual constitution. However, as we will see the strategy of following the signifier is accompanied by other strategies that seek to access diachronic processes of mediation, in particular, the strategy of 'following the people'.

Before we mobilise our multi-sited framework by engaging directly with the empirical material, it is important to say a word about *how* to do empirical work within this framework. After all, adopting the strategy of 'following the signifier' which sets out to analyse the appearances and uses of 'populis*' in the media, in politics, and in academia, raises a question about which sphere should serve as our 'entry point' in establishing connections between sites within and across those spheres.

While acknowledging that each case-study will have its peculiarities, and in each sphere the researcher might have to proceed differently, we have chosen to take the media sphere as our 'entry point'. In part this decision is driven by ease of access to its corpus, and the availability of tools that can help us identify and explore key moments in the evolution of the dynamics of the populism discourses. An insightful study of the uses of 'populis*' in newspapers through lexicometry was developed by Nikisianis et al. (2018), indicating co-occurrences to establish whether a media outlet was pro- or anti-populist. This is a fruitful first step, as the signifiers 'populis*' served as ideal search terms with which to identify the relevant discourses about populism. Studying the number of occurrences of the signifiers 'populis*' over time also helps the researcher track the ebb and flow of discourses about populism. Nevertheless, it is important to complement such quantitative analyses with in-depth qualitative media analysis through reading full articles, in order to grasp the broader context of the uses of the signifiers.

Such techniques help us identify and start exploring key moments in the evolution of the dynamics of the populism discourses in the media sphere. But we then use these moments to structure more in-depth analyses within and across spheres, elucidating the processes by which populist discourses relate to discourses about populism. Whereas the study of newspapers provide important elements for an analysis of the uses of the signifiers 'populis*', political speeches also serve as an important source of empirical material. Crucially, however, the strategy of 'following the signifier' is complemented by the strategy of 'following the

people', furnishing us with a prosopography that outlines the biographical trajectory of key figures who travel to and from sites of activity within and across spheres, serving as enablers of the populism discourses under study, and thus helping us develop a fuller account of the dynamics of their interactions.[1]

Following the signifiers 'populis*' in Brazil's 'Populist Republic'

As has already been noted in the literature, all data suggests that the term 'Populist Republic' was introduced *after* the period described as such (Ronderos & Zicman de Barros 2020, 34; Zicman de Barros & Lago 2022, 35). It refers to Brazil's Fourth Republic from 1946 to 1964, which followed a fifteen year period during which Getúlio Vargas had ruled Brazil, first as a strongman (1930-1937) and then as a fully-fledged corporatist dictator (1937-1945). The promulgation of the 1946 Constitution is considered the founding moment of a new political era marked by the expansion and emergence of popular layers decisively participating in electoral politics.

This was a turbulent time, though. This was a period when the Executive branch, supported by popular sections of society under a charismatic leadership, dominated through a tenuous balance backed by the organized coercion of the Army, with Congress operating as mediator. This instability explains why, although Brazil held four presidential elections from 1946 to 1964, it had eight different presidents. After five years of Eurico Gaspar Dutra in office (1946-1951), Vargas would be brought back to power through democratic elections, and govern for four years before committing suicide while in power, as he found himself surrounded by political scandals (1951-1954). Vargas' death – and his suicide letter that is a masterpiece of populist discourse[2] – would accentuate the political crisis, leading to the succession of the short-term presidents Café Filho (1954-1955), Carlos Luz (1955) and Nereu Ramos (1955-1956). Elected by the end of 1955, Juscelino Kubitschek would be the last president to complete his term (1956-1961). His successor, the eccentric conservative Jânio Quadros, would fail in trying to stage a 'self-coup', eventually resigning after only eight months in power (1961). His vice-president, João Goulart (1961-1964), was Vargas' political heir, and could only take power because Leonel Brizola – another important politician from the Brazilian Labor Party – organized a broad national movement called "Legality Campaign", as a way to shore up respect for the constitution. Despite the success of Brizola's initiative, Goulart would end up overthrown by the military, in a *coup d'état* that installed another dictatorship that lasted until Brazil's re-democratization in 1985.

[1] Although we do not do this in our study, a multi-sited discursive analysis might also consider the political and editorial line of each newspaper, as well as the logics of media ownership in more detail, for they constitute diachronic processes shaping and mediating the production and reproduction of discourses.

[2] Vargas' suicide letter is the ultimate example of a first-order populist discourse. There, he accused "the forces and interests that oppose the people", also referred to as "the birds of prey", of "not want[ing] the people to be independent". He claimed to be "a slave to the people", a fighter "against the exploitation of the people". As he says, however, "this people, to whom [he] was slave, will no longer be slave to anyone". He had given his life to the Brazilian people and now was offering to this people his death, as "[his] blood will be the price of its ransom" (*Última Hora* 1954).

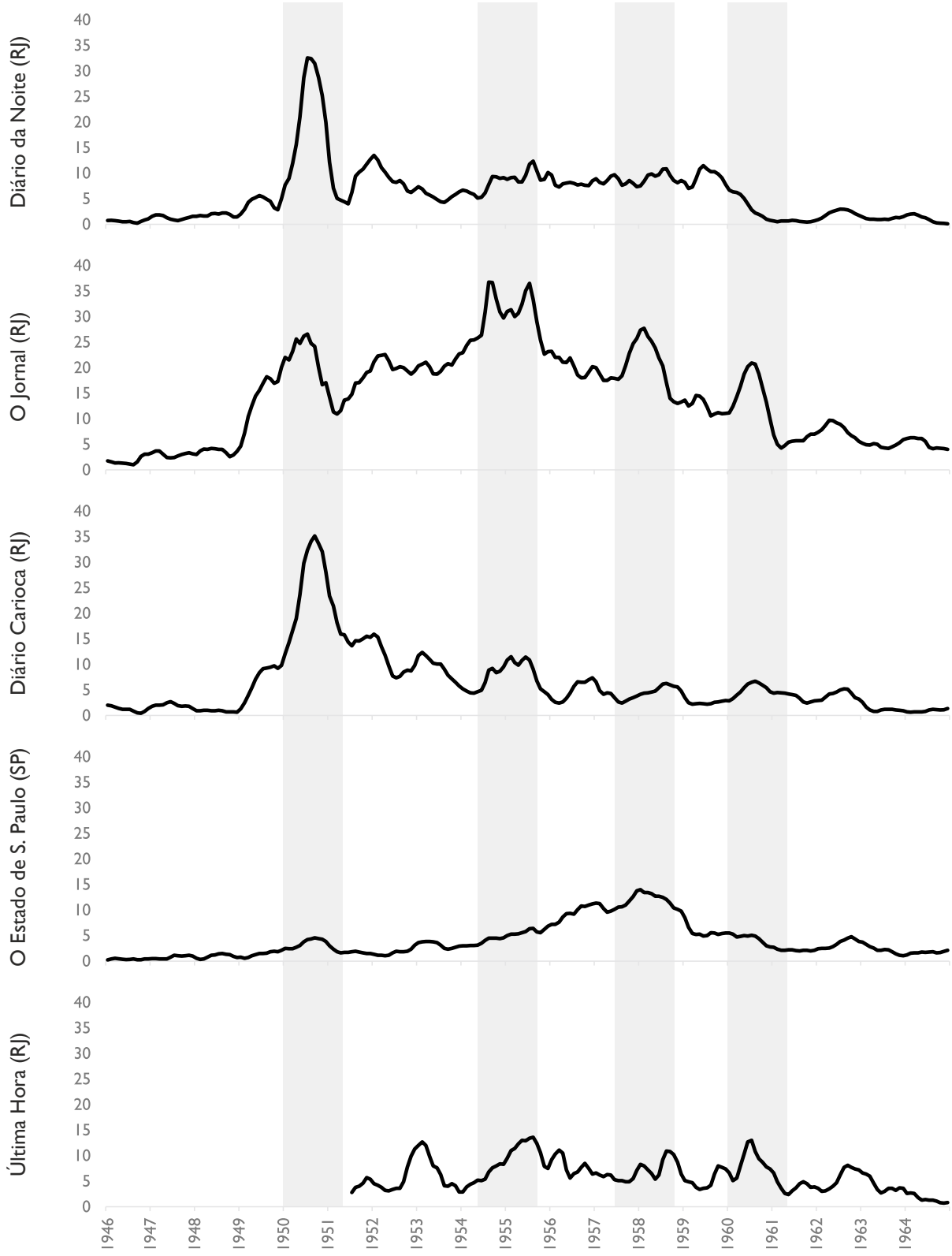
It was during the 'Populist Republic' that the signifiers 'populis*' entered the Brazilian political lexicon. And, as we will argue, the study of the Brazil's 'Populist Republic' through our multi-sited approach contributes to understanding the tensions of this period. To present this research, this part is divided into four sections. First, we introduce our database of occurrences of 'populis*' in the Fourth Republic and explain the context of the first uses of these signifiers in Brazil. Second, we analyse the interplay between the spheres of politics and media in the rise and fall of both populist discourses and discourses about populism in Brazil. In the third section, we argue that these interactions between populism discourses in the media and politics fed directly into the development of the first academic theories of populism in the country. To complete the presentation of these complex inter-sphere interactions, then, the fourth section discusses the enabling and mediating dynamics behind the impact of academia itself on politics.

The media sphere as an entry point

While the origins of the academic expression 'Populist Republic' remain ultimately unclear, it is nevertheless interesting to notice that it was during this fourth republican period that the signifiers 'populis*' entered the Brazilian political lexicon. This becomes clear when we search for references to populis* in Brazil's main media outlets from 1946 to 1964 available at the Brazilian National Library and the newspapers' digital repository. It enabled us to construct a database of 12,580 occurrences present in eleven of the most influential newspapers of the time.[3] While we have carefully read all articles in our database from 1946 to 1964, in order to better grasp the discursive textures underlying the graphs' patterns, we have structured our analysis around five of the most prominent newspapers of the time, taken as key sites of the media sphere: *Diario da Noite*, *O Journal, Diario Carioca*, *O Estado de S. Paulo* and *Última Hora*. The occurrences of *populis** in these newspapers can be visualized in the graph:

[3] If a word appears several times on a single page, they are counted as one occurrence. Therefore, we may say that the number of occurrences refers to the number of pages which include at least one reference to *populis**.

Graph 1: Monthly occurrences of *populis** in selected newspapers (six-month moving average)



Notwithstanding the variations in each region and newspaper, the aggregate analysis shows peaks in electoral years, notably during the presidential election of 1950, the electoral races of 1955 and 1960, and the São Paulo local state elections of 1957 and 1958. A question remains, however, regarding the meanings assigned to the signifiers 'populis*'.

It is interesting to note that virtually no occurrences of 'populis*' related to politics appear in the press before 1946, and that this remains mostly the rule until the end of the 1940s (Zicman de Barros & Lago 2022, 33-34). In this period, the few uses of the terms tend to refer to non-political topics such as the mention of the French Populist novel award (Prix du roman populiste). That said, the scarce political references to populis* in the media from the beginning of 1946 to the end of 1948 already depict the dynamic interplay between the spheres of politics and the media. One of the first groups to introduce the term populism into Brazil's public debate were the former integralists, led by Plínio Salgado. These extreme right-wing militants refounded the former Brazilian Integralist Action (AIB) in 1946 under the name of Party of Popular Representation (PRP). Salgado's forces started to refer to themselves as 'populists' or those who are 'on the side of the people' (*O Estado de S. Paulo* 1946). Despite the lesser appeal of Salgado's ideas in the post-war period, it is worth pointing out that, in contrast to current usage, the term *populist* was widely invoked in an approving manner, and affirmed as such across media outlets. Salgado thus appears as a salient enabler. While attracting scant attention by the public, the integralists became the source of not only a first-order populist discourse from which other second-order discourses would feed, but also a second-order discourse that brought to the fore a strident pro-populist rhetoric by defending 'populis*' elements.

Putting aside the rather niche and peripheral appropriation of populism by the integralists, the term's signifying use expanded as it was invoked to name other political forces. On December 20, 1946, an anonymous article accused Getulio Vargas and Hugo Borghi – one of Vargas' most eloquent allies in his Brazilian Labor Party (PTB) – of '*populist demagoguery*' (*O Jornal* 1946). On January 10, 1947, in the same newspaper, the journalist Marcelo Coimbra Tavares described Vargas' cattle-raising policies as '*demagogic and populist*' (*O Jornal* 1947).

It would be only in 1949 that this discursive logic would gain prominence, as a massive surge in the use of the signifiers populis* swept through the content of all media outputs. It was during the pre-election campaign of 1949, prior to the 1950 presidential succession dispute, that sectors of the press, pundits and leading politicians began to express alarm about the meteoric rise of a populist menace. This threat was embodied in a likely – and virtually unbeatable – alliance between Vargas' PTB and Adhemar de Barros' Progressive Social Party (PSP). Foreseeing this coalition, already in early 1949, the media tycoon Francisco de Assis Chateaubriand and, more poignantly, the journalist Murilo Marroquim – undoubtedly the columnist who used the terms 'populis*' the most during the entire fourth republic, responsible for 18% of the overall occurrences in *O Jornal* – anticipated the risk of demagogic populism, or a 'pernicious' and 'exacerbated populism', not far from communist ideas (*O Jornal* 1949b; 1949c). The exponential increase in the use of the term, however, would start a few months later.

Like Chateaubriand and Marroquim, President Eurico Gaspar Dutra was also unsettled by these developments. Fearing the return of Vargas to power, he aimed to form an alliance between two conservative parties: his Social Democratic Party (PSD), whose force resided in the political leaders from the countryside, and the National Democratic Union (UDN), the historical party of the urban middle classes. At a meeting between Dutra and the governor of

Minas Gerais, Milton Campos, from UDN, on March 20, 1949, the former outlined what would come to be known as the 'Petropolis Scheme': a two-column table listing, on the one hand, the 'democratic-conservative' forces (PSD, UDN and a third small Republican Party, PR), and on the other the 'populist' groups (PTB, PSP and elements from the then-proscribed Brazilian Communist Party, PCB), the latter described as 'hostile to the regime' (*Diário da Noite* 1949a, 1). A few days later, former president Dutra gave an interview in which he described the 'populist' as deploying a 'demagogic approach aimed at winning the support of the proletariat and with no other objectives than pure vote hunting' (*O Cruzeiro* 1949, 13–19).

Dutra's efforts to build an alliance between the PSD and UDN came to nothing. Nevertheless, the discursive frontier drawn between the conservative-democrats and demagogic-populists was a key milestone in the widespread use of the term 'populism' in Brazilian politics. In this sense, we can claim that Dutra, through particular sites of activity, assumed a central enabling function in the way the politics and media spheres interacted, producing a negatively-inflected second-order discourse *about* populism. Although Dutra did recognize some 'healthy elements' that could be recovered from populism, it was due to the 'Petrópolis Scheme' that the 'populists' were attacked and accused of being 'the shark that lives exploiting the misery of the wretched' (*A Manhã* 1949, 9). In this context, congressman Alberto Pasqualini, considered one of Vargas' PTB prominent ideologues, encapsulated nicely the uses of the term in anti-populist discourses. Asked by a journalist about the opposition between conservatives and populists, Pasqualini claimed that it was quite clear 'what conservatism stood for'. The term 'populist' as employed by the press, however, remained a mystery word for him. He described it as an artificial term to label adversaries, frequently acquiring a pejorative tone (*O Jornal* 1949a).

While the 'Petropolis Scheme' drawn up by Dutra helped to inform most second-order anti-populist discourses in both the politics and media spheres, it also helped to shape the populist discourse of his adversaries. Recent studies have argued that even discourses about populism that assume an anti-populist stance take part in relations of mutual constitution with populist discourses (Nikisianis et al. 2018), and there is little doubt about this in our analysis of the Brazilian case. Indeed, Dutra was an enabler of both first-order populist discourses and second-order pro-populist discourses. That is because, in a crafty move, São Paulo state governor de Barros decided to appropriate the term 'populist' for himself, giving it a positive connotation (Ronderos & Zicman de Barros 2020, 35; Zicman de Barros & Lago 2022, 42-46). He rejected the distinction between democrats and populists and described himself as a democrat precisely because he was a populist opposed to those 'politicians who make a living from politics', whose interests are served and sustained by 'artificially dividing the country'. In his weekly program on *Radio Bandeirantes* – a radio station that until today is owned by his family – on May 12, 1949, de Barros said:

> […] we are populists, which means being a democrat in the noblest and most modern sense of the word democrat. For us, being a populist means expanding the social function of the state which has been constantly absent until now. It is to govern by giving everyone an opportunity, seeking to elevate each one

> according to their potential and supporting each one according to their needs. For us, this denotes being a populist (*Diário da Noite* 1949c, 1–2).

If the signifier 'democracy' had become a key element in the antagonistic frontier drawn by anti-populist discourses, associating 'populism' with 'dictatorship', 'extremism' and 'demagoguery', de Barros' populist move sought to reframe such terms. Like the anti-populists, de Barros drew on the signifiers 'democracy' and 'demagoguery' to construct an 'us versus them' opposition. However, de Barros' tried to attach the floating signifier 'democrat' to himself and the signifier 'demagogues' to the greedy conservative-elitist detractors comprising an artificially created discursive opposition (see also *Gazeta de Notícias* 1949).

Adhemar de Barros' discourse occupies an interesting position for two reasons. First, feeding on Dutra's 'Petropolis Scheme', de Barros' discourse can – like Salgado before him – be classified as both first- and second-order – using the signifiers 'populis*' to articulate a pro-populist discourse. Second, his discursive strategy had an immediate and dramatic impact on the political agenda. Despite the virulent opposition of conservative pundits and threats of a *coup d'état*,[4] the PTB and PSP would march together triumphantly in the 1950 elections as a 'Populist Front'. This does not mean that de Barros' movement managed to prevent his opponents from continuing to spread the derogatory uses of the term 'populism' and the danger 'populists' allegedly carried for democratic practice. However, he did manage to reconfigure the discursive contours within the political sphere. More than that, his interventions reconfigured the discursive contours within the media sphere too, producing substantial changes in second-order discourses about populism. Such interactions, therefore, not only disclose important intra-sphere dynamics of mutual constitution, they also highlight the way the sphere of politics exerts considerable influence over the media in the wider sphere complex of this period.[5]

[4] As the conservative journalist – who would later become an important politician – Carlos Larcerda said in 1950: "Mr. Getúlio Vargas should not be a presidential candidate. If he is a candidate, he should not be elected. If he is elected, he should not be sworn into office. If he is sworn into office, we should resort to a revolution to block him from governing" (*Tribuna da Imprensa* 1950).

[5] The media-politics interaction so far highlights a terrain of relatively high volatility during this period, as things tended to be quite fluid, particularly at the intersections between spheres (see figure 1). However, perhaps one can also say that this set of complex interactions is framed by a more diffuse cultural backdrop. This is merely to suggest that once discursive battles are won in the more dynamic quarters of our sphere complex, the results tend to be secreted as 'cultural sediment'. In fact, dictionaries can be a good index of 'relative sedimentation' in the wider cultural arena and this applies no less to the meanings associated with populism.

Turning to the dictionary, then, we find evidence of how the signifying dynamics coalescing around 'populis*' transformed the Brazilian political lexicon. The best example is probably the *Pequeno Dicionário Brasileiro da Língua Portuguesa*, one of the most influential dictionaries of the time. Its first edition was published in 1938, with a ninth edition in 1951, and a tenth edition a decade later in 1961.

The comparison between these different versions is enlightening in terms of the relevance of 'populis*' in the Brazilian context. While the word 'populism' remains absent prior to the 1961 edition, the dictionary defines 'populist': '*Populist.* Friend of the people; used to describe a kind of literature that describes the life of the common people sympathetically' (*Pequeno dicionário brasileiro da língua portuguesa* 1951).

A slight change was made in the 1961 edition, and the definition of 'populist' acquires an important addendum:

The interplay of media and politics

Many elements suggest that Adhemar de Barros' discursive rearticulation of the signifiers 'populis*' worked, at least temporarily. And this despite the hostile media environment he confronted. There were, of course, some pro-populist media outlets, conceived as particular sites of activity. Besides *Radio Bandeirantes*, Adhemar de Barros was also the owner of the newspaper *O Dia*.[6] Another important mostly pro-populist outlet was *Última Hora*. Founded in June 1951 and edited by the journalist Samuel Wainer, this newspaper provides an example of the close inter-sphere link between media and politics, foregrounding the mutually constituting feedback loops that connect populist discourses from politicians and pro-populist discourses in the media. Wainer not only defended Vargas, but was even personally implicated in some political 'scandals' during the latter's presidency (*O Globo* 1954). And while it is true that the newspaper sometimes adopted a hostile stance toward 'populism', particularly in the moments PTB and PSP were not close (even while sustaining an overall predominantly pro-populist discourse), after Vargas' suicide it openly embraced the term.[7]

It is worth noticing that for a few months in 1955 the former congressman Danton Coelho was the *Última Hora*'s managing director. Coelho, who was Vargas' Labor Minister in 1951 and presided over the 'Getulist' PTB for a few years, left his position in the newspaper to be de Barros' running mate in a renewed 'Populist Front' ticket for president and vice-president. As such, diachronic processes of discursive mediation – represented here in terms of the inter-sphere transit of key players – can be identified by tracking populist and pro-populist discourses in the media and political spheres.

That said, anti-populist discourses were clearly hegemonic in the mainstream press. Illustrating the political sphere's influence over the media sphere, big media conglomerates such as *O Estado de S. Paulo* group and Assis Chateaubriand's *Diários Associados* often reaffirmed Dutra's 'Petropolis Scheme'. As such, the anti-populis* predominance in Brazil's media ecology of the time demonstrated how media ownership composition can serve as a key enabling condition for anti-populism discourses to thrive in both the media and political spheres. In the end, these outlets emphatically supported UDN, the main urban and elitist opposition party,

> *Populist.* Friend of the people; used to describe a kind of literature that describes the life of the common people sympathetically; *(Brazil) related to populism; that which is or those who take part in populism* (*Pequeno dicionário brasileiro da língua portuguesa* 1961a).

And finally, in the 1961 edition, the definition of 'populism' enters the scene: '*Populism*. (Brazil) Politics based on enlisting the lower classes of society' (*Pequeno dicionário brasileiro da língua portuguesa* 1961b).

As we will see later, the rationale for grasping this latter definition emerges more clearly once we examine in more detail the role played by the sphere of academia. For now, however, we continue to focus on the dynamic interplay between politics and the media.

[6] Unfortunately *O Dia* does not have a digital archive yet, which would make it an interesting site in the media sphere to consult.

[7] While de Barros' populist front running-mate, Vargas, clearly upheld an anti-elitist and people-centric first order discourse, his explicit defence of 'populis*' were rather rare. From the various disputes with the 'conservative-democrats', Vargas pushed the populist/anti-populist antagonistic frontier to the margins, claiming to represent the people via a labour movement.

forging stiff opposition to the political forces headed by Vargas and de Barros. In these conservative newspapers, the signifiers 'populis*' are constantly accompanied by deprecating adjectives, often described as 'low' and 'demagogic'. Another frequent trope was the association between 'populism' with 'dictatorship' and 'extremism', constantly connecting it to 'communism', but sometimes also to the far-right 'integralism' (see, for example, *O Jornal* 1949d; *Diário de Notícias* 1949a; 1949b). As Pasqualini had noted, however, in most cases these articles lacked a clear definition of populism, using the term instead as a rather blunt signifier-instrument with which to attack opponents. For example, in a piece by Osvaldo Chateaubriand – Assis Chateaubriand's brother – from November 14, 1950, he claimed that

> […] our populism, which is composed almost entirely of crooks, is a page of grotesque humour and unique blandness in the history of the republics, from this and the other hemisphere (*O Estado de S. Paulo* 1950).

Consequently, populists were treated as 'cheats of the worst kind', and a 'new species of tireless rodents, eating their victims from the outside to the entrails, leaving them only the carcass' (ibid.).

Despite the overall hostility towards populists among the big press conglomerates, de Barros' discursive triumph could be felt as early as July 1949. Disputes in the news now involved all parties falling over themselves to define which one was genuinely populist, the term frequently serving as a synonym for 'popular', or working for the people. In an illustrative case, while congressmen from the integralist PRP and de Barros' PSP disputed the ownership of the 'populist' label, a politician from the UDN intervened to point out that every party, including his, is somehow 'populist' because no party exists 'without the people' (*Diário da Noite* 1949b). Another index of the victory of the saliently laudatory meaning of 'populis*' at the time was the fact that some media outlets even adopted the habit of writing 'populis*' within inverted commas, to indicate that it was not intrinsically a euphemism.

Adhemar de Barros and his acolytes' initial victory regarding the (positive) connotation attributed to the signifiers 'populis*' was also a victory of populist politics. For years, the UDN had struggled with the signifier 'populism'. On various occasions, the 'conservative-democrats' tried to impose a differential logic between 'populis*' and 'popular', associating the former with demagoguery (*O Estado de S. Paulo* 1958; see also *Diário de Notícias* 1949a). Before the 1960 election, however, some factions of the party understood that their approach was fruitless (Benevides 1981, 212-13).

As a result, we can see a growing concern among journalists such as Marroquim that the so-called 'centrist' parties would face difficulties if they were to rely only on gathering the dwindling votes of the urban elites, without appealing to the 'populist sectors' of the electorate (*Última Hora* 1957; *O Jornal,* 1958). Jânio Quadros's name starts to gain traction as he embodied an idiosyncratic transgressive figure capable of disputing 'populist' voters, generally identified with governor Adhemar de Barros and vice-president João Goulart, the leaders of traditional 'populist' parties (*O Jornal* 1960, see also Benevides 1981, 215; Zicman de Barros & Lago 2022, 121).

It is at the moment populism reaches its peak, however, that it also runs out of steam. With Quadros' victory and his abrupt resignation eight months later, in August 1961, Adhemar de Barros took some distance from the term 'populism'. In a moment in which the new national government led by Joao Goulart (1961-1964) was fostering reforms considered to be too 'radical', producing endless political crises, de Barros decided to adhere to a new conservative discourse in vogue at the time (Sampaio 1982, 154; Zicman de Barros & Lago 2022, 54-56).

That might explain why, despite de Barros running and winning the São Paulo gubernatorial elections in 1962, there is no significant peak in occurrences of 'populis*' in the press that year and an overall decline in the uses of the term in general, exhibiting, once again, the dominant sway of the sphere of politics in relation to the media. It may also explain why populism became associated with reactionary politics. Adhemar de Barros may have started his electoral political career in an alliance with the Communist Party and presented himself in opposition to reactionary sectors. In 1962, however, he took a clear right-wing position, which may have alienated some part of progressives who used to see populism as a left-wing alternative.

In this context, there were even discussions in the press about whether populism was 'dead', with a new cleavage between left and right dominating the political landscape (*Última Hora* 1963b). That being said, many outlets indicate that de Barros regretted this strategy soon after the 1962 state election and would resume the practice of referring to himself as a populist and continue to do it until his last breath (Sampaio 1982, 102; see also *Manchete* 1963; *O Jornal* 1963; *Última Hora* 1963a).

From politics to academia

Whereas various studies on the uses of the signifiers 'populis*' have shown how intellectuals influence the spheres of media and politics (Stavrakakis, 2017a; 2017b), in the Brazilian case we see a more complex dynamic between these spheres. Indeed, if the increased use of the signifiers in politics and in the media during the 'Populist Republic' led to the first dictionary entries for 'populis*', it also significantly impacted academia. In fact, we argue that it is no accident that the advent of the first theorization about populism in Brazil flourished a few years after the beginning of the so-called Populist Republic. The growing interest of academics in the topic of populism was a response to the above-described non-academic uses of the terms.

If during the so-called 'Populist Republic' the terms 'populis*' did not have a clear negative connotation, being disputed and claimed by various actors in many ways, the academic formulations reinforced those who saw populism as a downgraded form of political organization. For instance, Hélio Jaguaribe's essential work on the subject, published in 1954,

sought to give a detailed account of the phenomenon of 'ademarism'.[8] The influence of non-academic discourses within the scholarly theoretical formulations of populism becomes clear when Jaguaribe states that 'the classification that suits [ademarism] has already been used countless times in everyday language' (Jaguaribe 1954, 141). He stated that 'ademarism is [indeed] a populism' (Jaguaribe 1954, 141).

Moving from political and mediatic discourses to an academic theorization of populism, Jaguaribe regarded this type of movement as one that would emerge subject to three conditions. These were: 1) a *mass* of unorganized workers; 2) a *ruling class* that has lost 'its aptitude to direct the social process' with a minimum of efficiency'; and 3) the subsequent emergence of a charismatic leader 'gifted with a special appeal to the masses, able to mobilize them politically for the conquest of power' (Jaguaribe 1954, 143-144).

In relation to the Brazilian context, Jaguaribe believed that the formation of a mass came about by a spontaneous process of urban migration. Large migratory inflows from the countryside brought unorganized workers in precarious conditions to concentrate and settle in the urban peripheries. Simultaneously, the reorganization of the dominant groups by the replacement of the landowners was not assumed by organized industrial capital but by diverse and conflicting speculative groups seeking to establish influence and authority (Jaguaribe 1954, 147). This double composition in the demographic reorganization that the unstable modernization process brought in Brazil, created room for a strong personality to intermediate between them – a role that de Barros would assume. Yet, Jaguaribe saw de Barros' leadership as somewhat conditional since other figures – such as Hugo Borghi – could have also exercised the commanding role Brazilian populism would require (Jaguaribe 1954, 148). Curiously enough, Jaguaribe did not include Vargas – who would commit suicide only a couple of months after his article was published – among the populists.

Although in the early years Jaguaribe's work had a rather negligible direct influence on the spheres of politics and the media on the meaning of 'populis*' (*Correio Paulistano* 1955, 1, 6), he inspired numerous other academic discourses about populism – which, as we will see, would later help to give shape to the disputes around these signifiers. In 1962, for instance, the prominent sociologist Fernando Henrique Cardoso would repeat Jaguaribe's claim that the Brazilian proletariat comprising migratory inflows from the countryside was disorganized, being manipulated by a paternalist populist leader (Cardoso 1962, 152). Yet, while Jaguaribe viewed 'Marxists' theoretical tenets as unsuited for the purpose of elucidating the populist phenomenon (Jaguaribe 1954, 141, 146), the works from the early 1960s have aimed to flesh out his work further and make explicit its compatibility with certain strands of the Marxist

[8] Jaguaribe's work on populism was clearly influenced by José Ortega y Gasset's theory of the masses and, at least indirectly, by Marxism (Zicman de Barros & Lago 2022, 58-59). However, a topic that still deserves further scrutiny is the influence of American sociology on Jaguaribe's theory of populism. For instance, scholars have pointed out that a tipping moment for populism to become a pejorative concept was Edward Shils' 'Populism and the Rule of Law' presented at the University of Chicago Law School Conference on Jurisprudence and Politics, in April, 1954. There, Shils associated American populism with McCarthyism (Shils 1954). Curiously enough, Jaguaribe's article on populism also compares Brazil's Adhemar de Barros to Joseph McCarthy (Jaguaribe 1954, p. 145). The intriguing fact is that apparently both Shils and Jaguaribe's works were written in the very same months – Jaguaribe's work is in a volume dated from January to June 1954.

tradition. In this respect, the name of Francisco Weffort, a former student, contributor and friend of Cardoso, stands out. Weffort would show how the key concepts for understanding populism are found in Antonio Gramsci's comments on Caesarism – which, in their turn, were based on a particular reading of Karl Marx's critique of Bonapartism presented in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* (1852).[9]

For Gramsci, the axial concept with which to understand Caesarism is the notion of subalternity (Gramsci 1971, Q13 [1932-1934] §27). The Italian thinker articulated this term from a notion present in the work of the young Marx: the notion of mass (Marx 1847, 159). Both Gramsci's subaltern groups and Marx's mass are progressively opposed to the notion of *class*. Unlike class – which is assumed to organize itself independently – the subaltern mass is seen as an intrinsically disorganized collective body, regarded as a multitudinous conglomerate of individuals rather than a social unit proper.

In his reading of Marx, Gramsci outlined the conditions for the emergence of Caesarism – or Bonapartism – through a rather paradoxical claim. As Gramsci reads it, Bonapartism emerged when the French proletariat found itself as a long-suffering, weakened class following a series of successive defeats. At the same time, the bourgeoisie's mode of domination had found its limits (Marx 1852, 34-35, 62). Therefore, Gramsci understands that Caesarism emerges in a moment of equilibrium of forces between the two fundamental organic classes of capitalism (i.e. the *proletariat* and the *bourgeoisie*). In this context, the Bonapartist leader would achieve relative independence within the political sphere in relation to the intrinsic economic interests by arbitrating between them (Weffort, 1965a: 55).

In so doing, the command of the charismatic Bonapartist leader would lean on an 'inorganic' social group: the peasantry (Marx 1852, 12; see also Laclau 2005, 145). The qualifier 'inorganic' sought to convey the idea of a dispersed social group with no capacity to organize itself as a 'class for itself' (Marx 1852, 142-143). As the peasantry lacked class-consciousness, it would be better characterized as a subaltern mass (Weffort 1965b, 29). This means that the peasants, in not organizing themselves independently 'from below', would find appealing a Bonapartist leader willing to lead 'from above', suited to their taste and judgement (Weffort 1967, 74).

Of course, Weffort was well aware that the Brazil of the fourth republic was no Bonapartist France. Brazil had a highly dependent economy, and the relative weakness of the bourgeoisie was closely linked to the crisis caused by the transition from an agricultural to an industrial economy (Weffort 1965a, 58-59). Consequently, the mass could not be constituted by the same social groups on both sides of the Atlantic. Nevertheless, Weffort invites us to consider the way the Bonapartist leader manipulates the peasant masses in a similar way to that of a populist leader – be it de Barros, Vargas or any other – finding in the newly-formed urban masses an electoral base with no intermediaries other than the Bonapartist leader (Weffort 1965b, 28-29; 1967, 79).

[9] For a criticism of the Bonapartist theories of populism, check Ronderos & Zicman de Barros (2020, 39-41) and Zicman de Barros & Lago (2022, 81-84).

In all its expressions, the distinction between mass and class rests predominantly on the idea of manipulation. It is true that Cardoso and Weffort – unlike Jaguaribe – do recognize a small emancipatory potential in populism (Cardoso 1962, 122; 1976, 37; Weffort 1967, 71, 84-85). In his more refined account, Weffort believed the mass would not be entirely passive (Weffort 1967, 75) as it would carry alongside a remnant of class in order to exert some pressure on the leader (Weffort 1965a, 60-61). Therefore, if the populist leader manipulates the workers, on the one hand, he gives them something back on the other in the shape of tangible achievements. In so doing, he becomes 'the main form of political expression' of the various popular demands (Weffort 1967, 71).

Nevertheless, as in Caesarism (Gramsci 1996, Q3 [1930], §48), in Weffort's work a deception inflects populism in its form and intention. To a certain extent, the workers´ achievements are nothing but crumbs given to sustain those in power. For this reason, Cardoso would point out that Weffort 'viewed populism with ambivalence, even horror', expressing a general sentiment shared by their peers (Cardoso 1985, 31-32).

From academia to politics

The role played by academia in the inter- and intra-sphere dynamics and disputes of populism discourses throughout the 1950s was rather marginal. However, the academic sphere later comes to assume a dominant role in mediating and enabling discursive processes of mutual constitution, particularly from the 1970s onwards. In fact, the academic sphere becomes the source of a distinctive power of discursive sedimentation in our multi-sited framework, which can be seen by studying the discursive dynamics deriving from the fourth republic. To explain this increasing importance of intellectuals, however, we must discuss the political context and the institutional authority of the actors involved.

When Jaguaribe wrote his reflections, populism was on the rise. Differently, the reflections from the 1960s took place in a moment of growing political crisis that finally led to the military coup of 1964. In this context, left-leaning theorists such as Cardoso and Weffort were trying to grasp what had gone wrong in the Fourth Republic – and seemed to reach a consensus that its 'populist' status made it intrinsically limited (Cardoso 2010, 44). The scholarship production deriving from Bonapartism emphasized populism's emancipatory limits, as compared to the 'true' emancipatory potential of workers, carrying with it important consequences for the fate of populism in Brazil. To a large extent, these intellectuals targeted populism as an inadequate alternative to political emancipation, explaining the military regime's appearance through the Fourth Republic's inherent contradictions.

This general hostility to populism in academic discourses would lead to profound political consequences, as many of these intellectuals reflected on possible avenues for contesting the military regime and organizing the opposition. As vividly stated by former president Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1977, 32) himself: 'we spent several years in a populist regime, and we know from experience that populist paternalism leads nowhere. It might immediately lead to an outburst, and then to a *coup*'. They thus imply that the democratic

resistance against the dictatorship should resist not only the military but also the populist temptation. This explains the hostility of some of Vargas' heirs towards these intellectuals. For instance, Leonel Brizola complained that the military regime had 'allowed for the birth of the sociologist who theorized against the labour movement, calling it populism' (*Jornal do Brasil* 1982).

That said, to fully understand the impact of intellectuals on politics, a prosopographical approach might help. That is because, in the playing out of these discursive interactions and dynamics not only did academic players act as discursive enablers, they also directly mediated mutual constitution processes in the political sphere. Indeed, beyond their academic work, figures such as Weffort and Cardoso took part in critical militant engagements throughout the 1970s and 1980s, including the reorganization of the national democratic opposition as it coalesced in the Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB, the main party opposing the military regime). Cardoso was even referred to as 'the most famous "organic intellectual"' of the party (Benevides 1986, 23), leading eventually to his election as president of Brazil in 1995, and re-elected in 2003.

It could be said that the political intra-sphere dynamics favoured the rise to power of these academic figures in the Brazilian opposition. Even though many PTB deputies went to the MDB, the more doctrinarian cadres were impeached, if not eliminated after the 1964 coup. Thus, Vargas' legacy fractured in favour of another way of organizing opposition to the military (Motta 1993, 109; 1996, 207, 210), showing that the crisis of hegemonic intra-sphere discourses enables a more fluid inter-sphere interaction, through the movement of key players between sites across spheres and promoting discourses crafted in a 'foreign' sphere.

The political trajectory of Weffort is particularly interesting for, after taking part in the MDB, he would participate in the formation of the Workers' Party (PT), becoming a salient intellectual cadre of the party. Again, we find here the echoes of anti-populism scholarship and its mediating role in politics. The PT came about at the dawn of the 1980s after widespread unionist unrest contested the military and also Vargas' corporatist legacy, which constitutionally subjected union activity to executive fiat (Singer 2010, 101-102). As the anti-populist intellectual he was, it is no wonder that Weffort would later part ways with PT, arguing that after the election of its undisputed leader, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, to the presidency, the latter had become 'the Adhemar de Barros of these new times' (*Folha de S. Paulo* 2006).

After the fall of the fourth republic, the academic sphere came to assume a more powerful role in the overall sphere-complex, contouring subsequent political and journalistic anti-populism. Furthermore, the theoretical and analytical contributions of the time have had a long-lasting impact on Brazilian scholarship. Although more than half a century has passed since the seminal contributions of Jaguaribe and Weffort, their continuing, towering influence is hard to deny. In this respect, André Singer´s important work on 'lulism' stands out (Singer 2012, 33, 42; de Mendonça 2017, 41-46).

Conclusion

Discourse theory scholars have been highlighting the ubiquitous reference to 'populism' and 'populist' across various fora, pointing to the need to study populism as both a concept and a signifier. They have also emphasized how the interaction of actors across social spheres overdetermine our views on the meanings we attribute to populism. Taking inspiration from these studies, this paper has sought to develop a multi-sited framework to study the dynamic interplay of populism discourses, showing how, through discursive constitution and mediation processes, these interactions enact the construction of social reality.

The distinctive virtues of this framework have been probed with reference to a concrete case study. Following the seminal references to 'populis*' in the Brazilian context, we have delved into the Fourth Republic (1946-1964), considered the first instance in which popular sectors in Brazil actively participated in electoral politics. In identifying the spheres, sites and processes of discursive interaction at stake, we traced, untangled and articulated the dynamic production and evolution of populism discourses. In so doing, we hope to have demonstrated the added value of our multi-sited discursive framework, while also showcasing in greater detail and nuance the significance of key moments in this period.

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POPULIST DISCOURSE AND DEMOCRACY
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POPULISMUS: POPULIST DISCOURSE AND DEMOCRACY

Populism is dynamically and unexpectedly back on the agenda. Latin American governments dismissing the so-called "Washington consensus" and extreme right-wing parties and movements in Europe advancing xenophobic and racist stereotypes have exemplified this trend. Emerging social movements and parties in Southern Europe that resisted the administration of the global financial crisis as well as the Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders presidential candidacies in the US have also been branded "populist". The POPULISMUS research project (2014-5) involved a comparative mapping of the populist discourse articulated by such sources in order to facilitate a reassessment of the category of "populism" and to develop a theoretical approach capable of reorienting the empirical analysis of populist ideologies in the global environment of the 21st century. Building on the theoretical basis offered by the discourse theory developed by the so-called "Essex School", POPULISMUS endorsed a discursive methodological framework in order to explore the multiple expressions of populist politics, to highlight the need to study the emerging cleavage between populism and anti-populism and to assess the effects this has on the quality of democracy. Through the dissemination of its research findings and the continuation of its activities we anticipate that the synthetic analysis of populist discourse it put forward and the emerging evaluation of populism's complex and often ambivalent relationship with democracy will advance the relevant scientific knowledge, also enabling the deepening of democratic culture in times of consecutive crises.

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