Where is Europe going?

Rebuilding the House of European Democracy

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> *Populism (…)*
> *accompanies democracy like a shadow.*
> Canovan (1999)

1. Introduction

Populism is not a new phenomenon. In the late 19th century, a nascent populist party provided a powerful challenge to the dominant two-party system of the United States. However, its decline was such that, a few decades later, an American journal concluded that: "Populism as a political and economic philosophy is as anachronistic as an ox-cart".

This reading of populism as an anachronism largely prevailed in post-war 20th century. Populism was mostly seen as an excrescence of democracy in countries with weak democratic traditions, fragile institutions and unequal societies, prone to the appeal of charismatic leaders – or, more pithily, of democracy in Latin America.

During this period, the European continent appeared to have vanquished the populist threat. Democratic values were firmly entrenched in the post-war democracies of Western Europe. Democracy then further expanded in the 1970s and in the 1990s, first as authoritarian regimes in the continent's south embraced democracy, then as former Soviet satellites in Central and Eastern Europe followed suit. This widening reach of democracy was also mirrored in the successive enlargements of the European Union, with this "democratic club" more than quadrupling its original membership by the early 2010s.

In the 21st century, it appears that political ox-carts are back in fashion, not least in Europe. Populism has arguably become the defining political term, with one author describing the current period as "the age of populism"; and another speaking of the "Populist Zeitgeist". It is an increasing focus of interest amongst academics and decision-makers, citizens and the media. Democrats in polities in the grip of populism ponder the reasons for its ascent. Their counterparts in polities not facing populist electoral uprisings reflect on their apparent exceptionality – and contemplate the possibility that they may be next.

The elections to the European Parliament (EP) provide a unique setting in which to consider this rising populist tide. On the one hand, these elections provide a distinctive vantage point from which to assess the ascent of populism, providing a snapshot of voters' support for populism across the European Union at a single point in time. On the other hand, the European Parliament becomes a relevant context in which to observe the *effect* of populism in democratic institutions. By congregating various populist parties under a single roof, it allows us to observe how they impact the way the European Parliament functions. This is all the more relevant given that much the animus of these parties is directed at the European Union itself.

This paper seeks to reflect on this populist challenge, presenting policy proposals that can bolster European democracy. To do so, it first provides an overview and working definition of the concept of populism. It then examines populism in the European Union in general and more particularly in the European Parliament, before outlining four proposals for the strengthening of European democracy.

> *Now we must address ourselves to the biting of the sour*
> *Apple a difficult part of our proceedings, which is the attempt*
> *to formulate some kind of model or definition or formula into*
> *which we can fit all the various types and nuances of populism.*
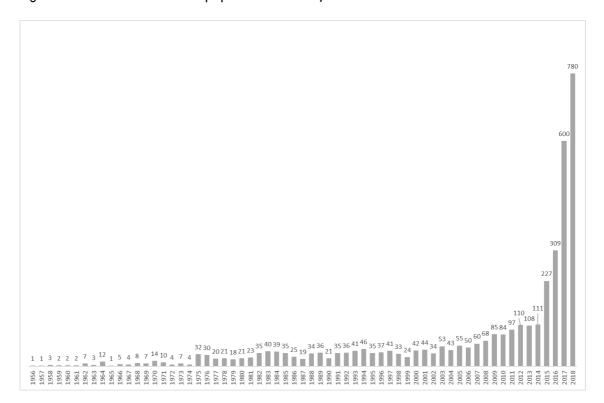> Isaiah Berlin (1967)

2. Defining populism

The growing usage of the term populism in public discourse has done little to simplify its definition. Nailing it down is akin to nailing down the proverbial jelly. One can find considerable scholarly debate regarding what constitutes contemporary populism. Indeed, its very categorisation is contested, let alone its definition. Is it an ideology; a strategy; a rhetoric; a stance; a political style; a communication style; a doctrine; or a discursive frame? The debate is ample and enduring. As the most influential scholarly proponent of populism himself put it, "We know intuitively to what we are referring when we call a movement or an ideology populist, but we have the greatest difficulty in translating the intuition into concepts".

Unsurprisingly, this academic debate percolates through to public discourse, where the populist label remains uncertain. While it is most frequently used as negative political epithet, often conflated with demagoguery, irresponsible policies and political opportunism, that view is not necessarily universal.

A good example of this are the remarks of President Obama at the 2016 North American Leaders' Summit, when he proposed that a populist is someone who "has been on the frontlines working on behalf of working people" and "carrying the laboring oar to open up opportunity for more people", concluding that "I suppose that makes me a populist".[1]

Populism thus emerges not only as an instance of potential conceptual *confusion* (in the sense that the term 'populism' is used with distinct meanings) but also of conceptual *contestation*. This debate concerning the definition of populism is potentially accentuated by the almost exponential rise in academic publications on the topic, highlighted in figure 1. By the close of 2018, there were almost 4,000 scientific articles with populism as the topic indexed in the Web of Science database. Out of this total, two-thirds (over 2,500) were published in the most recent ten-year period (2009-2018); and almost half in the years 2016-2018 (1,689 articles).

Figure 1: Number of articles on populism until 2018, Web of Science

It is beyond the scope of this paper to resolve the debate surrounding the concept of populism, or to present its myriad forms. Rather, our goal is a more pragmatic and modest one: to present a working definition of populism that encapsulates the concept in a sufficiently satisfactory and intelligible manner to permit policy proposals. In this sense, our goal is to replicate for populism the test that Justice Potter Stewart established for identifying obscenity: "I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be [obscenity]; and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so. But I know it when I see it".

In other words, this paper does not provide the definitive conceptualisation of populism; but rather aims at providing the elements that broadly allow us "to know it when we see it". This also allows us to adhere to Isaiah Berlin's (1967) admonition to avoid the "Cinderella complex" in defining populism; i.e., we should not assume "that there exists a shoe – the word 'populism' – for which somewhere there must exist a foot", and wander like the prince in search of the foot that is "true, perfect populism" and fits this shoe.

In order to help generate this working definition of populism, table 1 provides an overview of how the concept is characterised in the most frequently cited recent political science scholarship on populism[2].

Table 1: Definitions of populism in frequently cited academic publications

Jan-Werner Müller (2016, pp. 19-20, 35)	*Populism is a particular moralistic imagination of politics, a way of perceiving the political world that sets a morally pure and fully unified—but, I shall argue, ultimately fictional—people against elites who are deemed corrupt or in some other way morally inferior.* *In addition to being antielitist, populists are always antipluralist: populists claim that they, and only they, represent the people.* *They can accurately be described as "enemies of institutions"—although not of institutions in general. They are merely the enemies of mechanisms of representation that fail to vindicate their claim to exclusive moral representation.*
Margaret Canovan (1999, pp. 3-6)	*Populism in modern democratic societies is best seen as an appeal to 'the people' against both the established structure of power and the dominant ideas and values of the society.* *They involve some kind of revolt against the established structure of power in the name of the people. Within democratic systems that often means an attack on the established parties.* *[P]opulism challenges not only established power-holders but also elite values.* *Populists claim legitimacy on the grounds that they speak for the people: that is to say, they claim to represent the democratic sovereign.* *Populist appeals to the people are characteristically couched in a style that is 'democratic' in the sense of being aimed at ordinary people. Capitalizing on popular distrust of politicians' evasiveness and bureaucratic jargon, they pride themselves on simplicity and directness.* *But simple, direct language is not enough to mark a politician as populist unless heor she is prepared also to offer political analyses and proposed solutions that are also simple and direct.* *Populism's fundamental structural characteristic, popular mobilization against the political and intellectual elites, implies not only a direct, simple, style but also a characteristic mood. Populist politics is not ordinary, routine politics. It has the revivalist flavour of a movement, powered by the enthusiasm that draws normally unpolitical people into the political arena.*
Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser (2017, pp. 6-8)	*We define populism as a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic camps, "the pure people" versus "the corrupt elite," and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people.* *Unlike "thick-centered" or "full" ideologies (e.g., fascism, liberalism, socialism), thin-centered ideologies such as populism have a restricted morphology, which necessarily appears attached to—and sometimes is even assimilated into—other ideologies. In fact, populism almost always appears attached to other ideological elements, which are crucial for the promotion of political projects that are appealing to a broader public.*

So how can we boil down these various ideas into a more succinct, working definition of populism? Leaning on the above ideas and the broader academic debate, we posit five central and interrelated aspects in populism[3]:

1. Antielitism, with a moral division of society into two homogeneous camps: a romanticized community of virtuous "people" that has been left out, versus a corrupt and wicked "elite" that is the "enemy". This antagonism encompasses not only the composition of the elite but also its prevailing values and norms.

2. Antipluralism, with populists seeing themselves as the sole true and genuine representatives of the "people".

3. An overriding emphasis on popular sovereignty and a disapproval of the conventional institutions of representative democracy, seen as a means for the "elite" to control and exclude the "people". This is often accompanied by proposals for different forms of democracy, which include – but are by no means restricted to – direct democracy.

4. A thin ideology, with populism thus often attached to other ideological elements (e.g., nationalism).

5. A political discourse that is Manichean, simple and blunt in terms of proposals and speech.

European Union politics is a sitting duck
[for populist attack].
Canovan (1999)

Populism in the European Union and the European Parliament

As noted in the previous section, the definition of populism as a thin ideology means that it is often attached to other ideological positions. We can thus speak of various subtypes of populism. Moreover, these different forms of populism are usually context-specific in nature. As Canovan (2004, p. 242) aptly puts it, populists "take on the colour of their surroundings." Thus, populism in North America differs from that in Latin America or Europe; and even within each of these broad continental cases there is substantial national (and even subnational) variation. Indeed, even if we take a single country, we find that populism mutates over time, adapting to its changing environment, as the case of France exemplifies, from post-war *poujadisme* to 21st century *"front nationalisme"*.

These local specificities make it virtually impossible to inventory all the various guises by which populism exists in the European Union's political space. However, we can note three broad dimensions based on the existing literature.

The first is that a particularly common form of populist parties in Europe are populist radical right parties. As Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017, p. 34) explain, these combine

populism with authoritarianism ("the belief in a strictly ordered society", with an emphasis on "law and order" issues); and with nativism (thus generating "an ethnic and chauvinistic definition of the people").

The second is that radical right populism coexists with other subtypes of populism in the EU. While much of the focus on populist parties has been on this radical right subtype – indeed, so much so that in recent times "populist" has frequently become short-hand for "populist radical right" – they are not the sole purveyors of populism in Europe. *Inter alia*, we can identify at least three other subtypes:

1. Left-wing populism (or, as some authors dub it, radical left populism), associating redistributive policies with an anti-elite and anti-institutional stance, as exemplified by Podemos in Spain, with its anti-elite stance against the "caste".

2. Neoliberal populist parties, such as UKIP or Forza Italia, which, according to Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017, p. 35), combined "neoliberal policies of lower taxes and free trade with strong populist critiques of the political system and elites".

3. Post-communist populism in Eastern Europe, which tends to be conservative, nativist and often with an explicit religious hue, as exemplified by PiS in Poland and Jobbik (even more so than Fidesz) in Hungary.

The third is that the populist space is a very fluid one. Thus, populist parties can shift from one subtype to another over time. For instance, we would be hard-pressed to keep UKIP in the neoliberal subtype in 2019, as it metamorphoses towards a populist radical right party. Equally, non-populist parties can become populist over time, as exemplified by Fidesz's evolution from a liberal, centrist pro-European party to a national conservative populist party. Still others may drift out of populism. Arguably, that may be the gradual case for Syriza in Greece, with its populism tempered by office (though one should note that office does not necessarily subdue all populists). Overall, then, the configuration of populism at one point in time is by no means applicable at later (or earlier) ones.

While populism comes in different flavours, there is one important common element to virtually all European populists: their anti-EU stance. The underlying logic for this commonality is not hard to fathom. As Canovan (1999, p. 6) notes, populists decry "backroom deals, shady compromises, complicated procedures, secret treaties, and technicalities that only experts can understand". It is hardly surprising that she concludes that European Union politics are a "sitting duck" for populism.

As noted earlier, populism has been on the rise across Europe in recent years. The 2014 European Parliament elections brought a record number of populist MEPs to Strasbourg and Brussels. While exact estimates vary depending on different classifications of populism, it is broadly accepted that some 20 to 25 percent of MEPs in 2014 hailed from various populist parties. This 2014 result continued a pattern of steady increase in populist presence in the European Parliament since the 1999 EP elections.

The implications of this for the European Parliament's political process are considerable. As a recent study by Hix, Noury and Roland (2018) shows, the post-2014 legislature marks a significant change in the way political competition is organised in the European Parliament. Whereas previously the main dimension of competition was the traditional left-right divide, in the current EP this was replaced by a pro/anti-EU divide.

The outcome of the 2019 EP elections is naturally uncertain. However, it seems unlikely that we will see a radical reversal in populist fortunes. Rather, given current opinion polls, it seems fair to estimate that populist MEPs will represent some 20 to 30% of the 2019-24 European Parliament. A further shift towards pro/anti-EU as the main dividing line within the EP thus appears possible.

As the study by Hix and his colleagues concludes, this is not good news for European integration. As they point out, this could signify a shift away from the hitherto functioning left-right coalitional structure of European politics to one dominated by "intractable conflicts over the nature of European integration, for example over whether there should be deeper integration in the euro area or whether there should be common EU refugee policies to resolve the migration crisis" (Hix, Noury & Roland 2018, p. 57). At the limit, they note, "we could see steps to undo parts of European integration" (ibid).

The actual impact of populism in the post-2019 European Parliament will naturally hinge on the support that populists generate in the May elections. Moreover, the variety of populisms in the European Union weakens their capacity to unravel the European project, as ideological differences make some populists improbable bedfellows.

At the same time, pinning one's hopes for the future of the European Union on the inability of populists to coalesce seems to be the very definition of ill advised. Rather, dealing with the populist challenge requires bolstering democratic performance, and thus weakening the demand for populism in European electorates. In the next section we make four policy proposals towards this end.

> *"Populism (...) is a mirror in which democracy*
> *may contemplate itself, warts and all,*
> *in a discovery of itself and what it lacks."*
> Panizza (2005)

Rebuilding European democracy: what can be done?

The debate on how to stem the populist tide is considerable. Studies have noted the role of combatting economic inequalities to curb populism. Likewise, several authors highlight the need to give value to different cultural conceptions, as well as generating social integration and recognition for recently marginalised groups, particularly those that lost not only jobs but also status as a result of globalisation and technological change[4]. A burgeoning field of work has examined how education can reinforce democratic values and inoculate citizens against misinformation. Still others have noted the role that corruption scandals have played in propelling populist parties, thus calling

for a strengthening of transparency and the control of corruption in contemporary democracies.

Our goal in this paper is not to review or debate existing proposals. Rather, we seek to build on the existing discussion. More specifically, we make four proposals, briefly outlined next. These are: mandating impartiality at delivery for online media; introducing constituency or district pooling in EP elections; establishing a European Citizens Parliament; and promoting community building.

We are fully cognisant that these proposals are not necessarily easy to implement. However, it seems fair to say that it is only by reflecting – and, at some point, innovating – on the nature of democracy that we can contribute to its future.

a) Mandate due impartiality at delivery for online media

It is hard to understate the contemporary ubiquity of online media. The Internet in general, and its media platforms – be these of the social persuasion, such Facebook or Instagram; video-sharing platforms such as YouTube; or media and advertising conglomerates such as Google – now consume a large proportion of citizens' time and attention. While the purview of these online media platforms goes well beyond politics, their political impact cannot be underestimated, not least as they become increasingly important sources of political information for individuals.

The problems that these online media can generate for democracy are well-documented: they facilitate the propagation of misinformation; they allow for targeted and manipulative political advertising based on psychographic profiles of individuals; and, more prosaically, they provide a platform for anti-democratic discourse and mobilisation. Indeed, while correlation is not causation, one cannot help but note the close proximity between the growth of these online media platforms and of populism.

One particular problem that has been highlighted with regard to online media pertains to the "filter bubble" and "echo chamber" effect that they generate. To a far greater extent than traditional media, online media platforms typically reinforce the users' existing values, by exposing them to what they already believed in.

How does this happen? The algorithms of online media such as Facebook or YouTube are calibrated to retain attention. To do so, they keep feeding the content that the user has already shown interest in. Once the platform determines that you have an interest on a particular content, it systematically feeds you more of that content; in some cases, this takes the form of gradually showing increasingly radical material pertaining to that content. It thus places the user inside a "filter bubble", from which other points of view are excluded. Even something as seemingly harmless as an internet search is not immune to this filter effect. With the profile it already has on the user, a search engine will show results (and advertising) that most closely match this profile, thus reinforcing pre-existing interests.

In political terms, this generates a dangerous echo chamber that feeds populism and extremism. This echo chamber also becomes a fertile propagating ground for the spread of misinformation and 'fake news', as online media systematically confirm and reinforce pre-existing biases. The echo chamber also increases political polarisation, with a consequent decline in reasoned public debate.

Yet, can online media be blamed for this? After all, these online media platforms do, quite reasonably, claim to be impartial. They do not generate content. Rather, it is individuals who can quite freely upload content to YouTube, or Facebook, or create webpages that are then indexed by Google. If this includes polarising or populist appeals, it is a reflection of the political diversity in a society. To quote YouTube's mission statement, "We believe that everyone deserves to have a voice"; and their claim to impartiality derives from letting everyone generate content (and thus "have a voice").

However, we would argue that this impartiality of online media platforms is embedded at an inadequate level. It is impartiality in the way content is generated: what we term here content production impartiality. However, this does not ensure that these platforms are impartial in the way they deliver content to consumers. In other words, impartiality in the production of content does not generate impartiality in the delivery of content. Indeed, as we noted above, it is very much the opposite that is happening. While content production is free and impartial, the content delivery is made partial by the nature of the platforms' algorithms.

In other words, online news media are not effectively impartial. To use an analogy, the existing system of impartiality for online media would be akin to a traditional media outlet that has an impartiality mandate, such as the BBC, claiming that it achieves impartiality by having journalists of all ideological persuasions producing news-stories, even though the news that it actually publishes veer solely to only one ideological position.

The first (and arguably most forceful) proposal is then a very simple one. Online media platforms that claim to be impartial, as is the case with Facebook or YouTube, must provide for impartiality at the point of delivery of content, at least with regard to political content. In other words, online media platforms should be treated as traditional media when it comes to due impartiality, rather than having the free-pass they currently enjoy. In practical terms, this would require that the automatically recommended content these platforms feed to users be balanced and respect a due impartiality mandate.

This proposal has at least three expected benefits. First, it provides users with counterpoints to their positions. Second, and related, it hinders the spread of misinformation. Third, it facilitates bridging across political divides. All three are welcome outcomes for democratic debate, and potentially make simplistic and manipulative populist appeals online less effective.

b) Reform the electoral system for EP elections

The second proposal is an ambitious one – and, we also recognise, arguably more debatable and certainly harder to implement. It envisages a radical change in the electoral system for EP elections. This faces two challenges. The first is the general difficulty in changing electoral systems, for both principled and partisan reasons. The second is the reluctance across a number of national parties to create a more 'Europeanised' EP election.

While this proposal cannot eliminate either challenge, it can potentially mitigate the latter. As for the former, the proposal's potential capacity to reduce populist support could well help overcome some of the more partisan reasons for avoiding electoral system change.

This proposal derives from the literature on electoral systems in heterogeneous contexts, which the EU can reasonably be seen as an instance of. In particular, it seeks to implement what one author describes as an *incentives approach* to generate moderation in such contexts.

The overall logic of the proposal is simple one: the adoption of constituency or district pooling across EU member states in EP elections. Thus, each of the electoral districts of a member state (the "national" district) would be twinned with a relatively small number of districts from other member states (the "twin" districts). Only parties from the country of the "national" district could contest these elections, so there would be no risk of parties from different EU member states competing against each other. The difference with regard to existing elections is that parties' vote totals would be determined by the sum of the national and twin districts.

In order to obviate fears of excessive Europeanisation, this proposal is sufficiently flexible to allow each member state to graft its own specificities to this district pooling structure, be it in terms of "core" electoral system elements such as the number of national districts; the electoral formula; or electoral thresholds; or broader electoral rules, such as who can run, gender parity laws, campaigning rules and so on. Indeed, each member state could even be free to delineate its various potential "twin" districts.[5]

As mentioned, we are fully aware that this proposal would face considerable barriers. Nevertheless, it should be noted that it would have a positive impact in terms of curbing populist parties. By necessitating parties to obtain votes not only in their own national district but also from the "twin districts", in other member states, it would significantly curtail populist appeals. Populism is largely a national product, and the "people" rarely encompasses those from other member states. Populist parties would thus be faced with a difficult choice: maintain their discourse unaltered, but lose seats in the EP; or keep EP seats by shifting their discourse away from populism. Moreover, by increasing the influence that each voter had – as she can not only vote for her national district but also in others where she is a "twin" voter, this proposal could contribute to a somewhat greater citizen interest and participation in EP elections.

c) European Citizens Parliament

This proposal borrows from the Green Paper on the Future of Democracy in Europe for the Council of Europe (Schmitter & Trechsel 2004). Now somewhat neglected, this document contains a number of relevant proposals that merit revisiting. The European Citizens Parliament is an adaptation of the Citizen Assembly outlined in that Green Paper.

The European Citizens Parliament (ECP) would consist of a randomly selected sample of European citizens. This sample would be drawn so as to ensure a similar proportion of citizens and MEPs from each member state.[6] It would meet once a year and its purpose would be to review and vote on a limited number of bills.

A strict adherence to the Green Paper's proposal would entail a negative policy-making role for the ECP. Thus, its role would be to review and vote on legislative acts already approved by the EP and the European Union during the previous year, for which a certain threshold of MEPs have requested an overview. Acts rejected by the ECP would not be adopted.

However, this paper recommends considering granting a positive policy-making role to the European Citizens Parliament[7]. Thus, rather than serving as an instrument to reject proposals, the ECP could serve as a mechanism to approve legislation. Proposals would be referred to the ECP, with approval by the ECP implying their adoption[8]. Be it with a positive or a negative policy-making role, the ECP would resemble a deliberative voting platform. Each Member of the ECP (MECP) would be compensated for the period of civic duty[9]. They would equally be assigned with legislative assistants to ensure receipt of relevant documentation, following up on requests for further information and assistance in dealing with the public. MECPs would initially be provided with the necessary documentation and information to analyse the bills. Likewise, the names of the MECPs would be made public and citizens would be encouraged to contact their office. After this, the actual MECPs would meet, so as to deliberate and vote on the bills referred to it.

The creation of the ECP could help reduce the gap between citizens and EU institutions, and thus erode a key element of populist appeal: that the EU is too removed from the common citizen. By randomly selecting MECPs, it creates a sentiment in citizens as a whole that they too can participate and oversee European decision-making, which again weakens populism. Moreover, the fact that it has a genuine legislative role means it is less likely to be perceived as mere "deliberative window-dressing", and can generate broader media and citizen interest.

Again, we are fully aware that the adoption of this proposal is far from easy. It implies an almost unprecedented degree of change in the nature of our political institutions. In addition, giving effective powers to an unelected body, chosen at random, runs counter to classical notions of representative democracy. Nevertheless, it is a proposal that merits consideration. It would be a potent symbol against populism, bringing the citizen closer to the EU's complex political process. While it does entail giving power to an unelected body, the random selection of its members does have roots in democratic history. Last but not least, it is worth noting that the existing institutions of democracy were

themselves innovations when first adopted. As one influential academic study notes, "there is lots of room for institutional creativity" in contemporary democracies.

d) Community building

The previous three proposals imply fairly precise and specific actions, even if they are adjustable in a number of parameters prior to implementation. This fourth proposal, on the other hand, is more diffuse in nature. We can perhaps best conceive it as a policy goal that can be achieved through a variety of particular measures.

The departure point for this final proposal is the fact that democracy presupposes a sense of community. As Pierre Rosanvallon (2016, p. 22) notes, democratic citizenship is not merely an individual trait; rather, the citizen "is also defined by his relation to others, his fellow citizens", engaging with the latter in a common society. As Rosanvallon also points out – echoing older literature on the decline of social capital – this sense of community has waned in recent decades.

This decline of a sense of community is in itself a spur for populist appeals. Populism does not merely posit a *people* against an elite: it posits a *community of people* against the elite. The populist "people" is not an aggregation of individuals. Rather, it is an idealized and imagined community, whose virtuous character is as much (if not more so) a collective one as it is an individual one. As scholarly research shows, the support for populism is tied to a need for common belonging, not least in the face rapid social, technological and economic change.

This proposal echoes, and seeks to translate into reality, the conclusion of Rosanvallon (2016, p. 22) that "democracy needs (…) a more active, creative concept [of community], a more complex understanding of what elements of life and experience can and should be held and lived in common."

How might this be achieved? Our proposal is for the EU to actively engage and support community-building efforts. This can take a number of different forms. It could involve establishing and supporting neighbourhood festivities – European "block parties" or "street parties" – that would regularly bring together a local community. These "block parties" could even take a leaf from the 'soft power' initiatives of Chinese Confucius Institutes and offer food, games and activities from around EU member states.[10] Another possibility would be to offer vouchers (or even initial inducements, to promote participation) that motivate citizens to get involved in social activities, be it pottery lessons, cooking courses or karate classes. It would also involve the EU consulting and learning from the experience of civil society organisations already engaged in community building efforts.[11]

In all of these measures, the underlying principle is the same: creating spaces where people can interact and engage with others, gradually generating a sense of community that embraces both commonality and diversity. By building actual communities, we can reduce the need for the imagined ones offered by populism.

3. Conclusion

A central feature of democracy is its ability to adapt and reinvent itself, safeguarding principles, but renewing processes. The substantial increase in the number of democracies throughout the 20th century led to it to be dubbed the "democratic century". However, it is important to note that the nature of democracy evolved over this period, as the extension of the suffrage to women, or the abolition of racial or class distinctions in accessing political rights amply illustrates. Likewise, the emergence of this "democratic century" was not a linear process. Rather, democracy faced significant setbacks over the 20th century, and its expansion required considerable effort and imagination. Much the same is true of the European Union, which has reshaped and reinvented itself considerably over its 60-odd years of existence.

As in the past, tackling the current populist challenge requires innovation, experimentation and effort. Such experimentation and innovation is not, one should add, without cost. As Fisher Ames put it in his celebrated (even if potentially apocryphal) comparison of democracies and non-democracies, the latter like a great merchantman vessel that sails well "but will sometimes strike on a rock, and go to the bottom"; whereas democracy is like "a raft, which would never sink, but then your feet are always in water."

The proposals in this paper involve, in one way or another, wet feet. But unless we are willing to get our feet wet, the shadow of populism will continue to loom large.

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[1] And interestingly then adding that Bernie Sanders "genuinely deserved the title [of populist]".

[2] These cover some of the most cited political science books and authors on the topic of populism, as cited in Google Scholar and Web of Knowledge.

[3] Given the nature of this paper, we do not indicate references to these ideas, though the origin of several can easily be identified from table 1.

[4] As Timothy Garton-Ash (2018, p. 24) memorably puts it, "in the pathology of contemporary populisms, the inequality of attention and respect is at least as important as any economic inequality".

[5] For practical reasons, we would suggest two "twins" per national district, though this number could be higher (or lower). The number of voters in the twin districts can also vary, though a plausible size would be a ratio of approximately 1:1 between the "national district" and the "twin districts". At specified intervals, the "twins" for each national district would change, in order to foster broader moderation and consensus. In order to maintain accountability and responsiveness despite this rotation, one possibility would for it to occur in a staggered and randomized manner.

[6] The Green Paper suggests an initial selection of two potential members of the citizen assembly, to reduce risks of capture.

[7] I am grateful to Miguel Poiares Maduro for this suggestion.

[8] Within the EU's legislative procedure, there are a number of possible points at which the ECP could come into play. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss these different options (including who has the power to refer proposals) and their implications, this adaptability is in itself an aspect that can help make the proposal more palatable in the EU.

[9] In addition, employers should also be compensated if an employee is selected, so as not to discourage participation.

[10] Though it should be noted that the goal of this 'soft power' angle would not be to make an explicit link to the EU.

[11] Including religious and faith-based organisations, as exemplified by the work of the Bahá'í community in several European countries.