Are Syriza and Podemos populist on Facebook? An analysis of political communication of the first three months of 2016

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Very first draft version.

Introduction

New Parties are emerging in Southern Europe, especially in Spain and Greece, countries in which the economic crisis affected the ordinary life of citizens and the political elite was accused of complicity with the global economic elite. In these context, feelings of distrust toward politicians are widespread, leading people to be in favor of populist parties. The peculiarity of Greece and Spain consists in the rise of two left-wing parties: Syriza and Podemos. The first one won the general election in January 2015 and September 2015, the second one got a good percentages of votes upper 20% in the two political election, December 2015 and June 2016. Both parties were defined as populist by several scholars, but there are few empirical works which have assessed their populist vein. Thus, the aim of this work is evaluating to what extent Podemos and Syriza are populist on Facebook, one of the most important social media in the world. There are different ways in which scholars can study the populist features of a political party: analysis party manifesto, leaders’ speeches in public, twitter posts, etc. In this case, the choice is focused on Facebook because it is the most influential social media and only few empirical works have dealt with the relationship between populism and Facebook.

In the first part of the paper, the concept of populism will be investigated in depth with regard to the definitions which helps its operationalization and focusing on the relationship between populism and political communication. Secondly, we will introduce Podemos and Syriza, resuming the state of the art about them with a focus on the national context pointing also their populist features. Finally we will present an analysis of the political communication on Facebook and we will draw some conclusions with regard to the relationship between the political communication on Facebook and the emergence of these parties.

Populism: a slippery concept

Populism is one of the most problematic and slippery concept in the field of political science. Ilvo Diamanti (2010) refers to populism as an “un-defined definition”, to highlight that is very difficult to correctly use and apply this concept because of the presence of so many different accepted
definitions, pointing out the risk of having developed a catch-all concept unable to explain the phenomena it is intended to define. However, in literature we can distinguish four main waves of thought about populism: 1) populism as a strategy/organization; 2) as a discursive style; 3) as a thin-centered ideology or mentality 4) Political logic

The first one considers populism as “a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers” (Weyland 2001). Akkerman (2011) deducts from this idea that populist leaders tends to personalize their communication. Despite Weyland was quite relevant in explaining the rise of populist leaders in Latino-America, several scholars strongly criticized this conceptualization insofar lacking of empirical strength. Moffit and Tormey (2013) stated that “[t]he primary difficulty with this definition is that it identifies modes of organization or strategy that appear across the political spectrum in many different articulations that we would ordinarily never consider calling ‘populist’”. Moreover, the personalization of politics is strongly recognized as a separate concept from populism even because entails the whole political spectrum not only populist leaders (Poguntke & Webb 2005).

Regarding the second approach, populism as a discursive/style, Jagers and Walgrave (2007) consider populism mainly as “a political communication style of political actors that refers to the people”, while according to Taguieff (2006) populism is “a political style susceptible to multiple ideologies; it changes its political colour according to them”. Moffitt and Tormey (2013), instead, define populism as "the repertoires of performance that are used to create political relations". In fact, they identify three necessary and sufficient features: the appeal to "the people", a "perception of crisis, breakdown or threat", and the use of "bad manners". Even in this case the conceptualization is quite vague in pointing the key aspect of the concept.

The third approach, populism as a-thin-centered ideology, is mainly linked to Mudde (2004). Accordingly, populism is described as: “an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people (Mudde 2004)”. Abts and Rummens (2007) simplify Mudde’s formulation by defining populism as "a thin-centered ideology which advocates the sovereign rule of the people as a homogeneous body", while Stanley (2008) similarly considers it as a thin ideology whose core concepts are: the existence of two homogeneous units of analysis “the people” and “the elite”— in an antagonistic relationship with each other, respectively connoted with positive and negative value judgments, and the doctrine of popular sovereignty. Finally Tarchi (2015) prefers using mentality rather than "ideology or thin-centered ideology". The Italian scholars builds his reasoning on the distinction made by the German
sociologist Geiger. As such, for Tarchi, populism is foremost “a mentality that identifies the people as an organic whole artificially divided by hostile forces, it attributes them natural ethical qualities, it opposes realism, diligence and integrity to hypocrisy, inefficiency and corruption of political, economic, social and cultural oligarchies, and it claims the primacy as a source of legitimation of power, above all forms of representation and mediation” (Tarchi 2015).

Within the literature Mudde’s definition encounters a wide support due to the fact that it provides the minimum requirements for a party to be considered a populist, and allows to overcome the challenges of the Cinderella complex Ionescu and Gellner spoke about in the 60s. Moreover, following the scholar Sikk (2009), we consider that this definition lays less emphasis on the Sartori’s methodological norms and the logic of necessary and sufficient criteria that have to be used in order to distinguish between categories (Goertz 2005: 6, quoted by Sikk 2009, p. 3) and increases the solidity of comparisons by referring to the concept of “family resemblance”: in other worlds Mudde’s definition has the advantage of limiting random decisions about the parties in the grey zone (Sikk 2009). So the Mudde’s definition is the best suitable for the operationalization of the concept and it will be considered as such for our purposes.

Finally, with the last Branch Ernesto Laclau sees populism as the logic of politics. Following a post-Marxist frame of interpretations, which focused on the discursive creation of a historical bloc centred on "the people" and on the prevailing of a "logic of equivalence" among them, Laclau also argues that populism is the logic of the political. In fact, in this formulation, ‘The people’ become the possibility of any renewed and effective political project and, indeed, the very subject of the political. And if ‘the people’ are the subject of the political, then populism is the logic of the political. In this sense, Laclau claims that all politics is populism: ‘if populism consists in postulating a radical alternative within the communitarian space, a choice in the crossroads on which the future of a given society hinges, does not populism become synonymous with politics? The answer can only be affirmative’ (Laclau, 2005). The Argentinian political scientist is particularly relevant in this research because he is the benchmark of Podemos and Syriza, two of the parties we are dealing with. Unfortunatly, in this case the conceptualization remains quite vague for the operationalization: “All politics is populism” is a blurring claim, even in this case should we conclude that all the parties are populist?

To sum up, starting from the Mudde’s formulation, I claim that, without entering in the debate between styles, ideology or logic, populism is a phenomenon in which the “people” as a whole is the core of political society. This whole is not divided in class and it should carry forward the same interests against its enemy: the economic and political elite. Therefore, We have a Manichean distinctions between “people” and “elite”.
The parties under consideration: Syriza and Podemos belong to the political spectrum of left-wing, so according to Mudde they can have populist features if in the rhetoric, or in the party manifesto there is always an important appeal to the people against an elite. This contraposition is Manichean (as we have already stressed): populist parties consider certain elites such as political or economic ones as an evil who plot against the common people. Usually, the “people is seen as an homogenous unity, in the case of Podemos, as we will see, there is a reference to “la gente” a clear synonymous of the “people”. Sometimes populist parties can refer to the national identity, this is considered populist if the reference is put in relation with an enemy elite, for instance the claim: “The European elite is the evil for Greek people”.

In order to better assess the populist vein of these parties, we will focus on the political communication on Facebook, the most used social media across the world. Before introducing these parties, it is worth specifying the existing relationship between populism and political communication.

As the literature points out, populist actors and parties are more bound up within the context of mediatization (Mazzoleni and Schulz, 1999) and popularization of politics (Blumler and Kavanagh, 1999). In fact, populist leaders continuously seek to gain the attention of the media by adapting their political communication to the media’s logic. This happens because populist actors are usually new on the political stage and, therefore, often considered as “outsiders” (Bos, van der Brug and de Vreese, 2011; Mazzoleni, Stewart and Horsfield, 2003). Therefore, one of the main goals of a populist leader and parties, in particular in his/her early stage, is to get the media’s attention in order to spread his/her political messages to the highest number of citizens. Anyway, if we consider the Mudde’s formulation as the best suitable for the operationalization, we can immediately identify the populist features in one speech, a tweet, facebook’s post of a leader. Communication is strongly linked with the concept of populism insofar every “appeal to the people” against a “corrupt elite” needs a communication arena. Of Course, Facebook and Social media become relevant in these context because they are the tools which tries to connect easily ordinary citizens with the leaders. Without questioning to what extent this interaction is effective real, the most important insight from the social media in politics deals with the unmediated and direct forms of communication of political leaders and party pages.

**The populist vein of Syriza and Podemos**

These parties are quite new in the political spectrum of the respective countries. So we do not have high numbers of scholars who consider them as populist. However, in recent years we can quote certain authors such as Stavrakakis, Kioupkolis and Van Kessel who started to define them in this
way. Van Kessel includes Syriza and Podemos as populist parties in its wide work “Populist Parties in Europe. Agents of discontents?”. According to this scholar, these parties “portrayed the ‘people’ as virtuous and essentially homogeneous; advocate popular sovereignty, as opposed to elitist rule and define themselves against political establishment which is alleged to act against the interest of the people” (van Kessel 2015). This definition comes from Mudde’s framework, and even without questioning its possible ideological structure, we consider it valid for our purposes because in our operationalization of Facebook’s post we will focus on the struggle between common people and the elite, the key aspect of populism. According to Stavrakakis, Syriza’s discourse is a distinct articulation of left-wing populism (Stavrakakis and Katsembekis 2014). In fact, the scholar finds in an analysis of the party manifesto the populist vein of Syriza such as blaming the European elite which is seen as an evil for Greek people. Moreover, Kioupkiolis finds a lot of common features between Syriza and Podemos: “Both party embrace the project of a politically integrated and solidary Europe, they defend immigrants and socially marginalized sectors, they press a strong social rights agenda, they target not only political but also economic and social elites and they claim to fight for popular sovereignty, social justice and democratization. Moreover, they deliberately enunciate a populist discourse and they pursue a populist political strategy understood in Ernesto Laclau’s terms”. (Kioupkiolis 2016). Kioupkiolis and Stavrakakis see Syriza and Podemos as populist in Laclau’s terms. This does not mean that Mudde’s conceptualization is not useful in order to assess empirically the populist rhetoric on Facebook. In fact, Mudde give us a minimal definition

In Europe, populism is often associated with right wing parties such as French National Front, Ukip, Italian Northern League. In this case, Podemos and Syriza represent a novelty in European scenario because they are defined as left-wing populist. These parties do not share the nativism, the welfare chauvinism and the angry against “dangerous others” (immigrants) which are the key feature of right-wing populism (Mudde 2010), they are more similar to latino-american leftist experience of populism such as Venezuela’s chavismo. For this reason, other scholar specify the difference between rightist and leftist populist parties in the frame of “Exclusionary” and “Inclusionary” populist parties (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2013). The distinction between the two frames is based on three dimensions: material, political and symbolical (Filc 2010). Material means that exclusionary populism defends form of chauvinism welfare while inclusionary would like to include the poor and the migrants without any racial discrimination. The political dimension refers to forms of political mobilization which promote forms of radical democracy. In this case, both Inclusionary and Exclusionary want to give a voice to the disregarded of the society with the difference that Exclusionary claims the disenfranchisement of immigrants. Finally, also in the symbolic dimension the crucial difference between exclusionary and inclusionary is the perception of migration which is disregarded by
Exclusionary; in fact symbolic exclusion often draws on forms of cultural discrimination (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2013). Podemos and Syriza insofar leftist, we can hypothesize theme as “inclusionary” populist parties, in fact as our analysis will show, no Facebook’s post is an attack against immigrants, on the contrary the migration issue will be used to blame European Union, guilty of not respecting refugees. The empirical aim of this paper is to demonstrate that Syriza and Podemos are inclusionary populist parties in their Facebook’s posts.

**Research Design and Hypothesis**

As we have seen, Podemos and Syriza are very different in comparison with the traditional European populist parties which are always associated with right-wing. So far, no empirical work has investigated their behavior on Facebook, a social media which is becoming more and more relevant in these last years.

Facebook is the most popular and most used social media worldwide. More than 1.5 billion citizens use Facebook on a monthly basis. On the 27th August 2015, for the first time, more than 1 billion citizens accessed Facebook on the same day. While Twitter is not so widespread or used by citizens, in some Western European countries more than 50% of the citizens who use and have access to the internet use Facebook. Given an evident lacking in literature about Facebook, the choice of this social allows of shedding light in a new field which is becoming more relevant in Political Communication.

We must now justify the reason of choosing party pages and not leader’s pages. In this case, the aim is evaluating whether a party page can use a populist rhetoric or not. Political parties usually are mediators between citizens and institutions. With the rise of populism, the role of mediator is put in discussion given that these parties, especially the leaders, identify themselves directly with the people. So it is interesting to evaluate to what extent the political parties in the political communication use both a populist rhetoric and a traditional rhetoric in which the party remains a mediator. Moreover, it is also interesting to evaluate what are the main issues of these parties and to what extent these issues are in common. According to Mudde, populism is tied with ideology so the role of the leader is not necessary. In order to do it, we used netvizz, a software provided by Facebook, to download all posts comprised between the first of January 2016 and the end of March 2016. The time span was chosen for reason of homogeneity: it is an extremely interesting period for the life of the two parties. Podemos is engaged in the bargaining of the formation of the government, while Syriza is in office. So we can evaluate how much the perception of political problem might change when a populist party is in office or in the opposition.
Given the difference we have considered (Podemos: not in office, Syriza in office) we can also hypothesize that the level of the messages of Podemos will tend to be more critical toward political opponent as it is not in office, while Syriza probably will use Facebook in order to do a good publicity of its government, therefore Syriza will use a positive rhetoric.

At this point, we can state our hypothesis:

\[ H_1: \text{Syriza and Podemos will tend to be populist on Facebook} \]

\[ H_2: \text{The main issues of their political communication will be devoted to the theme of Inclusionary populism such as defending the migrants and social welfare.} \]

\[ H_3: \text{Podemos will tend to use a negative rhetorical strategy while Syriza a more positive one as it is in office.} \]

We underline again that the aim of this paper consists in an empirical study related to the claim of some scholars who consider these parties as populist. In this case, it is not tautological because populism can fit to different repertoires of communication, so it is interesting to evaluate to what extent a party, generally considered as populist, it is as such in the reality. Moreover, some claims must be always susceptible of empirical tests, in particular because political parties are in constant evolution and the populist vein of an actor can be more evident in a certain historical period rather than in another one. For instance Stavrakakis (2014) concludes that Syriza is populist after having studied the party manifesto before the party was in office, but, with the entrance in government, something could have changed.

The second hypothesis refers to the inclusionary character of these parties. In literature, nobody has really stated that Syriza and Podemos are inclusionary populist parties but, sometimes, this fact is consequent from a logic point of view (If they are not exclusionary then they are inclusionary). Also in this case an empirical control is useful for confirming certain hypothesis.

With regard to the methodology used, each post downloaded in the time span has been susceptible to a simple content analysis. Populist messages have been considered to be the ones containing: i) an explicit attack on political, financial or bureaucratic elites; ii) a direct reference to and exaltation of the people and/or the “general will” of the people. This operationalization derives directly from Mudde’s definition of populism. Instead, to test the second hypothesis, each post has been associated with a keyword summarizing the main issue such as Immigration, Welfare, government formation, etc. We will present a table in which for each keyword is associated the
frequency of this topic in percentages, (e.g. Corruption 10%, Immigration 8% etc). In this case we will look for the inclusionary issues such as the defense of the migrants and social welfare. If this topics will be more present than other topics our hypothesis will be confirmed.

Regarding the third hypothesis, each Facebook post can be published with three different rhetorical strategies: positive, negative or comparative (Fridkin and Kenney, 2012). A positive rhetorical strategy refers to those Facebook posts in which the only aim of the party is to support its policy positions. A comparative rhetorical strategy denotes a Facebook post in which the party is comparing its policy positions with the ones of one or more political opponents, whereas a negative rhetorical strategy expresses those Facebook posts in which the only aim of the party is to attack one or more political opponents. We have also added the operationalization “Another” for pointing when a post is nor negative nor positive, nor comparative. We will then present a table for each party in which we can confirm the claim of Podemos more negative and Syriza more positive.

An important aspect for the confirmation of our hypothesis is the following: if the first hypothesis is empirically satisfied, then the second hypothesis assumes validity. So if we discover that these parties are not populist on Facebook, it is useless to test the inclusionary or exclusionary character. In this particular case, we will find only certain tendencies on the issues. Referring to the third hypothesis, even without the discovery of populism on Facebook, its validity remains important in order to determine which kind of rhetoric strategy is used.

Findings

Podemos has published 460 posts in the time span considered while Syriza only 223. So, we can already note a crucial difference in the parties’ activity on Facebook. Podemos confirms a tendency revealed also by Kioupkiolis (2016) in a good use of new technologies and Internet, while Syriza posted almost half of the posts in comparison with Podemos. If we consider the total number of days (88) from first of January to 28th of March, the average number of posts every day is 5.22 for Podemos and 2.53 for Syriza.

With regard to the first hypothesis, we will first analyze the activity of Podemos. The total percentage of Populist posts of Podemos is 11.95% (55 on a total of 460). This percentage is not really high but quite significant. Regarding the type of populism expressed, none is a strong attack to the political and economic elite without reference to the people, while the reference to the people is the most used form of populism used (55 post in total whose 46 without an attack against elite and 9 with together an attack against elite).
The table below resumes the populist vein on Facebook:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage of overall Populist Posts</th>
<th>Only an attack against elite</th>
<th>Only a direct reference to the people</th>
<th>Attack against elite and reference to the people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Podemos</td>
<td>11.95% (55 on 460)</td>
<td>0% (0 on 460)</td>
<td>10% (46 on 460)</td>
<td>1.95% (9 on 460)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An example of each form of populism is showed below:

The first image shows a direct reference to the people, while in the second one there is a strong attack against the traditional political class (PP and PSOE) which is considered an elite against the interest of the ordinary people.
So, the main aspect of populist rhetoric of Podemos is the direct reference to the people which in this case is labeled “la gente”.

Coming to Syriza, the analysis shows that there are no populist posts. This is probably the most important finding of this study because it disavows our hypothesis. Consequently, the second hypothesis loses his validity for Syriza, therefore we will show what are the main issues addressed by this party without associating theme to “Inclusionary Populism”.

At this point we will show the most relevant issues for both parties in the tables below. We have collected just the most important issues, the criteria is that we register the chronic issues by excluding the ones below the threshold of 1% of the frequency. The first one is referred to Podemos the second one to Syriza. The inclusionary topic is highlighted in red.

**Podemos:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Frequency percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corruption</td>
<td>20% (92 on 460)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>3.04% (14 on 460)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions about the Municipality of Madrid</td>
<td>3.91% (18 on 460)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>1.73% (8 on 460)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>1.08% (5 on 460)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The total of the Inclusionary topic is 19.12%, so these issues are very relevant in the political communication of Podemos. The first place in the ranking is occupied by the issue “Corruption”, mainly because in Spain a lot of these scandals have occurred in the past years. It is also interesting to note that at the third place there is the issue of the “Government Formation”, this can result very logic because the time span considered deals with the bargaining between all the Spanish parties. In the first months of 2016 Podemos occupied a key role in the bargaining. So, regarding Podemos, the second hypothesis is quite confirmed: Inclusionary issues are not the most relevant but they are very close to be.

### Syriza

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Frequency percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>23.31% (52 on 223)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attack political opponent, especially Nea Demokratia</td>
<td>15.69% (35 on 223)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International affairs</td>
<td>2.69% (6 on 223)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender issues</td>
<td>1.34% (3 on 223)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Manifestation</td>
<td>4.93% (11 on 223)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>1.34% (3 on 223)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austerity-Ue</td>
<td>14.79% (33 on 223)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of the party</td>
<td>1.34% (3 on 223)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare</td>
<td>11.65% (26 on 223)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corruption</td>
<td>1.34% (3 on 223)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmentalism</td>
<td>1.34% (3 on 223)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>1.34% (3 on 223)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Strike farmers: 4.48% (10 on 223)
Other: 15.76% (35 on 223)

In this case the inclusionary issues are of course the most relevant (36.3%), and they are followed by the attack to the political opponent, especially Nea Demokratia, and by the topic of Austerity. Greece is truly affected by this kind of policy, so it not surprising that the Facebook’s party page deals with a good number of posts on this topic. It is worth underlying the farmer strike event during the first months of 2016, an event contingent to this time span that was quite covered by the page. Unfortunately, these findings cannot confirm the hypothesis because no post was populist in this time-span. However, the results reveal a certain tendency in the choice of the issues of the page and of course they confirm the left-wing attitude of Syriza.

Regarding the last hypothesis, the table below shows the final results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rhetoric aim</th>
<th>Podemos</th>
<th>Syriza</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive</strong></td>
<td>56.08% (258 on 460)</td>
<td>65.91% (147 on 223)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comparative</strong></td>
<td>2.17% (10 on 460)</td>
<td>0.89% (2 on 223)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negative</strong></td>
<td>37.17% (171 on 460)</td>
<td>31.39% (70 on 223)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>4.56% (21 on 460)</td>
<td>1.34% (3 on 223)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even in this case the hypothesis is confirmed just for one party. It is true that Syriza uses a positive rhetoric strategy but it is the same for Podemos. At this point it is useful to draw some general conclusions.

**Discussion and Conclusions**

Summing up, the first hypothesis is confirmed for Podemos but not for Syriza. The second one would be confirmed by both the parties, in this case the problem consists in the fact that Syriza was not populist in the time span considered so the character of “Inclusionary” cannot be assigned. Regarding the third one, Syriza mainly used a positive strategic rhetoric so the claim that this behavior is due to the permanence in office can be useful for the interpretation, while Podemos didn’t use in majority a negative rhetorical strategy.

The real discovery of the paper is the absence of populist messages in Syriza’s political communication. This fact can mean that Syriza is not populist, disavowing the claim of Stavrakakis. To draw some explanations we should focus our attention on the time span considered for the study.
Syriza, in this particular time span, had no necessity of being populist. Populism is often used by the actors as a strategy in order to get votes and consent from citizens. Starting from January, Greece has faced several problems such as the crisis of migration and the strike of the farmers. Populism rhetoric implies the identification of an enemy against which people struggle, but, in the case of the strike of the farmers, the government embodied by Syriza represented the enemy of farmers. We can deduct that Syriza could not use a populist rhetoric for that specific event and it was forced to have an approach of mediation. However, we would have expected a trace of populism against the European elite in the post dealing with European Union, but that was not the case.

Another factor that can explain the non-populist character of the party page could be the fact that populism is more tied with party leaders rather than the party per sé. The leader usually uses populist rhetoric in order to directly challenge the elite, wanting also to embody the overall people. The Syriza page usually offers the point of view of several members of the party and it is not concentrated to give voice only to Alexis Tsipras. Moreover, there is also a problem in the measurement of populism: it is still not clear how to properly measure the populist vein of a party or a leader. This paper demonstrates that Syriza was populist in its party manifesto (Stavrakakis & Katsembekis 2014) but not populist in Facebook’s post.

So the question remains: Is Syriza a true populist party? It depends on the time span, on the media used and in the particular time span in which the detection is conducted. There is also another relevant variable: the permanence in office. We can deduct that populism is of course a good rhetoric strategy when you are at the opposition but it becomes difficult to have the same attitude in office. In fact, Syriza automatically becomes the “political elite” and its posts are in the majority positive and praise the activity of the government.

Regarding Podemos, the first hypothesis is confirmed: there is a tendency in being populist in the posts. In particular, Podemos appeals to the ordinary people “La Gente”, the elite identified is the traditional political class, Partido Popular and PSOE, guilty of not forming a gobierno de cambio. This kind of government can be formed only by Podemos, the unique Spanish political party which embodies the real interests of common people. So, in the case of Podemos the populist vein is very clear and recognizable. There is also a certain tendency in being “Inclusionary” with the issues, especially the Welfare. In fact, the difference with Syriza is that the topic of immigration is faced but not in depth, probably in the time span considered it was not considered a priority while in Greece there was a real emergency. We stress again that in the inclusionary populist view, the immigrant must be welcomed with respect while in the Exclusionary ones there is a strong nativism which also denies the elementary rights to migrants. Finally, the third hypothesis is not confirmed, probably in this case the unique explanation is that Podemos was not officially in the opposition. The time span
deals with the long process of bargaining for the formation of government in Spain, so in this case Podemos assumed the role of kingmaker in which strategically was not convenient being too much negative toward the entire political spectrum. Of course Podemos blames the entire political elite, but it strategically used this rhetoric according to the moment.

To conclude, the three months of detection have revealed some unexpected tendencies of these parties even if we consider the literature already present on Syriza and Podemos. We stress again that these results are valid only for a particular time span and just for a particular social media which is Facebook. The paper also aims to urge other scholars to investigate how to correctly measure populism in order to establish the perfect time span for a good detection. Moreover, other research on party leaders of Podemos and Syriza could be conducted after this research in order to assess whether the populist vein is more in the rhetoric of the leader of the party.

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