

Heinisch | Holtz-Bacha | Mazzoleni [eds.]

# Political Populism

A Handbook



Nomos

Reinhard C. Heinisch | Christina Holtz-Bacha  
Oscar Mazzoleni [eds.]

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## CHAPTER 16:

# POPULIST AND PROGRAMMATIC PARTIES IN LATIN AMERICAN PARTY SYSTEMS

*María Esperanza Casullo and Flavia Freidenberg*

### Populism and stable party systems: can they coexist? The Latin American experience

Populism is often said to be antithetical to a stable democratic system (Weyland 2013). Populism is based on personalistic rule and charismatic authority, whereas a well-functioning democracy should be based on solid programmatic parties. Moreover, populist leaders compete for votes on the basis of emotional appeals (Kitschelt et al. 2010: 3), whereas political parties should compete by putting forward comprehensive programmes that clearly articulate public policy preferences in universalistic terms.<sup>1</sup>

In particular, populism is often considered something akin to a political pathology that is especially prevalent in the semi-peripheral parts of the globe (Habermas 1989: 370), particularly—but not only—in Latin America. The normative-theoretical distinction between populism and an emphasis on programme is often discussed in connection with a complex historical narrative about modernisation and globalisation: Populism, it is said, is the norm in those areas of the globe that have yet to complete the transition from pre-modern forms of political organisation to fully rational ones; in time, all countries are said to advance towards a party democracy, which is the endpoint of the global process of political convergence into political modernity (Kitschelt et al. 2010).

The more frequent accounts of the prevalence of populism in semi-peripheral countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Turkey and India emphasise that in these countries the slow ‘normal’ trajectory towards political modernity was derailed by rapid state-led industrialisation in the early or mid-twentieth century. The sudden proliferation of factories caused urbanisation, which brought the displacement of rural workers into newly created metropolitan areas in search of higher paying industrial jobs. These migrant workers, cut off from their traditional political, cultural and even religious affiliations in the countryside, became ‘available’ masses that could be mobilised by smooth-talking demagogues. These rabble-rousers were carried to power by the waves of popular activism but were completely uninterested in advancing

---

<sup>1</sup> It is commonly believed that voters who choose within the constraints of programmatic party systems can do so based on rational expectations about what each party will do if elected to office because policy preferences are explained in the relevant party platforms; however, voters that are forced to choose between non-programmatic parties lack these ideological indicators, so party elites have to replace them with something else: charismatic leaders and/or clientelistic appeals. “Various Latin American party systems are noted for having powerful political machines, [*sic*] that enforce discipline, [*sic*] through clientelistic rather than programmatic means; likewise, Latin American politicians working at the behest of feared or revered charismatic leaders show considerable unanimity.” (Kitschelt et al. 2010: 66)



democracy. The personalistic and authoritarian appeal of these demagogues was said to preclude the consolidation of programmatic party systems in those countries.

Though simplified here, this account was in fact the predominant explanation for the rise of mid-twentieth century populism for two decades (Lipset 1960; Di Tella 1965; Germani 1968; Cardoso and Faletto 1976; Hurtado 1977; Baykan 2016). However, the clear-cut normative and historical distinction between populism and liberal democracy came under criticism as the twentieth century ended and democracy expanded around the globe.

This has become even more evident in the last three decades after the so-called Third Wave of transitions from authoritarian to democratic rule took place in Southern and Eastern Europe, Latin America and Asia. With the successful extrication of Spain from authoritarian rule in 1974 (Linz 1989), countries as diverse as Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Chile, Bolivia and all of post-Communist Eastern Europe, plus many others, adopted multiparty political systems. They have been remarkably stable in their adherence to (at least formal) democratic stability. However, the expected withering away of populism in the semi-peripheral areas of the world that was supposed to take place as more and more countries adopted capitalism and democracy has not happened yet, and it is doubtful that this will ever happen. Rather, it seems as if in these new democracies populist and programmatic parties coexist (Cavarozzi and Casullo 2002) and that populism is one of the 'normal' ways in which political competition is conducted.

The second factor causing the re-evaluation of populism today is the fact that populist leaders and movements are enjoying great political success in the global core countries as well. A surge of populism appears to be taking place in Eastern and Western Europe as well as in the United States. The political importance of the Geert Wilder, Marine Le Pen, Nikolaos Michaloliakos, Pablo Iglesias, Nigel Farage, Donald Trump, and the success of populist right-wing parties in Austria and the Netherlands call into question the supposed immunity of advanced democratic systems to the temptation of populist leadership (Freidenberg 2007; Mudde 2007).

It is only natural that a well-deserved reevaluation of global populist politics is taking place in political science under this new context (Moffitt 2016). For instance, some authors argue that populism is a reaction to the crisis of the institutionalised parties, which gives way to alternative forms of representation and parties (Roberts 1999; Weyland et al. 2010). Others go beyond this notion and push for the recognition that populism is not an antithetical impulse to democracy but a by-product of democracy itself, which coexists and competes with other modes of political identification in any democratic system (Canovan 1999; Panizza 2005).

The objective of this chapter is to answer the question of whether populism is a threat to the stability of party systems in Latin America (Zanatta 2008) or constitutes a political tradition that can coexist with democratic stability (De La Torre 2004) from a theoretical point of view. The chapter will argue that populism can, in fact, coexist with stable party systems. The argument then moves onto the second question: If we assume that populist parties and leaders compete and coexist with programmatic parties on a daily basis, how can this interaction be described and theorised? The main answer to this query is that populist and programmatic parties coexist in an ordinal relationship with each other with the result that the difference between the two types is largely a matter of degree and not of 'nature' or 'essence'. The fact that a party is 'more populist' or 'more programmatic' depends on strategic choices and the style of

leadership; parties can and do fluctuate between the two poles in different historical times as well.

The goal here is also to show that populist movements routinely evolve into populist parties in this region and that, moreover, these parties are as resilient and as effective in winning elections and governing as any other type of parties. Sometimes they succeed in performing these tasks and sometimes they fail, but they do not seem to be *a priori* condemned to do one thing or the other.

## The Current State of Research into Populism and Political Representation

The first explanation about the emergence of populist movements and governments in the twentieth century emphasised the degree of modernisation of a given society (Germani 1968; Di Tella 1965). In this seminal approach, dubbed Modernisation Theory, populism was explained as an answer to the problems created by stunted or incomplete modernisation and was thus viewed as an ‘abnormal’ transition from traditional to modern politics in underdeveloped countries. Most mid-twentieth century scholars of populism viewed it as ‘deviant’ political behaviour that would have to be necessarily superseded in the course of the ‘normal’ historical evolution towards a more modern and ideological form of politics.<sup>2</sup> Populism was thus regarded as a deviant alternative to more modern forms of representation.

The US and especially Europe were considered the templates for the progressive realisation of democratic institutional development around the globe (Lerner 1958). In Europe, the process of political modernisation supposedly involved what Gino Germani called “the model of integration” (Germani 1963: 421; authors’ translation), meaning that the newly mobilised working classes were incorporated into the political system through a process characterised by widespread respect for the political norms and institutions. In Europe, the mass publics secured their inclusion in politics step by step by participating in liberal or working-class parties. The whole process helped to consolidate rather than undermine representative democracy.<sup>3</sup> But Latin America followed a different path that led to ‘disintegrated’ forms of political action, of which populism was the main type. In the twentieth century, the new industrial classes began pushing for democratic incorporation in Latin America. Because the proper political instruments for such incorporation (the liberal or working-class parties of Europe and the US) were in short supply, the ‘available masses’ were recruited and manipulated by intra-elite factions or personalistic leaders that hoped to gain power based solely on their support. Thus, the incorporation of the masses into political life was achieved largely through informal and non-institutional means.<sup>4</sup>

The dominant narrative that identified populism with demagoguery and anti-democratic backwardness was promptly criticised. Defining the behaviour of the popular classes as being simply the unreflective expression of an amorphous, homogeneous whole went against the mere

2 For a critique of such a mode of thinking, see Chatterjee (2004: 48).

3 In contrast, Charles Tilly makes the case that there were multiple trajectories to democracy within Europe itself, and that some European countries came to liberal democracy via a more contentious path than others. The prime example of the contentious path is France, of course (Tilly 2003).

4 With the notable exceptions of Costa Rica and Uruguay (Cavarozzi and Casullo 2002).



possibility of conducting an empirical analysis of populism centred on methodological individualism. Moreover, modernisation theories (both from the left and from the right) simply did not leave room either for the comprehension of the political and economic contexts within which such mobilisation happened or for understanding the contingent factors crucial in each particular case. The self-evidently elitist and even reactionary undertones when equating the popular sectors with undifferentiated 'irrational masses' became the basis for criticising this view of populism (Altamirano 2001).

In the 1960s, an alternative explanation of the origins of populism was introduced in the context of the emergence of Dependency Theory (O'Donnell 1972; Ianni 1975; Cardoso and Faletto 1976). Although Dependency Theory shared the identification of populism as one particular historical phase with the preceding Modernisation Theory, it parted ways with the latter in that it did not regard underdevelopment in teleological terms but rather viewed it in a more deterministic fashion as a historically necessary by-product of the relations of dependency that connect the centre (the industrialised nations) with the periphery (Latin America). Linear progress was impossible, they argued, and real modernisation would require the systemic change of the global relations of power.

Dependency Theory explained the adoption of import substitution policies as an effect of the favourable conditions brought about by the Great Depression and the Second World War. The implosion of the global trade networks allowed for higher degrees of economic autarchy as Latin American countries were forced to turn to their internal markets for economic growth. Imports-substitution industries bloomed, creating a new economic elite and a working class, in what Ianni has called "a class society" (1975). The rapid social changes caused the sudden destabilisation of the oligarchic systems of governance, which were intimately connected with the old capitalist order based on the exportation of commodities. In turn, this development disrupted the pre-existing social and political structures and gave way to the active mobilisation of groups that were previously passive (Germani 1963: 412). The mobilisation of these groups became a constitutive element of state formation in Latin America in the first half of the twentieth century. Populist leaders rose in response to the demands of the newly mobilised classes. Born out of mass activism, the new populist governments logically sought to strengthen the hand of the working classes by creating a new development model based on internal market-oriented industrialisation, the nationalisation of resources and increased economic state interventionism.

The populist governments that emerged during this period of relative economic autonomy were characterised by redistributive politics that channelled resources to the popular sectors in the hopes that state intervention would act as an effective mechanism for their social and political inclusion. It was thought the enhanced economic redistribution would prop up internal demand, which would spur economic investment in turn. The whole project was planned as an inter-class alliance between the working classes, the middle classes and the newly formed industrial bourgeoisies against the dominant factions of the previous oligarchic regimes. Nonetheless, the plan had its own major weakness. Sustaining the process required that the interests of the 'national industrial bourgeoisie' and the emergent urban working classes were, if not identical, at least complementary. Such complementarity, however, was far from natural since the bourgeoisie was supposed to retain economic control, the popular classes were expected to subordinate themselves willingly, and the state was supposed to control all decisions. These premises were always doubtful, to say the least. This model of development required a



possibility of conducting an empirical analysis of populism centred on methodological individualism. Moreover, modernisation theories (both from the left and from the right) simply did not leave room either for the comprehension of the political and economic contexts within which such mobilisation happened or for understanding the contingent factors crucial in each particular case. The self-evidently elitist and even reactionary undertones when equating the popular sectors with undifferentiated 'irrational masses' became the basis for criticising this view of populism (Altamirano 2001).

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high degree of anti-elite mobilisation on the part of the working class and, at the same time, that same mobilisation had to be kept within the limits that a strong state deemed compatible with capitalist development.

In this vision, the 'populist state' was the sole agent of development: a supreme entity acting simultaneously as the engine behind capitalist accumulation and guarantor of its social and political viability by activating and controlling of the popular bases of support. One hardly needs to emphasise that this Herculean task proved almost impossible once the stabilisation of the global order after World War II brought the prices of commodities down. Moreover, the old and new economic elites were in the end never fully supportive of the new political order, even though it arguably benefited them (Sidicaro 2002).

Although Dependency Theory was crucial in the development of a more nuanced and historicised understanding of populism, it was flawed in that it associated political populism with one particular development model, industrialisation through import substitution (ISI) (Viguera 1993: 61). Dependency theorists of populism did not take into account that there is no essential connection between populism and industrialisation or working class strength, or even with heightened state intervention. There have been agrarian populist movements along with leftist and rightist populist leaders, not to mention neo-liberal populist governments, which shrank rather than increased the size of the state.<sup>5</sup>

One of the earlier proponents of unlatching the study of populism from economics and development theories was Ernesto Laclau (1986) as he noted that populism was by no means unique to the underdeveloped world but had existed in core countries such as Italy (fascism and *Qualunquismo*) and the US and Russia (agrarian populism). Laclau centred his critique on the developmentalist division between 'traditional' and 'modern' societies and on the deterministic understanding of social change that, explicitly or implicitly, underpins political functionalism (2005). A theory that attaches populism to one predetermined phase of historical evolution and restricts progress to economic growth simply cannot explain why there have been populist governments in countries that simply never had import substitution industrialisation (such as, for instance, José María Velasco Ibarra in Ecuador), or why populist governments sometimes pursue politics that generate de-industrialisation, as was the case with Brazil, Peru, Ecuador and Argentina in the nineties (Knight 1998; Roberts 1999).

The criticisms of the economic and sociological theories of populism opened a way for a radical rethinking of the theories of populism, which resulted in an open-ended political discussion that is still taking place. More and more voices began calling for the recognition of populism as a proper political phenomenon not wedded to one particular mode of economic development but used for advancing a variety of ideological agendas. These theories run the gamut from viewing populism as a sociocultural phenomenon (Ostiguy 1997, Ostiguy 2014), to defining it as a mode of identification (Panizza 2005), a practice for mobilisation (Jansen 2011) and a thin ideology (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2012), among others.

<sup>5</sup> The governments of Alberto Fujimori, Carlos Menem, Abdalá Bucaram Ortíz or Fernando Collor de Mello combined populist appeals with neoliberal policies that included deindustrialisation, the shrinking of the state, trade liberalisation and de-unionisation.) Conversely, state bureaucracies grew larger and unions grew stronger in many countries after 1930, as did protectionism, without the intervention of populist governments (Luebbert 1991).



## Populism and Parties

If populist mobilisation is neither to be understood as a predetermined phase in a teleological process of modernisation nor as the political correlate of a certain model of economic development, the question still remains as *to what it is*. The next section will focus on two of the main contemporary theoretical answers to this question. They are the definition of populism as a political strategy based on the works of Kurt Weyland and the discursive theory of populism of Ernesto Laclau. They have been chosen because it is instructive to see how two definitions that operate with widely different epistemological and methodological foundations end up nonetheless at the same blind spot: They both construct a dichotomy between *populism* as a whole and *institutionalised party politics* as a more specific phenomenon—a theoretical assertion that is difficult to maintain without further qualification in the context of Latin American politics.

The first paradigm views populism as a *political strategy* that becomes more salient in times of representational crises. This recent explanation affirms that populist movements, parties and leaders emerge when the traditional parties become unable to represent the interests and preferences of the citizenry adequately. A crisis of representation can happen due to a variety of reasons, such as the inadequacy of electoral designs and regulations. It can also be due to parties becoming functionally unable to perceive or articulate what the citizenry demands for improving their lives' conditions at a particular time, which can itself be caused by demographic changes, rapid social mobility or other factors (Weyland 2001; Weyland et al. 2010). Populism is directly connected with internal or external shocks that lead to institutional weakening and a breakdown of representation (Roberts 1999; Roberts 2003). The systemic loss of representation is defined as a crisis brought forth by the inability of a party system to adapt itself to new social and economic realities and in which politicians no longer respond adequately to social demands under one particular set of game rules (Paramio 2006, 67).

In a crisis of representation, traditional parties lose votes rapidly because their own voters become disenchanted and their fealty becomes unmoored. This erosion of traditional loyalties is, at the same time, a cause and effect of the crisis. Voters feel that their demands are not being heard. If the demands of the citizenry go unanswered for an extended period of time, people will rally behind outsider political figures that promise to punish the traditional party elites ('la partidocracia' or 'partitocracy') that have betrayed them. In such a context, populist leaders will deploy an anti-political discourse that promises a radical refoundation of the political system which alters both the rules of political competence and the social configuration of the elites themselves.

From this perspective, the macroeconomic agenda of a government becomes secondary to the methods and instruments that a leader uses to accumulate and deploy power (Vilas 2003). According to Kurt Weyland, populism can be thought to happen when a personalistic individual leader is able to obtain the support of a large mass of the population and relies on it as the only source of legitimacy for their political project. Weyland defines populism as "a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, non-institutionalised support from large numbers of mostly unorganised followers" (Weyland 2001: 14). Charisma is an important component of populist leadership (Weyland 2001: 13, Freidenberg 2007: 35) because the leader's authority is based on the



deeply held popular conviction about his or her supernatural political ability. Such leaders are thought to govern in the name of the people, with whom they share some characteristics of 'the common folk'. The particular bond between populist leaders and their followers is constructed in a top-down, paternalistic or plebiscitary manner without the mediation of formal institutions and organisations.

However, this definition of populism as an instrumental strategy can be scrutinised as well. Criticisms might be directed toward its reductionism: Its exclusive focus on the type of bond established between followers and their leader obfuscates the importance of other dimensions. This, in turn, may cause observers to mistake superficial similarities between disparate cases for conceptual identity. The excessive interest in the figure of the leader renders the expectations, demands and political culture of the followers largely invisible and of lesser importance, when in truth the followers of populist movements retain the ability of putting pressure on and negotiating with the leadership (James 1990; Levitsky 2001).

Even more relevant to the goals of this chapter is that the data do not seem to support the notion that populist authority is always antithetical to institutions. The relationship between populist leaders and political institutions is much more complicated than previously thought. Some populist governments created fundamental state institutions in their respective countries; some of these arrangements exist even to this day (New Deal institutions in the US, labour regulations and the public hospital system in Argentina, and national and state bureaucracies in Turkey).<sup>6</sup>

Populist leaders usually create their own parties as soon as they reach power or immediately before. While populist leaders do try to maintain control over their movement, many were explicitly interested in merging populist power with institutional forms, also including the creation of political parties. Such was the case, for instance, with Víctor Haya de La Torre and the Peruvian APRA, with Lázaro Cárdenas and the Mexican PRI, and with Juan Domingo Perón in Argentina (Knight 1998).

Along with the strategic approach to populism, there has also been the so-called *discursive* approach. The main figure of this school of thought was Ernesto Laclau, who gave ontological primacy to discourse, affirming that "discourse is the primary terrain of the constitution of objectivity as such" (Laclau 2005: 68). His expansive definition of populism viewed it "not as a type of movement ... but a political logic"; that is, a certain political productive dynamic (Laclau 2005: 117). Laclau does not see populism as a form of anti-democratic pathology but rather as the inevitable by-product of the processes of political institutionalisation, and a positive by-product at that. Political and bureaucratic institutions are unable by definition to process all social demands at once because their standard operating mode is to particularise the demands so that they can be dealt with one at a time. However, under certain conditions demands accumulate at the margins of the political system to such an extent that "an equivalential relation is established between them" (Laclau 2005: 73).

According to Laclau, a populist movement is created when the impersonal dynamics of discursive identity-formation processes unify the demands of seemingly disparate groups of people with the figure of a leader in a single chain of meaning (this is the "equivalential chain").<sup>7</sup> This

<sup>6</sup> For Francis Delano Roosevelt as a populist, see Kazin (1998).

<sup>7</sup> "(T)he symbolic unification of the group around an individuality (...) is inherent to the formation of a people" (Laclau 2005: 101)

process of identification creates a powerful political identity that can serve as the foundation and legitimation of a transformative political praxis (Laclau 2005; Barros 2014).

In populism, 'the people' itself is a political creation and is, at the same time, the cause and the effect of the dichotomisation of the political space into two antagonistic camps:<sup>8</sup> an 'us' (the people) that is identified as the heroic underdog (Panizza 2005: 3) and a 'them' which is defined as the *anti-people*, the elite. The leader's very existence *becomes* (there is a degree of impersonality to the process) the unifying symbol that makes the coalescence of a political identity possible.

For Laclau, populism is the main source of democratic innovation because it exists in direct contrast with the institutional day-to-day problem-solving that he regards not as politics but as administration.<sup>9</sup> In his view, the dichotomisation of society into two antagonistically-related camps means that the people is defined (much like Ferdinand De Saussure's idea of oppositional value) as that which it is not; or as Pierre Ostiguy says: "For Laclau the people is, by definition, on the oppositional side of the antagonistic frontier, antagonistically confronting empowered institutionality and its administration (of demands). (...) *By definition this model or conceptualisation logically implies that cases of populism being institutionally in power cannot exist.*" (Ostiguy 2014: 346; authors' translation, emphasis added). As a consequence, Laclau arrives at a position that is strikingly similar to that of the strategic theory of populism, even if he does so via a different path. Both Weyland and Laclau argue that populism, whether defined as a personal strategy or as a collective identity, can only exist *in opposition to* institutional forms of representation.

The definitions of populism as a strategy or as a performative discourse theory could not be more diverse in terms of their epistemological premises and normative orientation; Weyland (2001) is much more critical of populist mobilisation, whereas Laclau was much more sympathetic, even going so far as to equate populism simply with democratic politics. However, both theories share a blind spot because a prominent feature of both Weyland and Laclau's theorisations is that they both leave no room for the contingent business of day-to-day politics. There is manipulation on the one hand and the impersonal pull of the logic equivalence on the other. In Laclau's case, the popular base of a populist movement does not seem to have much agency. On the contrary, populism is a personal *strategy*, but the question remains as to why that particular leader chose that particular strategy at that particular time, or why such strategies succeed or fail. They both pit populist mobilisation (anti-systemic, reactive and antagonistic) against political institutionality, which is thought to be programmatic and rule-oriented. For both of them populism exists to challenge established forms of representation and as such it is the *opposite* of political parties.

However, this logically coherent theoretical premise simply does not square with empirical evidence. The relations and connections between populist mobilisation, however defined, and programmatic parties are much more nuanced. Populist leaders create parties that are able to participate in and win elections all the time. These parties can, at times, challenge the leader and are even able to carry on after the founder's death (Mustapic 2002). What is more, it is

8 In Laclau's words: "So we have the formation of an internal frontier, a dichotomisation of the local political spectrum through the emergence of an equivalential chain of unsatisfied demands" (2005: 74).

9 Following Jacques Rancière's distinction between politics and "the police", which in English resonates with the distinction between politics and policy (Rancière 1996: 43).



not only the case that a populist party can transform itself into a programmatic party but that programmatic parties can become vessels for populist leaders as well.

Moreover, forms of populism have proven to be surprisingly resilient once they come to power. In the last decade and a half, South American left-wing populist movements have been remarkably successful in electoral terms, and they have shown themselves to be surprisingly *adept in the art of not only enduring but also achieving political and social change*. Latin American populist presidents have been able to reform the constitutions of their countries (Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, Rafael Correa in Ecuador and Evo Morales in Bolivia) and pass relevant legislation (such as the nationalisation of oil and gas in Bolivia, the nationalisation of the largest oil company and of the private pension funds, and the legalisation of egalitarian marriage in Argentina). These populist governments also deployed a panoply of expansive social policies that, backed by the revenue from a boom in commodity exports, reduced poverty and, even in some cases, inequality.<sup>10</sup>

The longest-running populist government of South America, Venezuelan Chavismo, came to power in 1998. It has managed to govern Venezuela for 18 years, and continues to do so even after Chávez's passing. Even in its present and highly problematic state, Chavismo has proven to be much more resilient than most observers would have expected. It has been able to reinvent itself over and over again and has surprised many observers by its ability to survive in the face of internal and external problems (including those of its own making) that have ranged from a dramatic drop in the price of oil, enormous economic problems including shortfalls in food supply, the unexpected death of a charismatic leader and increasing opposition pressure.

Evo Morales has governed Bolivia since 2005; Rafael Correa was elected in November of 2006. Néstor Kirchner and Cristina de Kirchner governed Argentina for twelve consecutive years, surpassing the mark of both Juan Domingo Perón (1946–1955, 1973–1974) and Carlos Menem (1989–1999) (who were, of course, also populists). In fact, one might say that in Argentina it has proven to be much more difficult for non-populists to govern effectively, if by 'effectively' we mean the ability to finish one's term in office. Álvaro Uribe, a right-wing populist, must be counted among the effective South American populist presidents (Fraschini 2014).<sup>11</sup>

Far from being incapable or unwilling to build their own form of institutionality, movements and leaders in South America have shown that 'populist institutionality' is far from being an oxymoron. It is also not the case that this resilience is always or even often constructed *without or outside political parties*. In South America, the situation is often the reverse: Populist leaders invest a substantial amount of resources and efforts in party-building. Evo Morales is a charismatic leader, but there is no denying that his rise to the Bolivian presidency could hardly be comprehended without understanding the role played by the thick network of social movements, unions, *Cocalero* and indigenous organisations that propelled his candidacy forward (Sivak 2009; Cyr 2012; Durand Ochoa 2014). In the case of Chavismo, the mere survival of Nicolas Maduro's dysfunctional government rests partially upon the grassroots groups it creat-

10 A key factor in poverty reduction were the innovative conditional cash transfer policies, such as the Bono Juancito Pinto in Bolivia, the AUH in Argentina and other forms of transfers to women in Ecuador. For evidence of the impact of state policies on poverty reduction, see the 2016 Human Development Report published by the UNDP (PNUD 2016).

11 This is true of other regions: populist governments have proven to be resilient in Turkey (Baikan 2016), Italy and Poland.



ed (Velasco 2015). The party MÁS has proven to be equally dominant in Bolivia. Very much like Rafael Correa's PAÍS, the Bolivian MÁS has evolved from a loose network of anti-systemic social movements into a multi linkage party that combines linkages with unions, movements, clientelistic networks, state bureaucracies, and even middle class and business organisations.

For instance, if, according to Sartori's minimalistic definition, a political party is "any political group that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections, candidates for public office" (1976: 64), then there is simply no question that Peronism must be thought of as a very successful political party. Peronism has competed in every national election in Argentina since 1946 (except for the eighteen years when it was legally proscribed, between 1955 and 1973). From 1983 to today, Peronist candidates have won the presidency through the electoral votes in 1989, 1995, 2003, 2007 and 2011.<sup>12</sup> Peronism has held a majority in the Senate since 1983 and has been in the majority in the lower house of Congress in most election cycles as well. Peronists also govern most of the Argentine provinces.<sup>13</sup> In Ecuador, Rafael Correa's *Alianza País* has proven to be an electoral juggernaut as well: His new party won the 2006, 2009 and 2013 national elections, the 2014 subnational elections, the popular consultation plebiscites and the Constitutional Convention election of 2007. He managed to do all that by coordinating many of the territorial bosses connected with territorial clientelistic networks called 'caciques', the indigenous movement (at least originally) and the 'forajidos' (or 'out-laws', as the groups that protested against former president Gutiérrez were called) who were unhappy with the previous government.

It is time to reject the notion that populist mobilisation is incompatible with party politics; reality shows us every day that this is not the case. As Carlos De La Torre, Kurt Weyland, and Pierre Ostiguy have shown, the populist appeal is not only compatible with party politics, it is an ever-present tool in the toolbox of aspiring politicians. According to Weber, modern political parties function as organisations that "provide themselves with a following through free recruitment, present themselves or their protégés as candidates for election, collect the financial means, and go out for vote-grabbing" (Weber 2009: 99). Political parties function as instruments for power and as forms of socialisation. Thus, both populist parties and programmatic parties can and do perform those functions in an effective manner. They seek power for their leaders, place some of their members in office and socialise their followers. They achieve these goals through different means. Populist parties build their day-to-day operation on the direct connection between its leader and its followers; the former determines the party's goals, chooses its strategic course, and prioritises relationships based on personal, direct clientelistic relations with the lower-level party officials and voters. Programmatic parties, by contrast, employ formal procedures to select candidates and set up party priorities.

In our analysis, we propose to differentiate between *populist parties* and *programmatic parties*. To quote a relatively straightforward definition of programmatic parties: "A political sys-

12 Before 1983, Peronism won the presidential elections of 1946, 1951 and 1973.

13 Non programmatic parties can participate in free elections, command votes in an impressive manner and be, in short, both resilient and successful; however, they achieve these things in a somewhat 'premodern' manner that does not advance the collective rational discussion of important common issues and is not anchored by consistent policy preferences; populist-clientelistic parties are personalistic and have only weak ideological principles. To quote Kitschelt et al: "Recent studies of Latin American legislatures find extremely high levels of party discipline in countries such as Argentina, Mexico and Venezuela that equal or rival those in advanced industrial democracies with parliamentary regimes, yet the attitudinal indicators explored in this volume show that these countries have only moderate levels of programmatic structure." (Kitschelt et al. 2010: 65).

tem is programmatic when the parties within it predominantly generate policy, mobilise support, and govern, on the basis of a consistent and coherent ideological position.” (IDEA 2011: 7). Programmatic parties have a structured and stable set of political positions that constitutes its political programme and through which it is publicly recognisable. They possess a certain degree of coherence and internal consensus about that shared programme and have a joint commitment to fulfilling at least some of those programmatic promises if and when the party finds itself in elected office. They pursue recruitment in such a way as to emphasise programmatic allegiance over other incentives. Populist parties are constructed around the authority and appeal of a charismatic leader, have a much weaker and fluctuating ideological programme, use clientelism and patronage to obtain votes, and can rely on a personalized mechanism for recruitment that is largely based on the leader’s vertical connections. The differences between programmatic and populist parties can be summarised in Table 16.1.

Table 16.1: *Populist and Programmatic Models of Party Institutionalisation in Latin America*

	Populist party institutionalization	Programmatic party institutionalization
Leadership	Open to charismatic outsiders	Favors insiders
Mediation	No organizational mediation between leader and followers	The organization mediates and coordinates between leader and followers
Relative autonomy of organization vis a vis the leader	No autonomy	Autonomy
Level of organizational systematicity	No systematicity Informal party organization	Systematicity and routinization of party procedures
Established recognizable repertoire of symbols and ideas	No repertoire except the exaltation of the leader	Core repertoire of symbols and narratives
Strategies for winning votes	Clientelism, patronage	Programmatic

In programmatic parties, the source of the linkages between the party and its followers is grounded in the common allegiance to the organisation and its programmes. In populist parties, however, the organisational mediation is weaker and the ideological enunciations are shallower, or they might not even exist. By comparison, populist parties are based on “emotional appeals to symbols, group identification or the charisma of the candidate” (Kitschelt et



al. 2010: 3; emphasis added) and they are usually formed as the electoral vehicle for a leader or a movement (Levitsky and Roberts 2013: 13).

These are ideal typologies that very rarely exist in a pure form in reality. Political parties—even the more institutionalised ones—must combine their programmatic dimension with the element of mobilisation and vice versa.<sup>14</sup> However, in times of social upheaval and rapid political change, new political identities and parties are indeed created, and old ones die. Such a juncture happened in Latin America in the decade after the turn of the century when many, if not most, of the political systems of the region underwent systemic change.

## Conclusions

Whether populist or programmatic, at the end of the day almost all parties are in it to win and have similar goals: to enhance their respective share of power (in terms of votes, executive offices and/or seats in parliament). Therefore, they must adapt their organisation to the conditions presented by the environment in which the party is situated, to the preferences of the voters, to the party's organisational capacities and to history. Under the conditions of electoral democracy, populist parties will strengthen their internal organisation so as to obtain votes for the leader.

Even in the context of a widespread political crisis that might even include the breakdown of the established political parties; political movements do not come to power in a vacuum and they seldom reshape the political map entirely. A populist government will have to come up with an electoral strategy to compete in elections or it will fail. One aspect that is often overlooked is that new populist parties usually end up recruiting officials and leaders from the 'old' parties who then are presented as 'politicians without a party.' If and when the populist movement is able to institutionalise itself into a populist party, a paradoxical reversion occurs: the former anti-systemic movement becomes the status quo and the former 'establishment' parties and politicians morph into the new challengers.<sup>15</sup>

When a populist leader is successful in establishing a new hegemony, opposition parties will reconstruct themselves and challenge the new order. Alternatively, some new party or parties will be created to fill that role. Populist parties have to perform a difficult balancing act, however, because even though they function better when they are more institutionalised, they cannot afford to completely lose their antagonistic edge. It is for this reason that populist parties have to try to retain their 'novelty' and freshness by continuing to denounce the old 'partitocracy' even though they are, in fact, 'the new old'.

14 Panebianco (1990) roots his definition of party institutionalisation on the notions of autonomy and systematicity of the party. However, autonomy and systematicity are two different dimensions which might operate in tandem or directly act against one another, depending on the context. In some cases, a lower degree of systematicity might actually increase the party's autonomy if the party operates within a largely informal party system (Freidenberg 2007). In other cases, a party can be systematically organised but operate with a low degree of autonomy, as has been the case with the Argentine far left parties.

15 The category of 'anti-systemic parties' is not chosen to refer to an implicit normative judgment. On the contrary, it is based on Sartori's suggestion that "a party is anti-systemic if it seeks to erode the legitimacy of the regime that it opposes" and if its opposition "is not derived from petty issues but based on principle". Thus, "anti-systemic opposition is guided by a belief system that does not share the values of the political order within which it is acting" (Sartori 1976: 166).



The relevant question must then be reframed from *how* populism is antithetical to parties to which factors allow a populist movement to transform itself into a populist party. This is not to say that there are no differences between programmatic and populist parties, but these two categories are not dichotomous but rather differ by degree. A populist movement can transform into a populist party and then into a programmatic one<sup>16</sup> or, in turn, a programmatic party can give rise to populist leadership.<sup>17</sup> There is, in sum, nothing essential or fixed about the nature of a party: the strategic choices made to occupy one place or the other in the spectrum have to do with internal and external factors, the demands of society and the relative positions of the other parties. These theoretical contentions are explored further and applied to empirical cases in Chapter 17 in this handbook.

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<sup>16</sup> It can be argued that the Argentine Union Civica Radical party followed such a path.

<sup>17</sup> This is probably happening right now with the US Republican Party.

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