What is populism and what is its role within far-right politics?

Tomáš Nociar

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Fringe Parties Unleash a Political Earthquake

Populist Rebellion Accelerating in Europe

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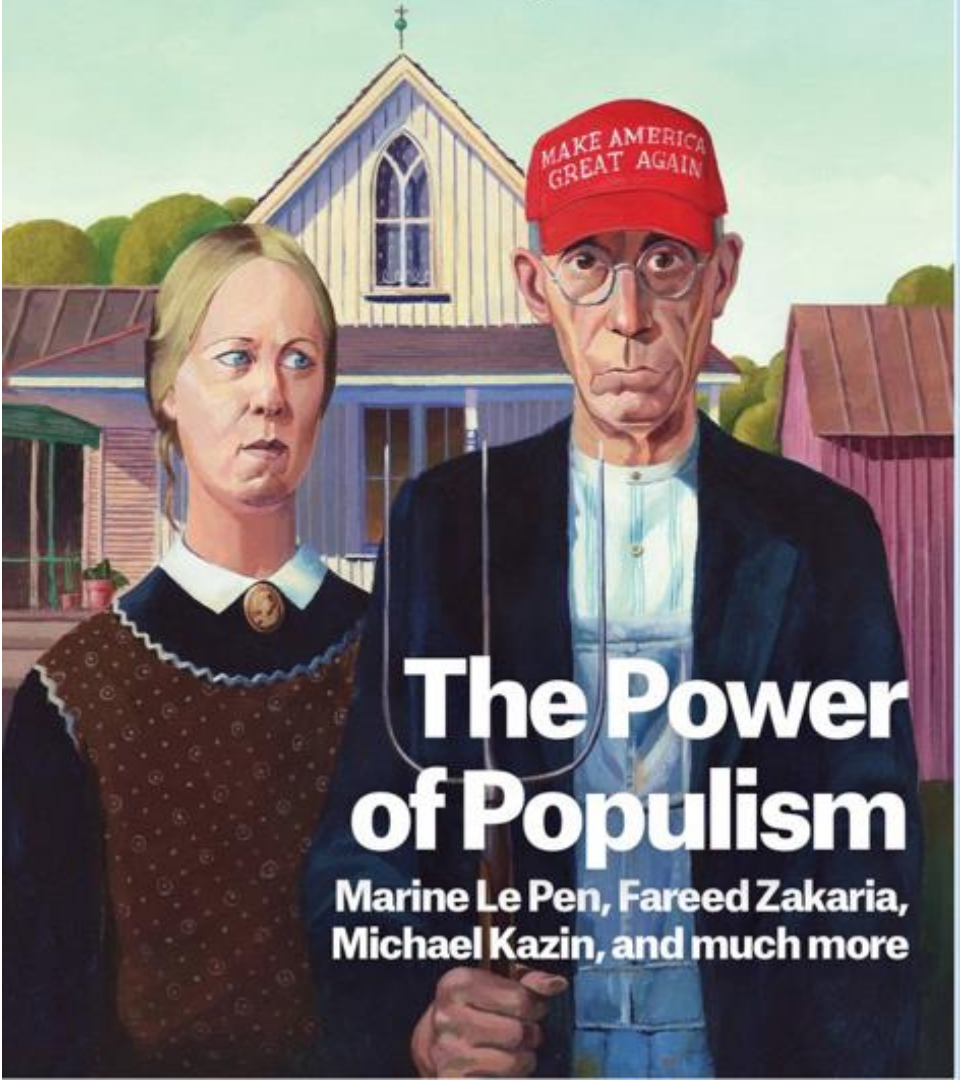
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2016



The Power of Populism

Marine Le Pen, Fareed Zakaria, Michael Kazin, and much more

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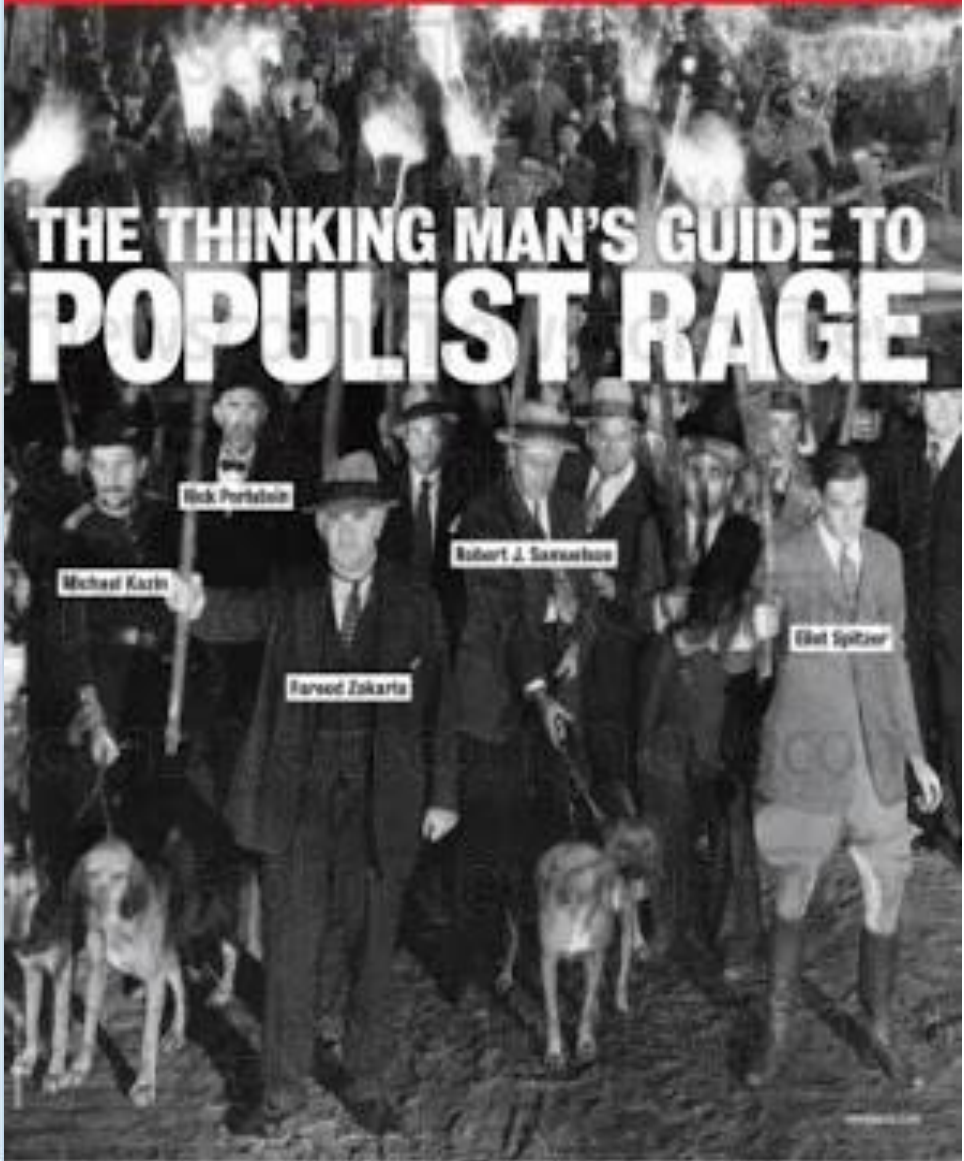
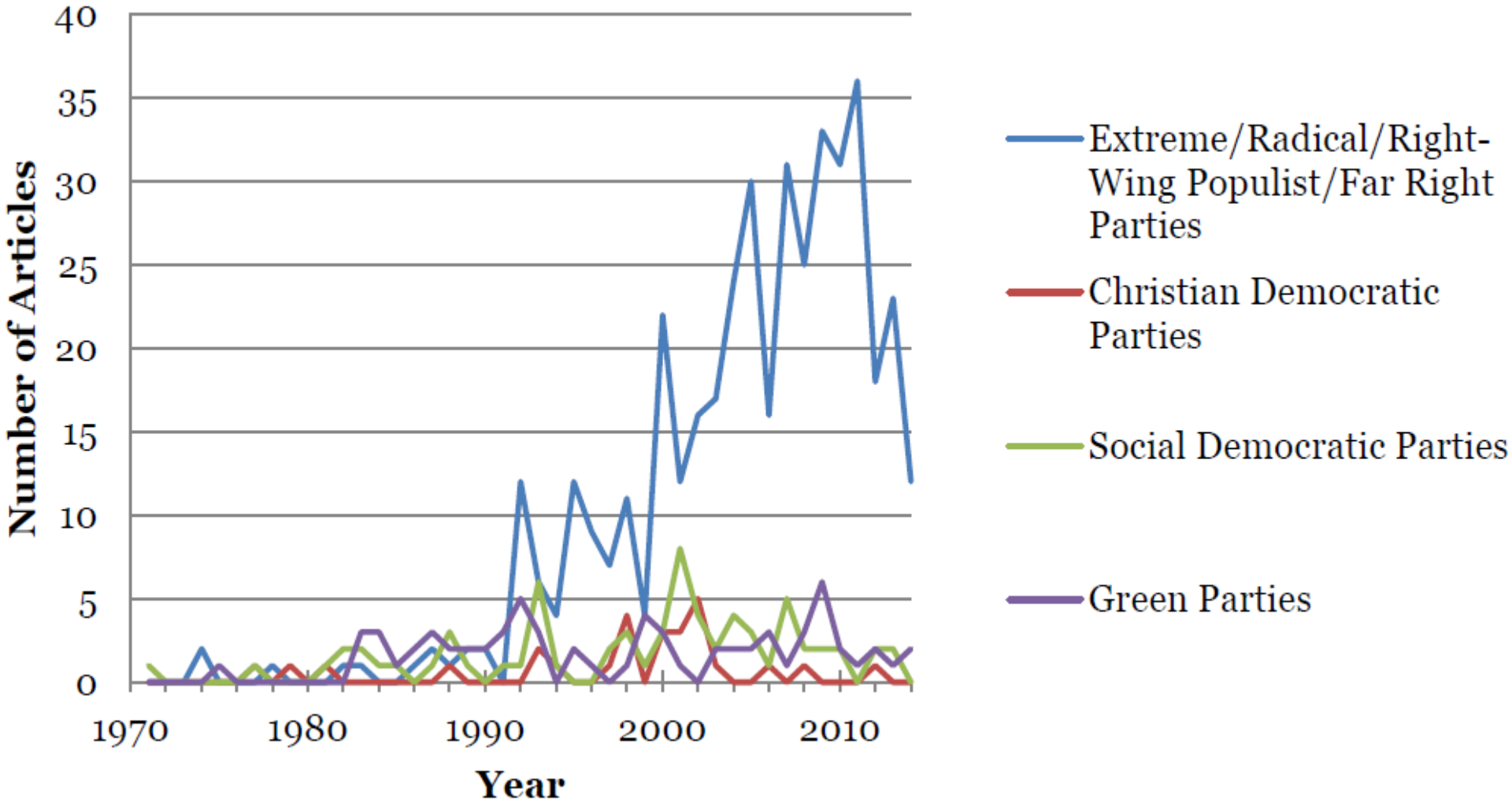
THE THINKING MAN'S GUIDE TO POPULIST RAGE

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Number of Articles
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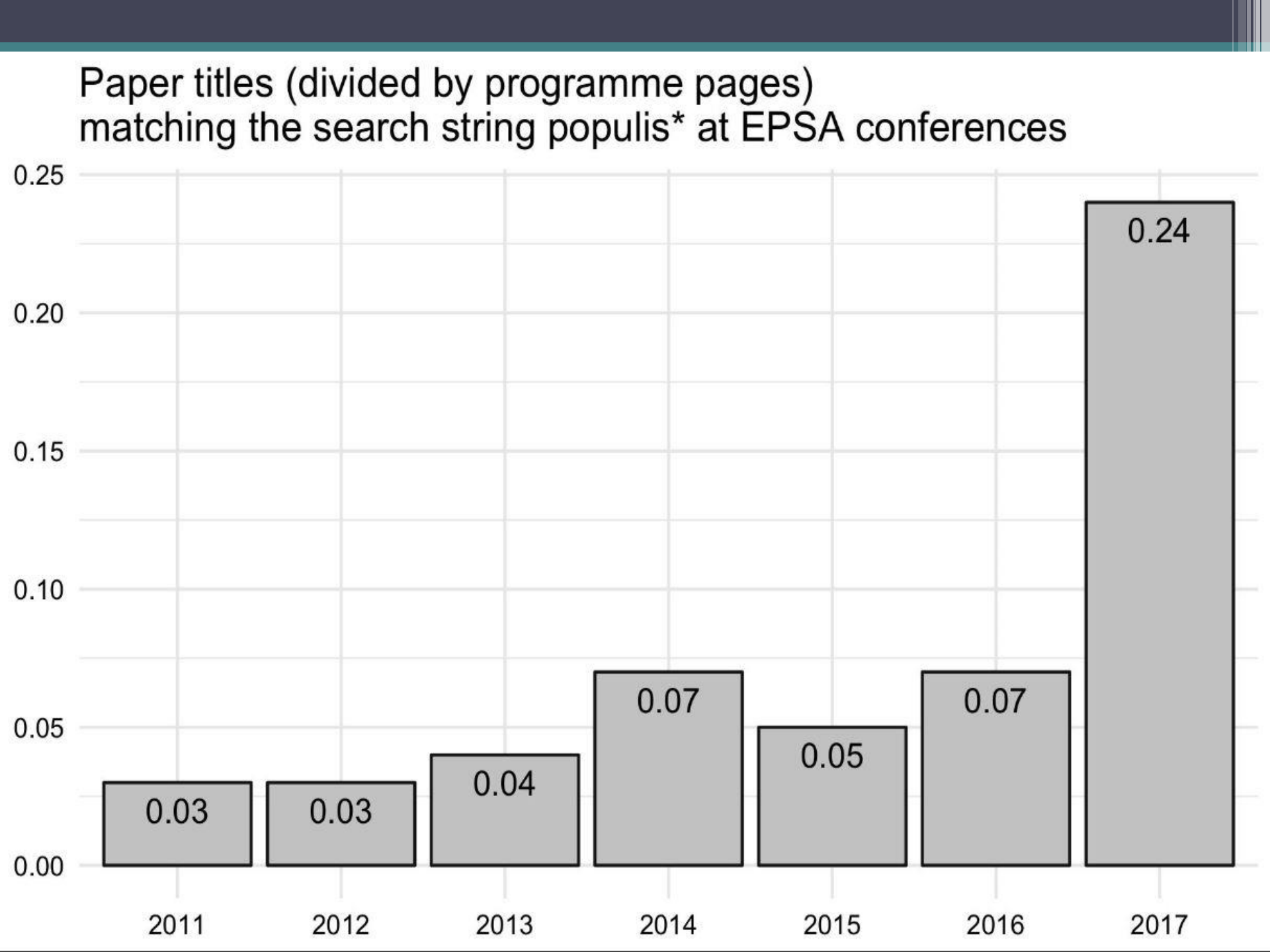
Extreme/Radical/Right-Wing Populist/Far Right Parties
Christian Democratic Parties
Social Democratic Parties
Green Parties


Paper titles (divided by programme pages)
matching the search string populis* at EPSA conferences
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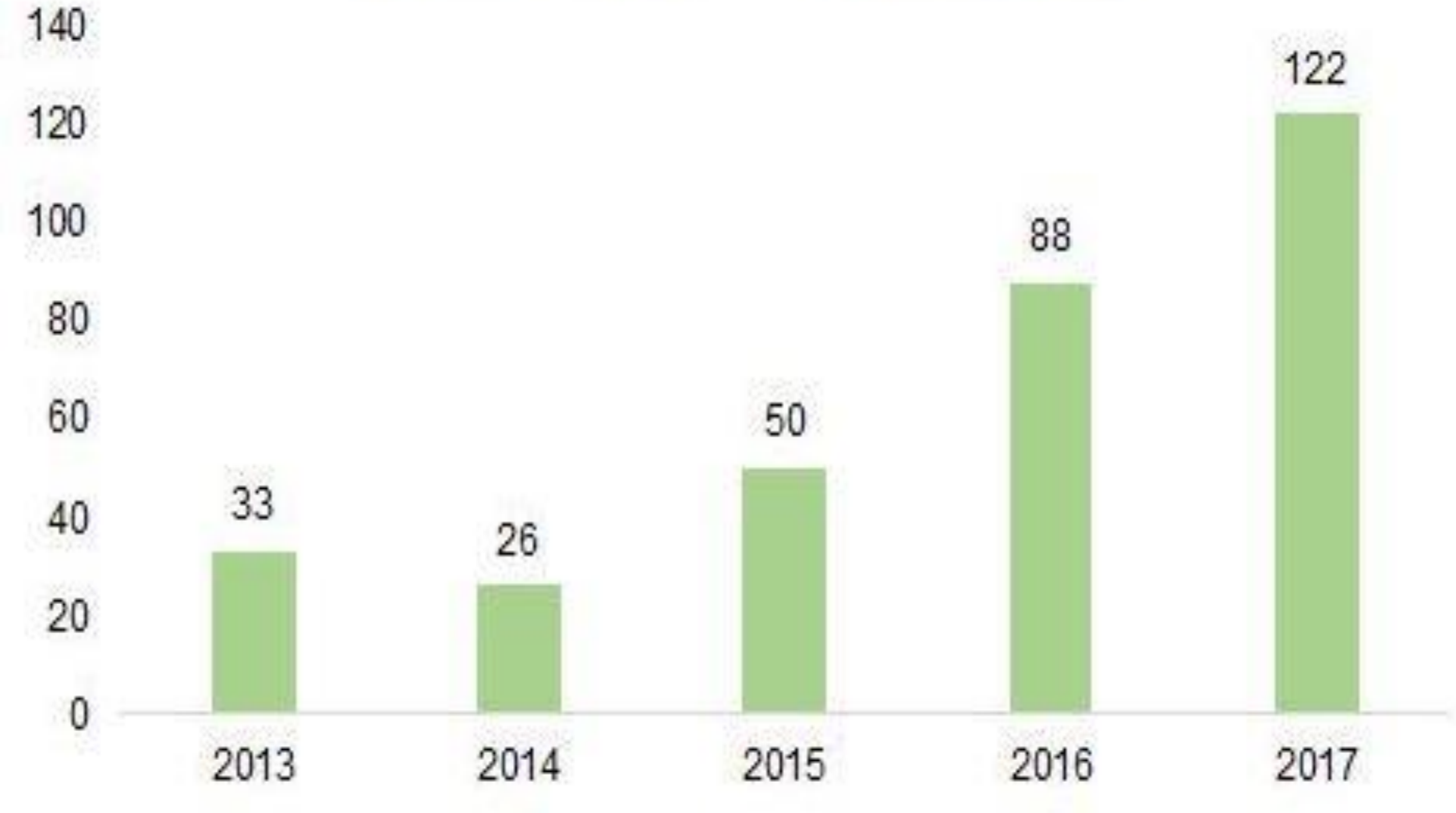
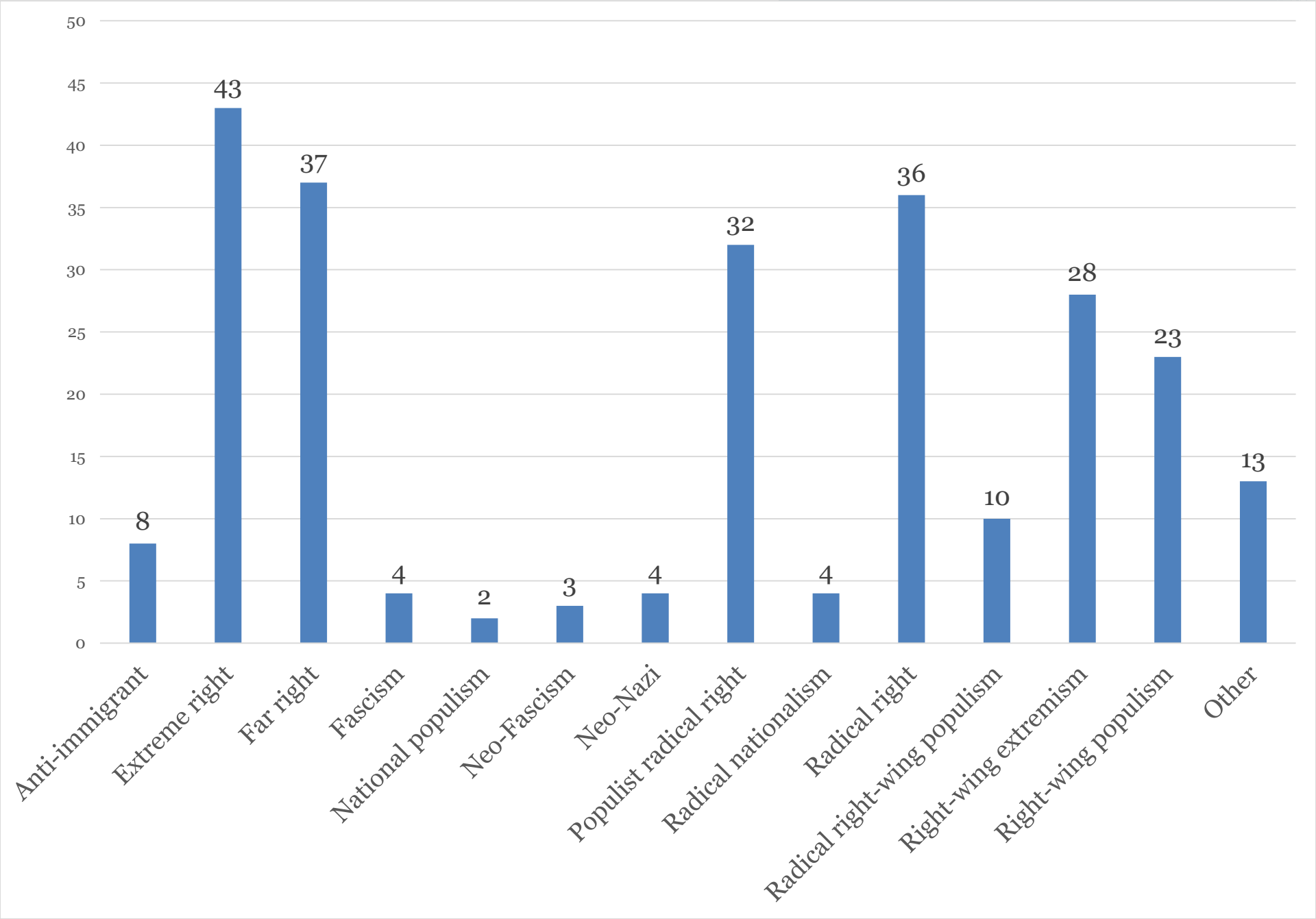
Number of papers matching the search string populis* at ECPR conferences

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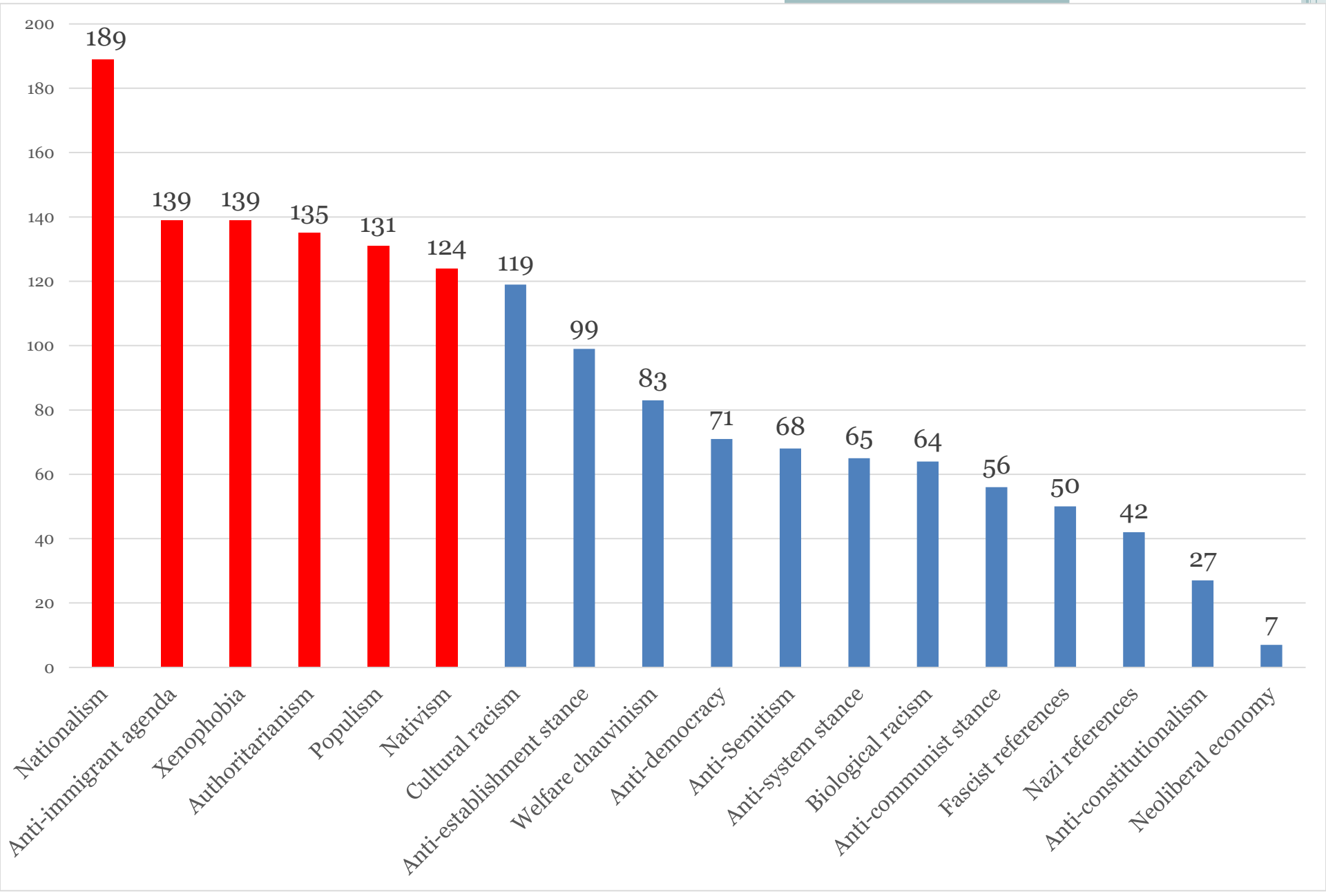
Anti-immigrant
Extreme right
Far right
Fascism
National populism
Neo-Fascism
Neo-Nazi
Populist radical right
Radical nationalism
Radical right
Radical right-wing populism
Right-wing extremism
Right-wing populism
Other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Nationalism
Anti-immigrant agenda
Xenophobia
Authoritarianism
Populism
Nativism
Cultural racism
Anti-establishment stance
Welfare chauvinism
Anti-democracy
Anti-Semitism
Anti-system stance
Biological racism
Anti-communist stance
Fascist references
Nazi references
Anti-constitutionalism
Neoliberal economy

them.

working-class ~.

popu·lism /'popjʊ

itics based on an

fears. **popu·list**

Conventional notion of populism:

- Media usage, political usage:
- **1.** demagogic political style typical for accentuating popular topics among voters and offering simplistic solutions to complex problems
- **2.** opportunistic political style characterized by "buying off" the support with irresponsible promises.
- **3**. leadership style, through which charismatic leaders mobilize and govern by directly appealing to the people, without the mediation of political institutions like parties or parliaments.

Criticism of the concept of populism:

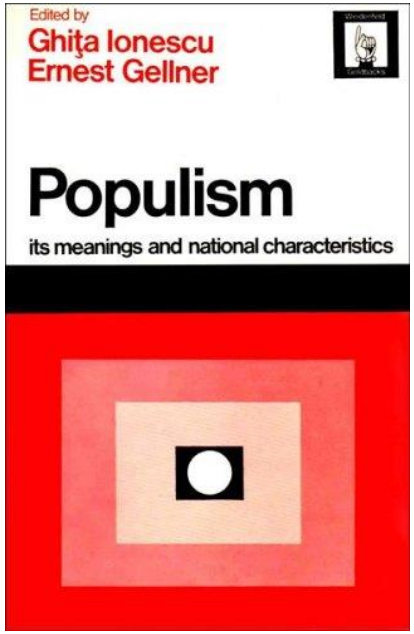
- One of the most used and abused terms inside and outiside of the academic world.

- **J. Rancière**:
- „*The hope is that under this name they will be able to lump together every form of dissent in relation to the prevailing consensus, whether it involves democratic affirmation or religious and racial fanaticism*“,

- „*Effectively the term ‘populist’ is something that our rulers use to say that they are in the know whereas the rest of us are imbeciles*“.

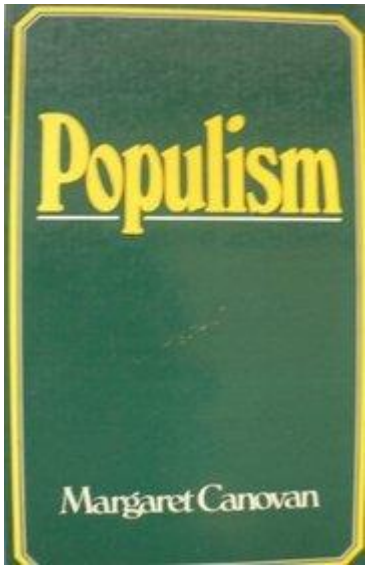
Academic notion of populism:

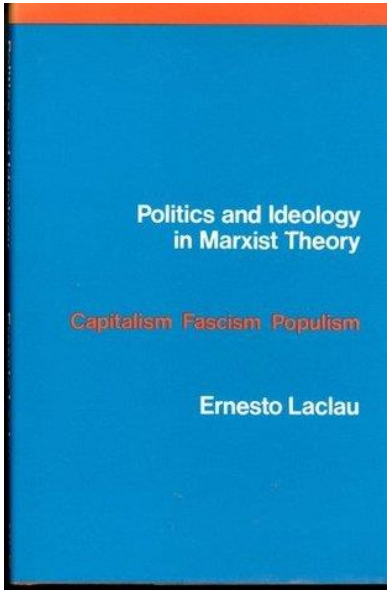
- 1960´s: *To Define Populism* (LSE, 1967),
- *Populism: Its Meaning and National Characteristics* (Ionescu, Gellner 1969),
- Keynote lecture: „*Everyone Is Talking About Populism, but No One Can Define It*“ (Richard Hofstadter).

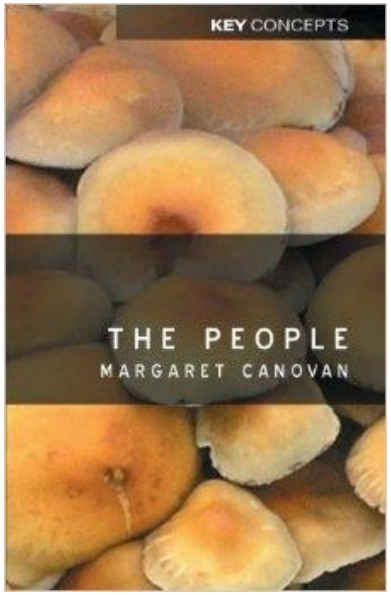


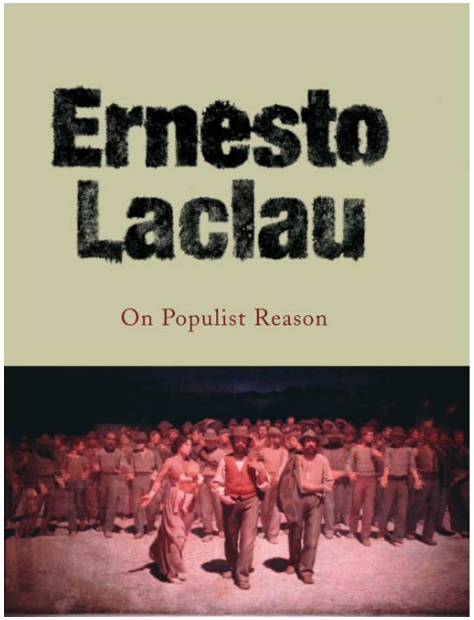
Academic notion of populism:

- Ernesto Laclau (1979) – discoursive approach to populism,
- Margaret Canovan (1981) – typology of populism: agrarian and political.



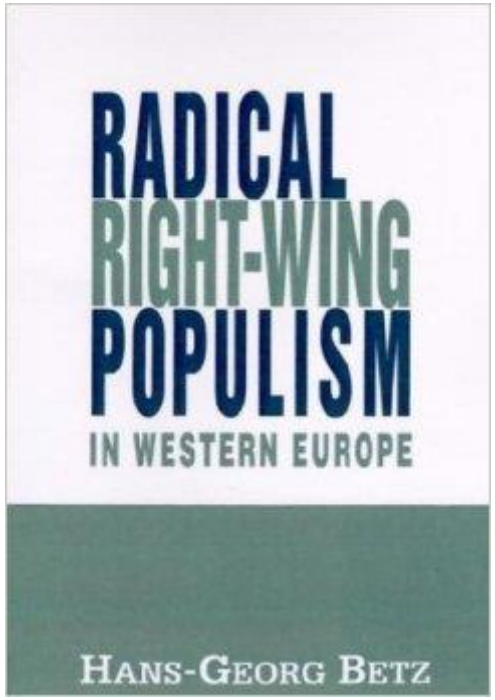


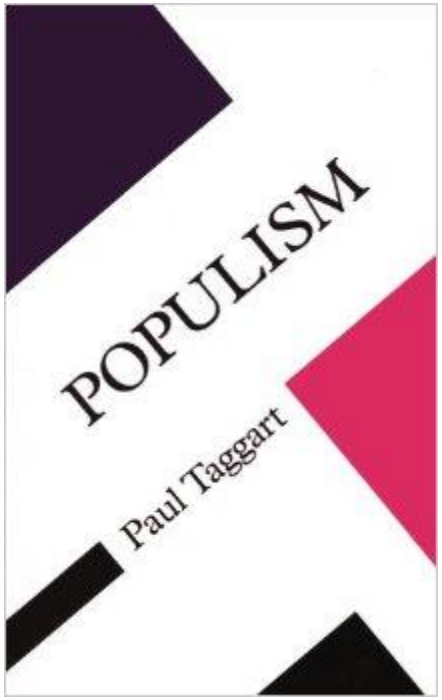


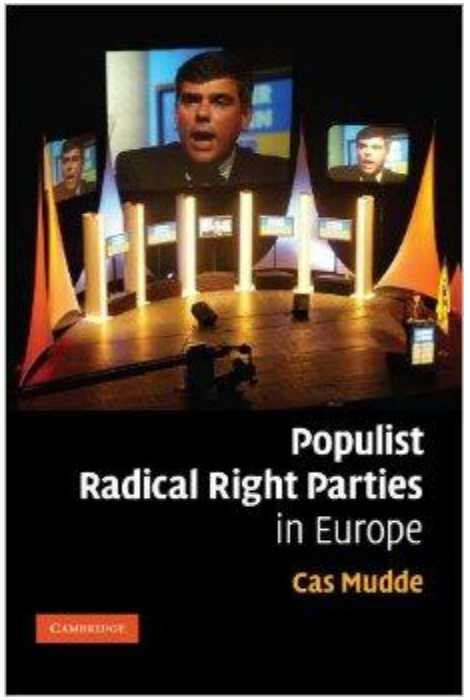


Academic notion of populism:

- 1990´s: far right and populism
- H. G. Betz, P. Taggart, C. Mudde.



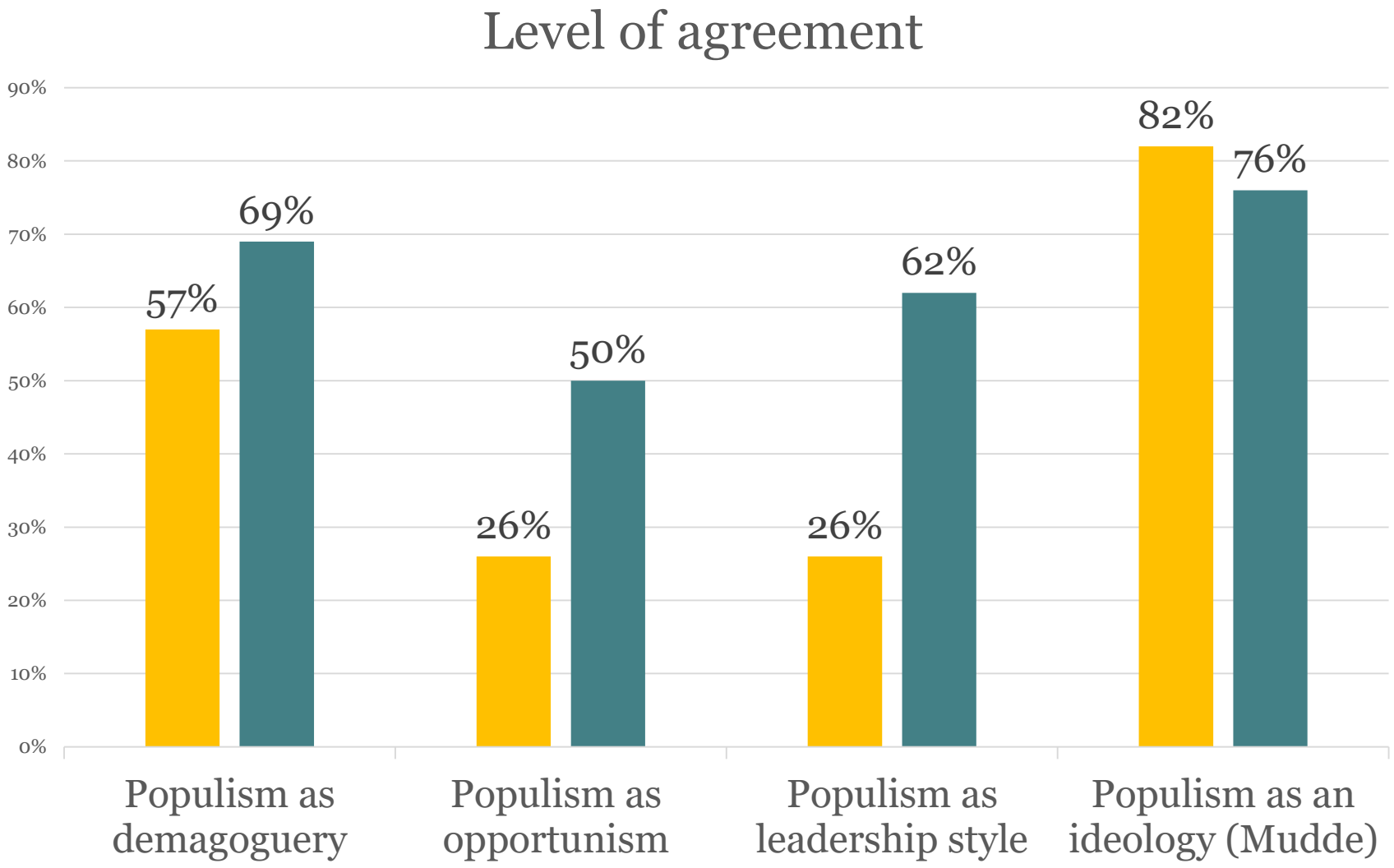




Academic notion of populism:

- No consenus regarding the form:
- (1) ideololgy, (2) political style, (3) organisational form,
- Consensus regarding the features:
- (1) existence of two homogenious units of analysis: „people“ and „the elite“, (2) antagonistic relationship between them, (3) positive evaluation of „the people“ and negative about the „elites“ (4) the idea popular sovereignty,
- Definition of populism: “*an thin-centered 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 2004:543).

Academic notion of populism:



Thin centered ideology:

- thick/full (liberalism, conservativism, socialism) vs. thin centered ideologies (nationalism, feminism),
- thin centered ideologies: restricted morphology and host ideology
- populisms:
- **socialism + populism** – left-wing populism
- **nationalism + populism** – right-wing populism

„People“:

- central category to understand populism,
- etymological origin - lat. populus,
- 3 basic meanings: sovereign people, people as a nation or common people,
- Historical appearances of populism:
- **agrarian populism** – Russia and USA, end of the 19. century– „sovereign people“– demos,
- **socioeconomic populism** – Latin America, 2. half of the 20. century - „common people“ - plebs,
- **xenophobic populism** – Europe after 1980 – „people as a nation“ – ethnos,
- „people“ constructed ex negativo – exclusion of the so-called „enemies of the people“

„Elites“:

- dichotomy: friend vs. enemy, us vs. them,
- moral cathegories: („pure people“ vs. „corrupt elites“),
- „elites“ – power holders,
- types of elites: political elites (politicians in general, political parties, political system), economic elites (business elite, bankers), cultural (intelectuals), media (journalists), legal (judges)...,
- in the eyes of populists they create a homogenious establishment (anti-political establishment parties).

Populism vs. democracy:

- populism is not anti-democratic, but anti-liberal, it criticizes the principles of liberal democracy,
- conflict between the democratic pillar (participation and popular sovereignty) and the liberal pillars (pluralism and individual rights),
- both threat and corrective to democracy: iliberal democratic response to undemocratic liberalism,
- prefers the majority rule to the principles of liberal democracy (the principle of checks and balances, or the protection of minority rights),

Populism vs. democracy:

- monism vs. pluralism,
- *volonté géneral* – J. J. Rousseau,
- promoting direct democracy (referendas),
- purpose: to take away the power from the "elite" and to return it to „the people“,
- populists consider themselves to be true democrats who voice dissatisfiaction and opinions systematically ignored by governments, traditional politicians and the media.

Far-right populism:

- 1980,
- new vs. old type of far right– extremism vs. populism,
- exclusionary far right populism is exclusionary not only on moral, but also on ethinc, national or religious base,
- „the people“ (ethnos) in the far right populist discourse specified on the ethnic basis, cultural basis and the basis of teritory.

Q & A