The Populism Multiple

Enactments of Populist Attitudes by Cas Mudde and the Eurobarometer

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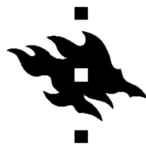

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Tiivistelmä/Referat – Abstract

"Populism" has become one of the most studied and contested concepts in contemporary political science. Whereas the standard explanation for the concept's inadequacy tends to be its ambiguity, this thesis argues the contrary: it is not understood ambiguously enough. Considering that the contemporary academic field, known as populism studies, heavily relies on representationalist ontologies, this thesis argues for an ontological turn towards a performative, nonmodern and multiple ontology. In such an ontology, the multiplicity and diversity of concepts are taken as constitutive of the messiness of reality, rather than as errors of scientific representation. Reality is multiple and it is performed in multiple practices.

This thesis demonstrates how a certain populist reality is performed in political science by doing, first, an allegorical praxiography of Cas Mudde's study in European populist attitudes, and secondly, of the six Eurobarometer surveys, which Mudde references as his data. The analysis outlines the methods and practices by which Mudde, and the multiplicity of issues in his analysis, enact certain concepts associated with populism, and conversely, how the concept of populism enacts Mudde and the analysis. In regard to the Eurobarometer surveys, the analysis demonstrates that the surveys do not represent attitudes "out there", rather, they perform not only the attitudes, but the conception of an out-thereness in form of a European public opinion. The survey questionnaires can be seen as inscription devices, which perform the multiple realities out there to be represented in the surveys.

As a conclusion, in line with the ontological premises of this thesis and following the analysis of Mudde's study of the Eurobarometer surveys, this thesis argues that instead of understanding the concept of populism as an object, or as a representation of an object out there, it should be understood as a multiple Thing — simultaneously an actor being made to act and a subject enacting others. The concept does not represent; it collects a multiplicity of entities to perform a certain populism. Instead of treating the concept as a particularity, it should be understood as a multiplicity constituting a mess.

Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords
Populism; Mudde; social ontology; nonmodern; performativity; ontological multiplicity; political concepts; science studies; allegorical praxiography; Eurobarometer; Latour

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1 Introduction

The political world has experienced a "populist moment" (Brubaker 2017). Due to the success of populist parties around the world in the last two decades, populism research has become one of the hottest bandwagons in political research. While there is today a huge database of case studies of populist parties, politicians and voters, there remains a controversy in the research field: an uncertainty over what populism *is*. The concept of populism is felt to be too *diverse* (Woods 2014; 2017), *abused* (Mudde & Kaltwasser 2012, 1) and *inadequate* (Jansen 2011, 76) for empirical purposes.

Whereas many scholars of populism (if not most) would argue that the problem is the concept's ambiguity and inaccuracy, thus arguing for a more *precise* conceptualisation of populism (e.g. Jansen 2011; Moffitt and Tormey 2014), this thesis argues quite the opposite. First, there is nothing wrong with the concept. It is not the concept that is too ambiguous — it is the reality that it attempts to represent that is too *messy* to be particularised in a singular concept. Second, due to the messiness of this reality, any attempt at articulating a precise conceptualisation is doomed to fail. Third, and most importantly, since no possible conceptualisation is going to be defined well enough to represent the reality of populism faithfully, political science would do better by making an inquiry into the very notion of representation inherent to the concept. What is needed is an 'ontological turn' in political science towards a *performative*, *nonmodern* and *multiple* ontology.

This thesis is an attempt to open the door for such an ontological turn by doing a case study of the multiple practices by which "populism" is performed in Cas Mudde's article "The Populist Radical Right: A Pathological Normalcy" (2010). Cas Mudde is an associate professor of political science at University of Georgia, and one of the most acknowledged experts in populism, with over 20,000 citations on *Google Scholar*, and almost 4,000 citations in the year 2019 alone (as of May 2020). His book *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (2007) is a cornerstone to studying the populist radical right (having been cited by over 4000 academic texts), and his definition of populism as a "thin centred ideology" has become popular among empirically oriented populism researchers due to its operationality, that is, to how well it may be applied to empirical studies.

However, this thesis argues that the notion of representation inherent to such an approach to studying populism is flawed. Representations do not simply emerge as social constructs of a non-social reality — they are *performed*, or better, *enacted* as representations of the "real world". This productive performativity is practiced by a multiplicity of human and nonhuman actors (Barad 2003; Law 2004; Mol 2002). Thus, this thesis is an attempt to answer the following research question:

What kind of entities and practices enact "populism" in Cas Mudde's (2010) article?

By describing the multiplicity of practices enacting a study of populism, I hope to make a case for an alternative ontology which acknowledges populism as a *multiple* concept, rather than a concept in the singular that is asked to represent a reality that is simply too messy for such a particularisation. That is, as a concept which is granted the status of a *Thing* (Latour 2005b; 2013) rather than being "black-boxed" as a representation of an object (Latour 2004; Law 2004).

The structure of this thesis is the following. In chapter two I present a literature review over the various conceptualisations of "populism" in contemporary political sciences. Here I focus especially on an approach to *measuring* populist attitudes: the *ideational approach*, to which Cas Mudde's (2010) understanding of populism is central. In chapter three I present the ontological framework of this study, by first discussing the prerequisites and the epistemological problems of the modern, "representationalist", social sciences, and then moving towards presenting an alternative ontology: a nonmodern multiple ontology. Chapter four regards the methodology and the research material of this study. The analysis of the populist attitudes enacted in Mudde's (2010) study is reported in chapter five. This chapter is divided into three parts: first, an analysis of Mudde's (2010) article; second, an analysis of his sources (the Eurobarometer surveys); and third, an examination of how the various entities and practices have travelled between these two. Finally, in chapter six, I present my findings and discuss the outcomes of this thesis. Since this is an exercise in political sociology (or a study *of* political science) and a study located in the field of Science and Technology Studies (STS), it is relevant to the body of academic literature in several disciplines: this is an interdisciplinary study in sociology (of knowledge), political science and philosophy.

2 Populism in the political sciences

“Populism” has become an increasingly trending word both in the media and in the academia in only a few years, following the Brexit referendum and the election of Donald Trump. In 2015, the words “populism” or “populist” appeared in *The New York Times* 671 times — one year later that number had more than doubled to 1,399. According to the *Web of Science* database, only 76 articles were published in 2010 with one of the two words in the title — only seven years later, in 2017, the number of annual publications had risen to 322. Populism has become such a buzzword that it was even declared word of the year by the *Cambridge Dictionary* in 2017. (Rooduijn 2019, 362.)

As a sociologist especially interested in political concepts, I have found great interest in this buzzword. By speaking to friends and acquaintances from different academic backgrounds (or without an academic background), I have come to the conclusion that populism is one of those political concepts about which almost everyone, from laypeople to experts, seem to have an opinion and some sort of (claimed) knowledge. Yet, when asked what populism *is*, I get multiple different answers, or the question might be met with a “who knows?”

Of course, laypeople should not be expected to be able to answer such a question. But how about all the political researchers studying populism? Hence, in 2017 I started working on my Bachelor’s thesis on the populist radical right. To my surprise, these political experts did not seem to know exactly either. Many scholars were frustrated with the seemingly impossible task of operationalising the disparate “features” or “components”, of which populism is theoretically composed (Brubaker 2017; Van Hauwaert, Schimpf and Azevedo 2018). Each methodological failure seemed to force a return to even more theoretical and conceptual work. The few cautiously accepted conceptualisations seemed to be circulated across relatively small cliques of like-minded scholars rather than gaining validity in the research community as a whole. What I, among so many other political scholars, found is that the concept of populism is undoubtedly a deeply contested concept (e.g. Brubaker 2017; Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012; Rooduijn 2019; Woods 2014).

In this chapter I discuss, first, how populism is generally conceptualised across the main traditions in populism studies. These conceptualisations do share some resemblances, mainly a somewhat cautious agreement over its "core elements" (Woods 2014), but the most troubling question for this field of study seems to be what the *genus* of populism is (Hawkins 2019; Rooduijn 2019). In the second sub-section, I discuss an approach to *measuring* populist attitudes; the premises of the *ideational approach*. This tradition has become popular due to the operationality of its conceptualisation and its methodological cogency. However, critics have found it to be inherently positivist and lacking in reliability (Hawkins 2019; Van Hauwaert *et al.* 2018).

2.1 A contested concept

There is a *plurality* of populisms: from ideologically positioned right-wing to left-wing versions of populism, geographically varying populisms in all parts of the world (European and American populisms being the most typically compared), and different types, or *genera*, of populisms. Each context seems to give birth to a new analytical unit of populism, slightly different, but similar enough to be counted as a member in the family of populisms. This thesis is not concerned with the plurality of right- or left-wing populisms nor with the differences between the European and American versions, since these are usually explained with reference to ideological or geographical context and do not cause controversies among political students. However, what I wish to discuss in this chapter are the controversies concerning the *genus* — the "ontic nature"— of populism. In other words, *the* populism in all these different populisms.

Dwayne Woods (2014) summarises three broad traditions in populism studies, each with its own ontic object and definition of populism. The *first* is populism as *ideology*. In this tradition, populism is often understood as a *thin ideology*, in the sense that it is not necessarily an ideology by itself, but connected to ideological thinking, such as nativism, anti-elitism and authoritarianism (Mudde 2004; 2007; 2010; Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012). In the search for a *minimum definition* of populism, Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser (2012, 9) define populism as a "thin-centred ideology" with a "restricted core" that can be "attached to other ideologies, be they thick (e.g. liberalism,

socialism) or thin (e.g. ecologism, nationalism)," in order to provide the concept a flexibility that reflects "the chameleonic nature of populism". The ideologies attached to populism are perceived to be relative and depend on national socio-political contexts. Populism is not thought to be a fully-fledged ideology — such as conservatism, liberalism or socialism — since it lacks its own "programmatic scope" (Hawkins 2019, 60) and a sufficient level of "intellectual refinement and consistency" (Mudde 2004, 544). Rather, its ideological content is always relative to other ideologies (hence, the emergence of left- and right-wing populisms).

In this tradition, populism is often considered to be an "ideational construct" with certain contents (Van Hauwaert, *et al.* 2018). What that content is varies from scholar to scholar, context to context and study to study, but the core "ideological feature" is often agreed to be composed of attitudes such as "anti-elitism" and "nativism". How these two are conceptualised further depends partly on the philosophical tradition of the particular scholar and the specific vocabulary used to define the concept.

The second tradition, as summarised by Woods (2014), is populism as a *political strategy*. In this tradition, the focus is not on the content of populism, but on the *form*: how the populists *per-form* populism. Here the focus is often on the political party leader and *the performative elements*[1] of populism (Hawkins 2019). Populism is considered to be a sort of a *rhetoric* or a *communication style* used to gain popularity and power, rather than drive forward ideological convictions. Instead of focusing on *what* populists say, the focus is on *how* they say it: as long as a politician refers to a power struggle between "the people" and "the elite", (s)he can be considered to be a populist, either "thin" or "thick" (Jagers and Walgrave 2007). Populism, in this tradition, is a *means* for something else.

The third tradition is to consider populism as a *discourse* (Woods 2014). This tradition builds on the work of Ernesto Laclau, considered by many to be the "most influential theorist of populism" (Brubaker 2017), who defines populism as a "social logic" and a

[1] As will become clear later, the notion of performativity in this tradition of populism studies is not in line with the notion of performativity (enactment) proposed in the ontological frameworks of this thesis.

"mode of articulation", rather than an entity with *content* or a *style* (Laclau 2005). Populism constructs its own discourse, a dichotomic construction of the social, in which society is ultimately divided into two frontiers, *the people* and *the power* (de la Torre 2019; Laclau 2005). Rather than being a response to *a priori* inequalities and struggles between the two camps, populism constructs a political reality in which these two antagonistic groups are pitted against each other. In order for this to be possible, two conditions need to be met and to co-exist: first, there needs to be a plurality of unsatisfied demands from a group of people without the power to satisfy them; second, an inability of an institutional system to "absorb" these as different demands (Laclau 2005). This situation, according to Laclau (2005), leads to an "equivalential moment" in which the plurality of demands is singularised by a thus far "empty signifier": *populism*.

Each of these three traditions both vary and overlap in methodology and research focus, thus presenting slightly different *versions* of populism. When studying populism as an ideology or a political strategy, the method chosen is often some sort of quantitative content analysis that measures some kind of content, either belonging to ideological features or speech acts (e.g. Jagers and Walgrave 2007, Mudde 2010). If ideology is to be studied, scholars often focus on political party manifestos, whereas if populism is studied as a political strategy or a discourse, they tend to focus on performances.

Despite these differences in conceptualisations and methodologies, each tradition refers to similar core concepts associated with populism (Woods 2014). The two obvious ones are the two antagonistic groups, "the people" and "the elite" (sometimes referred to as the establishment or the power bloc). Populism is ultimately perceived to be *about* a power struggle between the oppressed and unsatisfied people and an institutionalised elite who holds the political power. "The people" is defined as *lacking* the power it should hold as the *demos* of the *demo*cracy, and "the elite" is defined as *having* a privileged access to political power, which it should not have in a democracy. The elite and the (liberal) democratic system that has allowed such an elite to grow have thus failed the democratic principle of "the rule of the people".

Hence, another concept that is associated with populism is *democracy* (which is itself another contested enough concept to get political theorists fired up). Even though everyone seems to agree that there is a special relation between democracy and populism, the *nature* of this relation remain widely disputed. Margaret Canovan (2002; 2004), for example, has labelled populism as "the ideology of democracy", yet problematised its democratic ideals as in many ways anti-democratic. Ernesto Laclau (2005), on the other hand, has argued that in a democracy, populism is *the same* as politics. Populism *is* democratic politics at its core, since populism…

> means putting into question the institutional order by constructing an underdog as an historical agent - i.e. an agent which is an *other* in relation to the way things stand. But this is the same as politics. We only have politics through the gesture which embraces the existing state of affairs as a system and presents an alternative to it (or, conversely, when we defend that system against existing potential alternatives). (Laclau 2005, 47–48.)

On the other side of this dispute are Cas Mudde (2004; 2007) and Jan-Werner Müller (2015) who contrast populism with (liberal) democracy, arguing that the ideal democracy of populists is in fact ethnocratic and authoritarian, since it requires the homogenisations of a "pure people" and its *others*. Populists rarely refer to *a* people, as one group among others, but to *the* people, as a holistic and homogenized majority of a like-minded whole, represented by the populists as the rightful claimers of the democratic power (Müller 2015). Carlos de la Torre (2019), on the other hand, contrasts populism with the democratic power itself, by suggesting that populists only strive to *reclaim* it — they are thus seen as *challengers* for a political power they do not have. But what happens when a populist succeeds in gaining power? Do populists *cease* being populists once they stop *challenging* the power? A solution for this dilemma, according to de la Torre (2019), is to separate analytically populists *seeking* power and populists *in* power.

Due to the different perspectives on populism's relation to democracy, the tendency is that those who understand populism as an ideology also tend to argue that populists are *against* liberal democratic principles and more often than not associated with right-wing ideologies, such authoritarianism and nativism (Mudde 2004; 2007). In contrast, those

who understand populism as a political strategy or a discourse, do not conceptualise populism on the basis of *a priori* ideologies, thus leaving open the possibility of almost anyone being populist: a populist is someone who *uses* populist rhetoric *in order* to bring forward certain values or ideas. Those who study populism as a left-wing phenomenon value populism more often in positive and emancipatory terms: one of such scholars was Ernesto Laclau himself.

To conclude, there is an ambiguity regarding what populism is. Some argue that the concept is too diverse and thus often reduced to an "empty analytic shell" (Woods 2014). Laclau (2005), for example, referred to the concept of populism as an "empty signifier". Moffitt and Tormey (2014, 390), on the other hand, criticise such open-ended conceptualisations for losing the "analytical utility of the concept". Others defend such minimalist definitions for their generalisability and their potential to bring much needed consensus to this field of research (e.g. de la Torre and Mazzoleni 2019; Pappas 2016).

However, there are issues about which there is some consensus already. It is generally agreed that populists claim to represent "the people" — the *demos* of democracy — and defends their right to reclaim the political power from its current holders — "the elite" — who have unlawfully claimed the power *over* the people. Populism is, in other words, *something* that presents a democratic politics as a struggle between the oppressed people and the established elites of the society. But what remains widely disputed, is what this *something* is: an ideology, a political strategy, a communication style, a discourse, a type of politics? The big question for this ever-increasing field of research to answer seems to be still: what *is* populism?

2.2 Measuring populist attitudes

One recently grown approach to studying populism as measurable attitudes is the ideational approach. This perspective approaches populism as a *set of ideas*, a combination of different *attitudes*. This approach has gained popularity recently for a number of reasons. First, up until recently, most researchers have studied exclusively the *supply*-side

of populism. That is, what populists *gain* from certain public opinions. Contrary, the ideational approach focuses on the *demand*-side of the phenomenon, and particularly on "the populist potential" among individual voters (Van Hauwaert *et al.* 2018). It attempts to explain the demand for a populist politics that would represent the *a priori* populist ideas across populations. Scholars in this tradition thus set out to find and measure these *populist attitudes* in given geographical contexts, in order either to explain the success of local or national populist actors, or to predict the electoral success of populist parties (Hawkins 2019).

It is no coincidence that the ideational approach has grown in popularity at the same time as many Populist Radical Right Parties (PRRPs) have found remarkable success across Europe. Before this recent uprising of PRRPs, populism was widely linked to democratic, emancipatory and left-wing values, such as the belief in popular sovereignty, which defended the oppressed against the oppressors (e.g. Laclau 2005). On the other hand, political scientists of the early 21st century studying the radical right struggled to explain the sudden appeal and success of radical right parties connected with fascist groups from the past and the present. Surprisingly, empiricists studying the radical right found populist arguments and values among the radical right parties and their supporters. Populism had suddenly become a phenomenon connected with the radical right and seemed to explain their sudden appeal: these were not only newly emerging radical right parties, but *populist* radical right parties (Hawkins 2019; Mudde 2007). The success of a PRRP was to be explained with the concept of *populism*, not its radical right values.

Thus, scholars promoting the ideational approach tend to be critical of theories of populism that assert that populism is in some way radical or a consequence of social pathologies — a social movement born in a dysfunctional society. On the contrary, populism is perceived to derive from mainstream politics — from the premises of democracy itself (Canovan 2002; 2004) and the normal political values of voters (Mudde 2010). Cas Mudde (2007), for example, explains the wording of the "Populist Radical Right" (PRR) with the argument that it is not populism that makes the movement radical, it is the authoritative ideologies of the socio-cultural right. Populism is a gateway for these radicals to enter the mainstream of politics (Mudde 2004; Pyrhönen 2015).

Cas Mudde, whose study of European populist values will be analysed later, is one of the main theorists of this tradition. Mudde's (2007) renowned definition of PRRPs has gained remarkable popularity among scholars of PRR. Mudde (2007) deconstructs the term "populist radical right" by distinguishing its three "core features": *nativism*, *authoritarianism* and *populism*. He defines the socio-cultural right as an ideology that emphasises the deterministic inequalities across populations, arguing that some groups are worth more than others, which is manifested in thin ideologies such as *nativism* or *ethnonationalism*. What makes these right-wingers *radical* is their refusal to accept the *pluralism* of liberal democratic systems: PRRPs tend to be against consensual politics and cooperation with political opponents, believing that their views are the only ones acceptable. Mudde (2007) labels these radical views *authoritarian*. *Populism* is the polarizing view of the society as "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, 562; 2007, 23; 2010). Populism as an analytical "attitudinal" unit is operationalised as "anti-elite" and "anti-establishment" attitudes (Mudde 2010, 1177).

The ideational approach studies *the content* of populism: attitudes that may be described as "anti-elite" or "anti-establishment". Hence it presupposes that such attitudes exist *ahead* of a populist discourse (contrary to what discourse theorists might argue). These attitudes are often collected and measured with public opinion surveys in order to explain or to predict the success of contemporary populists (Hawkins 2019; Van Hauwaert *et al.* 2018). However, such an approach requires a realist and a positivist view of values and attitudes: as entities existing independently among the relevant populations. What such measures need to do is to *represent* as faithfully as possible the attitudes, out there, in the real world.

This, however, might not be as straight-forward as it sounds. Carlos de la Torre and Oscar Mazzoleni (2019) discuss two critiques of Mudde's conceptualisation. First, methodologically, it requires a certain apriorism by the reserarcher, something Mudde (2007, 13) himself seems to be aware of: "one is faced with the problem of circularity: we have to decide on the basis of which *post facto* criteria we should use to define the various parties,

while we need *a priori* criteria to select the parties that we want to define". In other words, in order to define something *as populist* and consequently populism *as something*, one first needs to have an *a priori* conception of what populism is and how to detect it. This is unfortunately an epistemological problem Mudde and his ideational approach colleagues are yet to solve. Another problem is one of instability: Mudde's definition of populism is quite static and relies on a notion of populism as a stable property of political actors. This, however, does not reflect well the fluidity of politics as a process of change (de la Torre and Mazzoleni 2019).

To summarise, the ideational approach is a quite recently developed approach to measuring populist attitudes, or a populist potential, among populations. It builds theoretically and methodologically on Cas Mudde's (2004; 2007) conceptualisation, according to which populism is a thin-centred ideology. Populism is, in other words, *ideational* or *attitudinal*. The goal is to measure the underlying attitudes that manifest the demand for populist politics: that is, the ideas that contribute to the success of populist parties. In the next chapter, I will discuss the ontological consequences of taking an alternative approach to such positivist representationalism: a nonmodern ontology.

3 A nonmodern ontology

The approach to studying populism as attitudes and ideational constructs is possible if one accepts as the starting point a representationalist ontology, in which the sciences are understood to represent a reality independent of scientific practices. In order to *measure* something, that something needs to exist independently from the measurement. In other words, there needs to be a positivist notion of an empirical reality "out there" to be represented by a certain conceptual and theoretical knowledge "in here".

This thesis moves towards a very different ontology and argues for an "ontological turn" (Jensen 2017) in populist studies, an ontology in which the idea of *performativity* is for once taken seriously (Barad 2003). This social ontology starts from adopting and accepting the idea that no entities exist by themselves in a real world "out there", but *everything* is performed, or better put, *enacted* (Law 2004; Mol 2002). This ontological turn has three major consequences for the way populism, along with other entities, is understood in this thesis. The first consequence is how the *entity*[2] of populism can be grasped and studied. The second consequence regards the definition of *agency* and, thus, how an *actor* is defined. Third, it also has grave consequences for how "reality" is conceived. These three consequences will be discussed in detail in this chapter.

The ontological approach of this thesis owes a great deal to the social ontology of Bruno Latour, named a "nonmodern constitution" in his ground-breaking work *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993). This book can be taken as the starting point for the philosophical Latour — or the "middle Latour", as classified by Graham Harman (2014) — who had before this point been mostly occupied with empirical laboratory studies. The central thesis of Latour (1993) is that modernity — or as Latour calls it, the "modern constitution" — as the binary distinction between *a priori* real natures and constructed societies, has never been fully adopted by the modern sciences and its distinctions are unfounded. Since then, he has developed his social ontology in numerous other works (e.g. Latour 1999a;

[2] An *entity* in this study is not the same as an object, as in an essence-by-itself. No entity is an entity by itself, but always performed as a certain entity by another entity. This will be clarified further in chapter "3.2 Performativity and enactment".

2004; 2013), along with developing the Actor-Network Theory (ANT) in the late 80s and the 90s.

Other ANT-scholars, especially John Law (2004; 2009) and Annemarie Mol (2002), have influenced my understanding of this social ontology and therefore the overall formulation of this thesis. However, even though many of the theorists referenced in thesis are affiliated with ANT and the ontological framework of this thesis is in many ways in line with ANT, I have chosen to avoid the term ANT in this thesis in order not to confuse my own theoretical and methodological premises with an *a priori* "toolbox" named "ANT". This is because ANT was from the very beginning not supposed to be considered a rigid methodology, or a theory of the social, but an ontology (Latour 1999b). In fact, most ANT theorists referenced here have rejected the methodological premises of ANT one way or another, and thus its functionality as a theory (Law 1999). Hence, I refer to each theorist *individually* and not as a representative of a certain theoretical tradition. That said, Latour, Law and Mol share very similar ontological premises due to their related backgrounds in philosophy and sociology. I also want to clarify that, since Latour has become such a big name in both philosophy and sociology, my focus in this thesis is on Latour's "sociological work", that is, on his *social* ontology rather than his philosophical *œuvre* as a whole. In other words, because of my education in sociology, I read Latour, Law and Mol as a student situated in sociology.

In this chapter I will summarise briefly the central premises of the nonmodern ontology to identify the central differences between the approaches of the modern (that is, representationalist) political sciences, such as the ideational approach, and the nonmodern performative approach. In order to understanding what happens in Mudde's (2010) study and other related survey-based political studies, it is imperative that the differences between the representationalist and performative ontologies central to this thesis are presented clearly enough ahead of the analysis itself.

Hence, there are a few key concepts to sort out. I will first, in the next sub-section (3.1), discuss the modern and representationalist distinctions of the empirical/conceptual and nature/society, summarised here as the "in here" and the "out there". In the second sub-section (3.2) the distinction of the "in here" and the "out there" is discussed further and

scrutinised as I present the central differences between the "representationalist" approach and an alternative ontological approach called "performative" (Barad 2003) and "non-modern" (Latour 1993). I also discuss what consequences a nonmodern social ontology has for conceiving the nature of agency and the definition of an entity. In the third sub-section (3.3), I discuss what sort of metaphors we may use to describe the "realities" of this alternative ontology. When there is no longer *a* reality to represent, we discover that the nonmodern reality of *Things* is in fact *multiple* — a *mess* (Latour 2005b; Law 2004; Mol 2002)[3].

3.1 The "in here" and the "out there"

> Conceptual: related to or based on ideas
> Empirical: based on experiments or experience rather than ideas or theories
> (Oxford Learner's Dictionary 2020)

A common way of understanding the nature of knowledge in empirical sciences is by dividing knowledge into two distinct domains: *the conceptual* and *the empirical* (Gad and Ribes 2014; Jensen 2014). As the definition from *Oxford Learner's Dictionary* above suggests, the two are opposites — or rather the two sides of a coin. Whereas "conceptual" refers to ideas, "empirical" refers to experience *rather than* ideas or theories. These two domains constitute the idea of the "in here" and the "out there", which is considered to be the foundation of the *representationalist* sciences (Barad, 2003; Law 2004). Such a positivist notion of representation builds on an epistemological position in which scientific knowledge is understood to be a representation of "nature" or the "real".

[3] It should be clarified that the name "nonmodern multiple ontology", that I occasionally use in this thesis, is not a homogeneous ontological movement officially named as such. Rather, it is an assemblage of *similar* ontological considerations of various theorists, who name their ontological approaches differently (ANT being one attempt to bring these together). The name is, in fact, an amalgamation of Bruno Latour's (1993, 139; 1999a; 2004) "nonmodern constitution" and Annemarie Mol's (2002, 6) "multiple" conception of reality. These theorists do not represent a unified school of thought, but due to their similarities, and their history of referencing each other and working together, they can be discussed under the same heading.

One of the most telling analogies of such positivist representationalism is provided by Latour in *Politics of Nature* (2004, 10–18). Recounting an allegory by Plato in the *Republic*, Latour imagines a cave in which humans as *knowers* live. This cave represents the social, *the society* or, quite fittingly to the analogy, the *in here*. Then there is the outside of the cave: the *out there*, the real world, the empirical domain or *nature*. There is no way of knowing the out-thereness without escaping the cave. The humans therefore elect philosophers (or scientists) to escape the cave and to learn about the world out there. The philosophers then return to the cave to bring order and *truth* to the society of ignorant humans. These elected citizens have a special talent: they can move between the cave and the world out there without any transformation.

This setting creates a distinction between "two houses" (Latour 2004, 13–14): the first being the cave of human subjects only able to produce social and cultural constructs, and unaware of the real surroundings outside the cave; the second being the world outside the cave, made of mute objects that constitute what is real but which may never educate the humans about the truths of the world because they lack the gift of speech. Then there are the elected citizens who have been granted the gift of representing the mute objects, thus finally giving them a voice. Nature finally speaks and reveals itself to the few elected representatives, who return to the cave to educate the prisoners of subjectivity and culture. Nature has been *represented* without social or cultural bias.

This distinction has been scrutinized for decades by epistemologists and sociologists, particularly by social constructionists associated with the programme of sociology of scientific knowledge (Jensen 2017; Law 2008), who argue that there is *always* a social bias in knowledge. Social constructionists have for a good part of the 20th century argued that scientific knowledge is social or "socially constituted" (Pinch and Bijker 1984). The dilemma between the two domains is understood to be the following. The only way the empirical sciences can conceive of an empirical world *out there* is by conceptualising it theoretically *in here*, thus making the the empirical thoroughly dependent on the conceptual and its inherently social and theoretical constructs, rather than being true to the objective nature it claims to represent (Gad and Ribes 2014; Jensen 2014). David Bloor (1991, 16), for example, states that theoretical knowledge is not given in our experience,

but, on the contrary, *gives* "meaning to experience by offering a story about what underlies, connects and accounts for it." The empirical thus becomes a *consequence* of the conceptual and everything *known* becomes "constitutively social" (Shapin 1995, 289). Yet, this empirical world *must exist*, otherwise there would not be anything to study. Or worse, the even more terrifying conclusion is that sciences only study social artefacts!

Once we accept that knowledge is social (Bloor 1991; Shapin 1995), the distinction between an empirical domain out there and a conceptual domain in here becomes impossible and the out there becomes a mere social artefact. Either there exists an out there that we can never be aware of, precisely because of its "out-thereness", or we access the out there, hence rendering its existence impossible by turning it into a conceptual in here. The empirical sciences, social constructionists argue, never studied an empirical reality *outside* the sciences, but *constructed* socially constituted representations dependent on certain theoretical and conceptual knowledges (Bloor 1991; Gad and Ribes 2014; Jensen 2014; 2017). These representations of the real are always false since they are contaminated with social factors. Hence, sociology of scientific knowledge is always a "sociology of error" (Bloor 1991). The question for the social constructionist tradition is not *whether* scientific knowledge is false, but *how much* it deviates from the real world. However, Latour (1993; 1999c) — as opposed to Bloor[4] — argues that the social constructionists have made the dilemma between the out there and the in here simultaneously necessary but effectively impossible to solve, by arguing that everything is socially constructed.

3.2 Performativity and enactment

Does this really mean that we cannot tell anything about the "real world?" If everything is socially constructed, then what is *true*? This dilemma is tackled by Latour in many of his works (e.g. 1993; 1999a; 2004). By countering the "social constructionists" and the "postmoderns", Latour (1993) questions the distinction between society and nature *altogether*, arguing that social constructionism and postmodernism fail to solve the dilemma,

[4] A debate between these two, regarding this issue, is found in Bloor's critique, "Anti-Latour" (1999), and in Latour's response, "For David Bloor… and Beyond: A Reply to David Bloor's 'Anti-Latour'" (1999c).

since they remain stuck in the social domain and the impossible requisite for representation. Claiming everything to be socially constructed is, after all, placing every set of knowledge and every known object into the domain of the social. Since being postmodern means taking a position *after* the modernist position, hence being dependent on the very distinctions criticised, postmoderns make knowledge effectively impossible — making the postmoderns the worst of the worst for Latour (1993, 59–62):

> Postmodern? Not yet; the worst is still to come. [– –] With the postmoderns, the abandonment of the modern project is consummated. I have not found words ugly enough to designate this intellectual movement — or rather, this intellectual immobility through which humans and non-humans are left to drift. [– –] There is only one positive thing to be said about the postmoderns: after them, there is nothing.

In order to escape the impossibility of the modern distinction between nature and society, we need to escape the social domain as well. We need to become not post-modern, but non-modern (Latour 1993).

Being nonmodern is to be true to the notion of *performativity* — an ontological standpoint characterised as the opposite to representationalism by Karen Barad (2003). This standpoint does not depend on modernist preformulated distinctions between what belongs to nature and what to society; what is a passive object and what is an active subject; what is located in here and what is out there, since its premise is that everything is *performed* as something *by* something. Everything moves in the *same domain*. It is no longer an *a priori* distinction that determines in advance the position, the attributes and the *essence* of any object or subject: it is the *performative practice itself* which determines the outcome — that is the “product” — of its producing power. To put it simply: the notion of performativity is *anti-essentialist*; instead of defining objects according to predefined configurations, objects are defined according to the practices that produce the object. And because these practices tend to be multiple, so is the object (Mol 2002).

The term “performativity” has a long history in the social sciences, being especially central to dramaturgical sociology and feminist theory (Barad 2003). However, science studies scholars (e.g. Barad 2003; Mol 2002; Latour 1999a; Law 2004) have argued that the traditional notion of *performativity* might not be enough to refill the ontological void,

when we have truly abandoned the terms of representativity. Annemarie Mol (2002) argues that "to perform" carries with it unwanted dramaturgical connotations: firstly, assumptions that there is a "script" (a macro-structure) that guides the performer and, secondly, that behind every performance exists a backstage (the *real* reality), promoting once again the idea that performances are *false representations* of the real — and so we have returned to the modern distinctions we tried to escape. Here, we may consider as an example of such a notion of performativity the second tradition of populism studies, as summarised by Woods (2014), in which populism is understood as a performance — a script for performing a certain populist character.

Annemarie Mol (2002) and John Law (2004) have thus proposed an alternative term which does not depend on *a priori* scripts and backstages: *to enact*. "To perform" and "to enact" bear similar meanings: both indicate that objects are *produced* in and by practices rather than having a fixed essence. However, "to enact" has one important advantage over "to perform", which allows us to escape the modern distinctions: what is enacted always *acts back*. If we accept the full notion of performativity — that is, the one of enaction — then whatever acts has to be *en*-acted *as* an actor by another actor (Latour 1999a; Law 2004; Mol 2002). What is conceived here is a reversal of the modernist definition of an actor, according to which an actor is something that acts. This would only indicate a return to an essentialist notion of an actor-by-itself. According to the *nonmodern* definition of an actor, nothing acts by itself, rather *an actor is what is acted upon*. As summed up by Latour (2005a, 46): "an actor is what is made to act by many others." All actions are, first, *re*-actions to *inter*-actions with other actors; secondly, *en*-actions of those other actors; and thirdly, en-*acting* of other actors. There cannot be, by this definition, an action without an interaction in a network of two or several actors. Each actor is, ontologically speaking, determined by a *network* of practices by a multiplicity of different actors (Latour 1999a; 2005a; Mol 2002). Each actor is a *collective* of actors (Latour 2004).

This reversal of the definition of an actor has important ramifications. First, *agency* is no longer defined by the essence or the pre-fixed configuration of an actor; instead *agency* is defined according to the *effect* on another course of action. Agency is what makes a difference to a set of practices and enacts different actors. The term "to enact" allows us

to forget about the actor and to focus on the agency *itself*: it is the agency that defines the actor, not the other way around (Law and Mol 2008). Second, since agency is no longer defined according to the actor, it allows us to detach agency from being exclusively a human attribute, and to turn to a "posthumanist" account of performativity (Barad 2003). This means that any entity that produces an effect is an actor. Consequently, no entity is an entity by itself, but always enacted by another entity: "nothing is, by itself, either reducible or irreducible to anything else. Never by itself, but always through the mediation of another" (Latour 1993, 113). Since nothing acts by itself, neither do humans — rather, being human is being enacted by a myriad of *nonhuman* actors. Things act too, *matter* matters, as Karen Barad (2003, 801) puts it: "Language matters. Discourse matters. Culture matters. There is an important sense in which the only thing that does not seem to matter anymore is matter."

Writing this thesis, for example, is a very human practice (only humans write theses), but would I not be a very poor writer without the pile of *books* I have had read for this work, the *computer* I am writing on and the *coffee* I am drinking in order to stay awake late at night? These nonhuman entities, on the other hand, are enacted too: by the *authors* referred to in this thesis and the *trees* that once grew in a forest somewhere before being chopped down and turned into paper; the *computer scientists* and the *factory machines* making it possible for me to write on my laptop; the *coffee bean farmers* in Colombia and the huge *trading networks* required to ship the brew to my home country and finally to my local grocery store. Each of these actors are enacted as well by actors I might be completely unaware of. The point being, I would not be *the* thesis writing graduate student I am without this enormous amount of practices constantly enacting me. The entity of human is in fact a *hybrid* of human and nonhuman actors (Latour 1993; 1999a) or a *cyborg*, in Donna Haraway's (1991) vocabulary.

Because the meaning of agency and an actor has changed dramatically from how these are perceived by the moderns, most science studies scholars have become cautious with the term "actor". Law and Mol (2008), for example, prefer to talk about the *actor-enacted* to underline the fact that each actor is enacted. Latour (1999a; 2004; 2005a) talks about *actants* to underscore that nonhumans act too. I will use both terms "actor" and "enactor",

depending on what I wish to emphasize in the specific context. With "actor" I emphasize the entity that acts; with "enactor" I wish to emphasize the outcome of the enaction and the fact that the actor in consideration is, even though I might not mention it specifically, both enacted and enacting. All in all, both terms mean the same thing: an entity that has been enacted and is thus enacting other entities.

Which consequences does this alternative definition of agency have on the domains of the out there and the in here? For a start, we no longer need a distinct domain of the out there, of which representationalists and social constructionists are completely dependent. Instead of constructing a dichotomy between *knowing subjects* and *known objects*, the object of knowledge — the out there — is now conceived to be a result of enacting practices, and vice versa. Instead of representing the out there, by leaving our cave in here, we *perform* it. The out there *is what is enacted* in here. In other words, *representation is performed* (Law 2008). Instead of an impossible dichotomy of two contrasting houses (Latour 2004), we finally have permission to *stay* in our reality and to try to explain what is at all times explainable, without having to be afraid of the "errors" (Bloor 1991) of representing a reality that is at all times out of our reach. Second, since the practices that enact the out there are *multiple*, so is the out there itself. If reality is enacted in multiple practices, then reality is multiple too (Law 2008; Mol 2002).

3.3 Mess and the multiplicity of things

> If this is an awful mess… then would something less messy make a mess of describing it? (Law 2004, 1.)

This rhetorical question, stated beneath an image of a mess, is asked by John Law in *After Method* (2004). He answers it himself: "the answer, I will argue, is that it tends to make a mess of it. This is because simple clear descriptions don't work if what they are describing is not itself very coherent. The very attempt to be clear simply increases the mess" (Law 2004, 2). The world out there is a mess, he argues, and the empirical sciences attempting to describe it as clearly as possible, in here, tend only to mess it up even further. As when looking at a messy painting, we find it hard describe the details of the mess,

because the details might change as we change our perspectives, or they might hide behind another stroke of the brush. “Knowing” a mess is only possible by “techniques of deliberate imprecision”: by accepting that whatever is “known” changes and travels in ways that we cannot control, and by learning to describe them *allegorically* (Law 2004).

This mess precedes the organising methods of the empirical sciences. Similarly to Michel Serres’ (2007) notion of *noise*, *mess* indicates a chaos of unorganised matter before a science creates taxonomies, classifications, hierarchisations or some generalisations about the ever-changing mess (Pyyhtinen and Tamminen 2011). Following Michel Foucault’s (1972; 2002 [1970]) archaeological studies of classifying practices, Law (2004) argues that such classifications do not capture the entities under study — as one would capture a butterfly in a jar — but only a small portion which is then turned into a standard.

Before an entity is successfully classified and turned into a statement about the nature of things, it remains a *proposition*: an uncertainty trying to convince the onlooker about its relevance (Foucault 1972; 2002 [1970]; Latour 2004). Propositions are not essentialising statements about objects, but *occasions* providing entities the chance to enact and be enacted (Latour 1999a, 141). They are “matters of concern” — unstable entities yet to have been given clear figurations — that are called upon to make possible statements about the nature of things. But once these entities are classified and turned into statements, they no longer move or change. They become *black-boxed*:

> Once the candidacy of the new entities has been recognized, accepted, legitimized, admitted among the older propositions, these entities become states of nature, self-evidences, black boxes, habits, paradigms. No one discusses their rank and their importance any longer. They have been *registered* as full-fledged members of collective life. They are part of the nature of things, of common sense, of the common world. They are no longer discussed. They serve as indisputable premises to countless reasonings and arguments that are prolonged elsewhere. (Latour 2004, 104.)

Propositions are the building blocks of *the collective* (Latour 2004). Since each acting thing is an assemblage of many actors, Latour (2004) argues that things should be understood as collectives — things that *collect* a multiplicity of actors. Since these collectives are not set in stone, but are mobile and changing, Latour (2004, 83–86) argues that the

old system of statements should be abandoned. Statements do, after all, refer to stable matters of fact. Rather, the term “pro-position” provides a much better metaphor for describing the entities that *enact* and *collect* the collective. Propositions are, more than anything, *enactors* (Latour 1999a). The more propositions a collective collects, the stronger the collective becomes at collecting. Once enough entities, as propositions, have been accepted as members of the collective, the old system of statements (that is, of representation) transforms them into stable facts about the singular nature of things.

Bruno Latour (1999a) provides an illuminating example of this black-boxing of propositions by following a group of pedologists (soil scientists) studying a forest-savanna transition in the Amazon forest. This part of the forest is already marked: there are tags on the trees and on the ground informing the scientists what is what and where they are. He follows as one of the pedologists picks up a piece of the soil and puts it into a jar which is then tagged. The pedologist then compares the sample with other soil samples on a “pedocomparator” and finally transports the soil to his office, where he studies it with a microscope at his desk. This piece of soil is *transformed* by the pedologist from being a small piece of the soil belonging to the Amazon forest into being a sample put into a jar, then classified by comparing it to other samples and finally, becoming a large piece containing small pieces under the microscope. The soil, as a collective of propositions, is gradually black-boxed; it has revealed everything it was supposed to, and it may be turned into a statement about the forest-savanna transition in a particular area of the Amazon forest.

If we follow this piece of soil, not as an essence-by-itself, but as an enactor, we find that there is in fact a *multiplicity* of the same soil sample. The soil *changes* its figuration depending on how it is enacted *to act* by the pedologist and his equipment. It is first a piece of soil giving nutrition to the surrounding trees and plants; then the forest is tagged and the soil becomes a location and an indicator on a map; the pedologist picks up the piece of soil to enact it as a sample — a *representative* for the rest of the soil in the tagged area; it is then compared to other samples, which enacts it as a specific soil with specific colour and graininess, but only *in comparison* to other samples from other tagged areas; finally,

the soil is taken away from the forest to *reveal* microscopic configurations under the microscope. The piece of soil not only changes its location, size and scale multiple times during this anecdote, but *it is enacted as different entities with different agencies*. The soil in the ground *is not the same actor* as the soil under the microscope: one gives life to plants and animals, the other reveals something to the scientist about the forest-savanna transition — but only when put under a microscope. Given that the soil is now considered to be not an object made out of statements, but a collective enacted by propositions: how many propositions are there in this short story? The pedologist is one, for sure, but so is the forest, the tags, the maps, the jar, the pedocomparator and the microscope. All of these propositions collect and associate different entities with the soil, making it a stronger and better articulated collective, and eventually a black-boxed object.

Annemarie Mol (2002) has made a similar study, but about a disease — "atherosclerosis" — causing a symptom called "intermittent claudication" which causes pain in the legs of the patients. For four years she visited a hospital in the Netherlands once or twice a week to follow how the hospital personnel discover, diagnose, define and treat the disease in different hospital departments. As Latour (1999a) discovered with the soil samples and the pedologists in the Amazon forest, Mol (2002) found that the disease is diagnosed, described and treated *differently* by different actors in different locations. This is because the *general practitioner* in the consulting room, the *surgeon* in the operating theatre, the *pathologist* in the pathology laboratory and the *radiologists* in the radiology department all *practice* atherosclerosis differently, given their different educations, equipment and professional duties in the hospital organisation (not to mention the patients themselves and their families, occupations, daily walking routes, etc.). If an entity is indeed what is enacted through practices, then the disease seems to be *multiple*: "more than one — but less than many" (Law 2004, 59; Mol 2002, 55).

It is "less than many" because even though it is multiple, this does not mean that it is *plural*. Being plural would mean that the disease was fragmented — but it is not, it somehow hangs together. The hospital personnel speak about atherosclerosis in the singular. As the pathologist told Mol as he showed her the disease under the microscope:

> That's the lumen. There's blood cells inside it, you see. That only happens when a lumen is small. Otherwise it's washed out during the preparation. And here, around the lumen, this first layer of cells, that's the intima. It's thick. Oh, wow, isn't it thick! It goes all the way from here, to there. Look. *Now there's your atherosclerosis.* That's it. A thickening of the intima. That's really *what it is*. (Mol 2002, 30, my emphasis.)

Even though the pathologist knows that the disease is diagnosed and treated very differently in other hospital departments — after all, the pathologist studies dead body parts and not live patients to be cured — he refers to it as the same disease as the one treated by the general practitioner or the surgeon. The fact that it is behaves differently in different locations and different practices is explained by a matter of perspectives. The fact that the "angiography" produces different readings to the "duplex" is explained by its superior accuracy compared to the duplex — it *represents* the out there *better*. Yet, Mol (2002) argues, the *disease* as a set of enacting practices is a different entity from practice to practice, location to location.

The point is not to claim that the atherosclerosis in patient *x*'s leg is a different disease than the atherosclerosis in patient *z*'s leg — that would return us to a question of plurality. There indeed exists a plurality of atheroscleroses: most adults older than 60 have some sort of atherosclerosis, even though most do not show any symptoms (WebMD.com). In contrast to the notion of plurality, *multiplicity* of an object refers to *one*, but multiple, object: an object that is one — as the disease "atherosclerosis" — but enacted by a multiplicity of practices. Mol's (2002) conclusion is that it is only by *coordinating* all the multiple atheroscleroses into a single story, that it can finally be regarded as a single disease, an object. It is at the same time a single disease as it is ontologically multiple. Ontologically speaking, given the reality of the practices which enact the disease, it is more sensible to talk about multiple atheroscleroses rather than one.

This coordination work is what Latour (1999a), Mol (2002) and Law (2004) have attempted to describe in their respective studies: how a *multiplicity* of practices has been transformed into a *singular* object. These singularising practices of course variate from case to case, but Law (2004) has attempted to describe some practices — or effects of practices — that need to have happened for such singularity to occur. For starters, the

researcher needs an *inscription device*: some sort of research equipment capable of *transforming* an object into a description of the object, for example a microscope or a survey questionnaire. These two, the object and the description of the said object, are two separate entities. But then these two separated entities are *translated* as one. Once the report of the study is published, the description of the object is treated as a faithful reference to the object itself. In other words, the inscription devices — or the *calculating devices* (Latour 2013) — enact the out there *in order* to be able to represent it. They work as *scripts* for the representable out-thereness.

> The term *calculation* and even *calculating devices* should no longer lead us astray. That the equipment of economization allows calculations does not mean that it *ceases to be performative* for all that. If the data produced by value meters are calculable, it is for reasons that *have to do with their nature as organizational scripts* and not at all, as we shall see, because they refer back to some quantifiable *matter* toward which they would procure privileged access. (Latour 2013, 409.)

Inscription devices are not intermediaries between an empirical out there and the knowledge in here, but *mediators* enacting the two domains as representing each other (Latour 1999; Latour 2005a). Concepts, as inscriptions of objects out there, work as the manifestations of the existence of the objects. In other words, concepts are enacted to perform that which they represent — the empirical out there (Gad and Ribes 2014).

In order for this to happen, some or most of the practices enacting the concept need to be *Othered* (Law 2004). This means that the practices of the researcher and the inscription device *differentiating* the object from its representation do not *travel* from practice to practice, but are left undocumented or deleted from the final report. Maybe the researcher is careless, maybe some practices are felt to be too contradictory or futile to report, maybe the journal editor thinks the report is too long and needs to be cut. Be it as it may, this makes the remaining entities *fluid* and more suitable for manipulation: the fact that certain enacting practices have been Othered makes the present entities more translatable. This fluidity and the Othering of disparities grant the object a continuity out there (Law 2002; 2004): despite its multiplicity, it still hangs together (Mol 2002). However, this does not mean that these Othered practices are *absent* — they are nonetheless manifested in the object as it has been enacted. They remain in the *Hinterland* — the "missing masses" of

an object, or the "plasma" (Latour 2005a, 241–246; Law 2004; Pyyhtinen and Tamminen 2011). By reading reports *allegorically*, one may account for these missing masses that must have been in order for the object to exist as it does (Law 2004).

A final note to end this section. As there are many different terms for "actor" used in STS, so are there many for designating objects. Some scholars avoid the term "object" because of its connotations to passiveness and essentialism. In a posthumanist approach, the *a priori* distinction between object and subject fades: objectivity and subjectivity is performed in and by the situated practices themselves (Haraway 1988). Objects are, after all, active and acting subjects too. Latour, for example, has written about "quasi-objects" and "quasi-subjects" (Latour 1993; 2013) and "subject-objects" (Latour 1999a). However, more recently, in connection to his political ontology, Latour (2005b; 2007; 2013) speaks of *Things* rather than objects: instead of talking about objects as "matters of fact", he asks us to talk about Things as "matters of concern" (Latour 2007, 815).

Borrowing from the etymology of the word, Latour (2005b; 2013) defines a "Thing" (*Ding*) as anything that draws interested entities together; as anything that assembles a group of actors to *act together*. Things are therefore matters of politics: something that invokes political practices. Latour (2005b) urges us to think about the names of Nordic parliaments: *Stortinget* (as "the big thing") in Norway, *Folketinget* (as "the people's thing") in Denmark, *Alþingi* (as "the thing of all") in Iceland, and *Lagtinget* (as "the thing of law") in Åland. Things are issues that *assemble* people, and other things, as Latour (2005b, 13) concludes: "the *Ding* or Thing has for many centuries meant the issue that brings people together because it divides them." Rather than being matters of fact, Things are matters of concern — *issues* that demand an assembly of a *collective* to discuss, altercate and, perhaps, reach consolidation. Things are the many issues that incite a collective to collect propositions. They are, in other words, *multiple*. The term "Thing" leaves the configuration of the object up for debate: talking about Things rather than objects is a way of recognising that *something* clearly sparks an effect in a collective, but it is still unclear exactly what it *is* and what it *does*. It exists, but it is yet to be articulated into a singular representation of an object.

Let me summarise this chapter. Several approaches to studying populism — among others, the ideational approach — relies on some sort of representationalist notions of scientific knowledge. The positivist notion of representationalism seeks to represent an independent outside world, the "out there", as faithfully and accurately as the methods in use are capable of representing. The ideational approach, for example, presumes that certain unmediated "populist attitudes" can be captured and measured without particular transformation using certain quantitative methods (de la Torre and Mazzoleni 2019; Hawkins 2019; Van Hauwaert *et al.* 2018).

This sort of positivism has been criticised by social constructionists, who have argued that any representation of the out there is inherently social (Pinch and Bijker 1984; Shapin 1995) — that is a construct with certain social bias and error (Bloor 1991; Jensen 2017; Law 2008). This move away from positivist representationalism is, however, not a move away from representationalism altogether, since claiming scientific knowledge to be "constitutively social" (Shapin 1995, 289) places everything "known" into the social domain, thus making the out there an empty and impossible artefact (Latour 1993). The social constructionist notion of representation is as inconceivable as the positivist one.

Hence, what needs to happen to solve this representationalist dilemma is to escape the notions of representationalism altogether and replace it with the notions of performativity and multiplicity (Barad 2002; Mol 2002). However, this does not mean that representation does not *exist*. On the contrary, the notion of representation is a central standard for (positivist) knowledge production; it *enacts* knowledge as representation. *Representation is an enactor*. Instead of taking representation as a *standard*, we can now examine, just as with any other actor, how *it is performed* (Law 2008). Instead of lamenting about the social factors and errors contaminating our representations, we no longer expect anything to represent at all (Latour 1993). Instead of representing objects, we examine the practices that enact Things and actors (Latour 2005b). Instead of expecting accurate and singular descriptions of a mess, we expect things to be multiple and fluid (Mol 2002, Law 2004).

4 Methodology

This is a qualitative case study of the research practices of Cas Mudde (2010) in his study of populist attitudes, reported in the article "The Populist Radical Right: A Pathological Normalcy". The focus of my methodology is on the *practices* of Mudde and his conceptualisation of populism as enacted by a multiplicity of human and nonhuman entities, rather than on the objects-in-themselves represented in his report. Or better put, the focus is on the objects *as enactors* rather than as essences.

This is *not* a methodological critique, but an *ontological critique*, in the sense that this thesis promotes an ontological approach that is at odds with the representationalist approach, which is central to Mudde's understanding of populism as measurable sets of attitudes. In other words, this is not a critique of Mudde personally nor his methodology *per se*, but a critique of the *ontological presumptions* that validate such methodological practices. Thus, the factuality of Mudde's conclusions is not my concern, but *how* he has reached his conclusions. This is an "analytic issue focused" study *of* (political) science rather than a study *in* science — that is, a focus on how science *is* done around a certain topic, rather than how a methodologically proper populist study *should* be done (Bowden 1995, 71). The purpose is thus not only to describe what happens in Mudde's study specifically, but also what might happen in similar ideational studies of "populist attitudes".

4.1 Research material

My research material is first of all the article written by Mudde (2010) and a passage on the pages 1177–1178 particularly, on which he reports his findings about populist attitudes in Europe. This passage, as my unit of analysis in the first part of my study, is a report on *one* of the *three* core features of his conceptualisation of the populist radical right (PRR). Prior to this specific passage, Mudde (2010) reports on attitudes regarding *nativism* and *authoritarianism* — the other two components of PRR. I will *not* focus on these two components since they are treated as separate features by Mudde (2007; 2010). It should also be noted that Mudde's article "The Populist Zeitgeist" (2004) and book "Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe" (2007) serve as a background to Mudde's

(2010) study and, consequently, my study. Mudde's now famous definition of populism was first formulated in "The Populist Zeitgeist" (Mudde 2004) before being defined almost identically in his book "Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe" (Mudde 2007) and in "The Populist Radical Right: A Pathological Normalcy" (Mudde 2010).

This article by Mudde is one of his most referenced articles (according to Google Scholar) and it demonstrates well how his conceptualisation works in empirical practice. In addition, it is exemplary of the development of the ideational approach, which grew in popularity later in the 2010's, partly due to the operationality of Mudde's conceptualisation. For my pilot study, I planned on comparing this study to other studies using other conceptual approaches, or alternatively, granting more importance to Mudde's earlier works (e.g. 2004; 2007), but I quickly realised that the just over one page passage produces more than enough practices for me to consider. Thus, I made the decision to make a case study of how entities from the Eurobarometer enact Mudde's study, and vice versa. The fact that a one-page passage produces enough data for a Master's thesis is indicative of how much is Othered in such representationalist measurements.

Thus, I also analyse the specific Eurobarometer survey reports referenced in Mudde's (2010) passage about populist attitudes in Europe. These Eurobarometer surveys are the *Standard Eurobarometer surveys 52* (EB52) published in 2000, *59* (EB59) published in 2003, *66* (EB66) published in 2007, *69* (EB69) published in 2008, and *the Special Eurobarometer surveys 245* (SEB245) published in 2006 and *291* (SEB291) published in 2008. The Eurobarometer is the largest recurring public opinion survey in Europe and its database is one of the largest in the world. The Eurobarometer surveys are commissioned by the *Directorate-General for Communication of the European Commission* (formerly by "The Directorate-General for Education and Culture" and "The Directorate-General for Press and Communication") and are carried out by *INRA (Europe) European Coordination Office* (EB52), *European Opinion Research Group EEIG* (EB59) and *TNS Opinion & Social* (EB66, EB69, SEB245, SEB291).

There are two different types of Eurobarometer surveys included in my analysis. Traditional *Standard Eurobarometer surveys* have recurring themes and sets of questions and are published twice a year (EB59). These regular surveys are developed to monitor the

European public opinion about standard issues related to the European Union. The *Special Eurobarometer surveys*, however, are in-depth thematic surveys that measure the public opinion on more specific and current issues, such as on organised crime and corruption (SEB245; SEB291; Signorelli 2012). These themes along with their "contexts" are usually presented in the introductions to the Eurobarometer reports.

The method of data collection used in the Eurobarometer surveys is a *Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing* (CAPI) (Höpner and Jurczyk 2015). This means that the interviewer is present while the respondent answers a survey on an electronic device, such as a computer or a tablet. Approximately 1,000 respondents from each EU member state included in the survey at the time are interviewed in line with a questionnaire and a methodology developed by the European Commission. The size of the country sample depends in part on the size of the country's population and each respondent has to be at least 15 years of age.

All research material is either borrowed electronically from the Helsinki University Library or downloaded from respective public providers: Mudde's (2010) article is downloaded from his public *reserachgate.net* -profile, while all Eurobarometer surveys are public documents and downloadable on ec.europa.eu. The material is read and analysed on my computer using the tools provided by Adobe Reader and Microsoft Excel.

4.2 Method: allegorical praxiography

The method of analysis of this study is not exactly a rigid method taken from a methodology textbook. Instead, it could be called an "allegorical praxiography". My method for reading and analysing Mudde's (2010) report on populist attitudes in Europe and the Eurobarometer surveys he references is heavily influenced by Annemarie Mol's (2002) praxiographic work in the Dutch hospital referenced earlier, and John Law's (2009) archaeological readings of the Eurobarometer surveys on "European citizens' attitudes to farm animal welfare" (Law 2009, 240) from 2005 (*Special Eurobarometer 229*) and 2007 (presumably *Special Eurobarometer 270*).

Annemarie Mol's (2002, 4) *praxiography* is what she calls an "exercise in *empirical philosophy*". The method is an ethnography with a twist: instead of observing people, actors, objects, cultures, traditions — or any other already established object or subject — the praxiographer observes all of these as *practices*. Everything, including people, is described and defined as a result of sets of practices. The purpose is to describe an object by the practices that have enacted it and the practices it enacts, as Mol (2002) described the enacting of atherosclerosis and Latour (1999a) the soil of the Amazon forest. This is why the methodological premises of Mol's praxiography provides the best possible tools to analyse the multiple practices that produce populism as a set of attitudes in Mudde's study. Instead of focusing on what populism *is*, I am interested in how it is *done*.

However, I will not be able to do a traditional "ethnography in practices" since I do not have access to real-time makings of populist attitudes. Instead, I will have to rely on the practices reported and manifested in the objects described in my research material literature. In fact, Mol (2002, 158) has hinted that this might be enough to discover something relevant. A praxiography in text does not allow me to follow the practices in action, rather only what the author of the text has chosen to include. This means that many of the practices that enact certain objects have gone unreported.

This is not necessarily a problem, but it could be a possibility. What John Law (2004) means with the term "allegorical reading" is exactly this: to read a reportage knowing that some aspects are necessarily Othered; that some things are simplified in order for an object to be translated into singular. I am only able to report with certainty on what has been reported by someone else — and this is the point. Everything else needs to be read *allegorically*. First, the analyst recognizes the missing practices, that is, the black-boxed entities which do not carry with them the practices that have enacted them as they travel from one literature to another. Then the analyst could go three different ways.

The first option is accepting that these practices are Othered and that they are no longer present. If the analyst is not allowed to know what has been Othered, neither are other readers and hence the object is gradually black-boxed. Opening the black box has failed, but this already will reveal something about it — the fact that it *hides* something, and we do not know what it is. The second option is to analyse the black box allegorically, to

work out the missing practices by reasoning what must have been done for this object to have been enacted as it has. This requires some presuming and is not the best way to reach certainty (whether certainty can be reached at all will be discussed later), but it might make the black box *leak* a bit by at least focusing on the object as a set of *potential* practices. This could be enough to reveal an object's multiplicity, even if the exact practices remain Othered. The third option, if the circumstances allow, is to do an investigation into the practices. For example, when Mudde (2010) references a Eurobarometer survey, which happens to be a public report, it is possible for the analyst to analyse how the multiple entities have been enacted in the Eurobarometer survey report, and to follow how they are re-enacted as they travel to Mudde's (2010) study.

John Law's (2009) "archaeological reading" of the Eurobarometer surveys 2005 and 2007 serves as a great example of how such an allegorical praxiography in text could be done. By attempting a "Foucauldian archaeology", Law (2009) describes the ways in which attitudes on farm animal welfare are enacted in the results of the Eurobarometer reports in five "layers". This archaeological reading and the five layers it produces work as a frame of reference for my interpretation of my data, because it exemplifies well how to study objects as practices allegorically. My reading of Mudde (2010), as will become apparent soon, produces three layers of enactors, based on Law's (2009) five layers and the central premises of the nonmodern ontology presented above.

Annemarie Mol's (2002) praxiography provides a methodological toolbox to studying objects as enacted through scientific practices, while Law's (2004; 2009) allegorical and archaeological readings of text are great examples of how to study such practices without actually being present at the scene. Even though Mol (2002) and Law (2009) have made similar studies, neither of them have focused specifically on concepts. My focus in this thesis is on the concept of populism as simultaneously enacted and *enacting*. I am, in other words, applying a perspective on concepts *as actors in their own right.* This means that this study applies a *nominalist* understanding of concepts (Magetti, Gilardi and Radaelli 2012), a premise that recognises that concepts are never right or wrong — they enact their own realities. Populism *is* as it is enacted in the specific literature.

4.3 Research process

The research process can be divided into three separate but partly overlapping readings. The first reading was a careful reading of Mudde's (2010) article and the section (pages 1177–1178) in which he analyses European populist attitudes. Here I analysed how the concept of populism as it has been defined re-enacts (translates) the attitudes that have travelled from the various Eurobarometer survey reports. This praxiographic reading of the populist attitudes underlined what kind of practices enact these attitudes and what is — or might be — Othered in the process. The first reading was accompanied with reading Mudde's (2004; 2007) earlier works to understand the theoretical background of the concept. The article was, first, read through once and then the chapter "The Attitudinal" (Mudde 2010, 1175–1178) was revisited a few times to get a proper understanding of my data. Here, in line with the praxiographic premises, I focused on how entities appear to have *been done*, rather than focusing on the objects themselves as matters of fact.

The second reading regarded the Eurobarometer surveys and the data used by Mudde (2010), but as reported in the Eurobarometer surveys themselves. By returning to the "source" of Mudde's data it is possible to recognize the objects yet to be translated *as* populist by Mudde and describe them as they have been enacted in the Eurobarometer. Here I focused on how Eurobarometer surveys work as inscription devices (Law 2004; 2009): how the methods applied in the Eurobarometer enact the different actors present in the survey reports in order to be able to represent a "European public opinion". I focused specifically on three central layers of enactors to the Eurobarometer surveys: *the (human) actors*, *the issues* and *the locations* of European public opinions. The second reading formed a dialogue between Mudde's analysis and the Eurobarometer surveys, since I had to constantly control which particular sets of data Mudde references in which instances.

Finally, the third reading concerned the specific statements made by Mudde (2010) to enact the populist attitudes in his study. The purpose of this reading was to retrace the multiplicity of entities (propositions) referenced by Mudde in his statements about the European populist attitudes *as* they have travelled from the Eurobarometer to Mudde's

study. Here, rather than considering objects as *changing* between the Eurobarometer and Mudde's (2010) report or being represented *differently* by Mudde, I focused on how Mudde actually re-enacts *new* objects of the data and the concepts he is working with. This reading was done in order to see if there are in fact multiple public opinions and whether Mudde's practices have led to the inclusion of only one of these many potential propositions. These statements and propositions were listed in tables using Microsoft Excel and edited into more readable formats for the report (see Tables 1 and 2).

These three steps produce new knowledge about how certain attitudes are enacted *as* populism by ideational approach studies such as Mudde's (2010). This analysis will also bring to light the multiplicity of human and nonhuman actors necessary for such an object to be enacted. My hope is that, even though this is a case study into a specific enactment of populism, the knowledge it produces is generalisable — or at least exemplary on an ontological level — to other studies applying similar ontological and methodological frameworks for studying "populism" or other analytical concepts. I do not claim that these same kind practices have occurred in similar ideational approach studies, or other quantitative measures of populism for that matter, but that these cases of science-making could be approached using the ontological and methodological premises presented in this thesis.

5 Analysis: A multiple populism

The following chapter is divided into three subsections, according to the order of analysis. I will first summarise Mudde's article, "Populist Radical Right: A Pathological Normalcy" (2010), and present the unit of analysis consisting of a one-page passage in which Mudde analyses populist attitudes using existing Eurobarometer survey data. Below, I present the central enactors and propositions to "trace back" to the Eurobarometer data. The purpose of this section is to lay the groundwork for the further analysis; that is to describe the central actors, issues and locations that are included in the passage and which enact "populism" in this specific study by Mudde (2010).

5.1 Cas Mudde and the pathological normalcy thesis

I will start with a short summary of Mudde's article. The article has almost 600 citations on *Google Scholar* (as of May 2020) and is thus one of Mudde's most cited academic articles[5]. Mudde (2010) presents two arguments for a paradigm shift in studies on Populist Radical Right Parties (PRRPs). The first is that the current paradigm, the *normal pathology thesis*, fails to explain PRRPs success under empirical scrutiny. The normal pathology thesis asserts that the success of PRRPs is explained by societal crises and social pathologies, that is, by pathological attitudinal changes as a result of these social crises. Mudde (2010) disagrees with this presumption and asserts that the success of PRRPs should rather be explained as a *pathological normalcy*: by the attitudes and the issues explaining the success of PRRPs being *normal*, not pathological, in (Western) European societies.

Thus, the second argument is that scholars, in light of pathological normalcy, should focus on "supply-side factors" rather than "demand-side factors" in explaining the success

[5] On top of writing academic articles, Cas Mudde also writes columns for the Guardian.

of PRRP's in Europe[6]. Since there are no pathological changes in society that could explain the success of PRRP's, scholars should rather focus on "internal" explanations: how PRRP's themselves have managed to overcome the struggles of the saliency of their issues already existing in European societies.

In order to argue for this said paradigm shift, Mudde (2010) needs empirically to demonstrate that the attitudes and values attached to PRRP's are *already* present in Europeans' "normal" attitudes on current societal issues associated with PRRP's. He does this by analysing attitudes associated with the three core features that he understands to be central to the populist radical right — *nativism*, *authoritarianism* and *populism* (Mudde 2007) — in several Eurobarometer surveys conducted between 1997 and 2008, that is before and after the argued rise of PRRPs. Since I am here interested in the concept of *populism*, my focus is merely on the analysis of populist attitudes and the sources Mudde (2010) references in order to make statements about such populist attitudes.

My unit of analysis in this section, strictly put, consists of a ca. one page long section in Mudde's article (2010, 1177–1178), in which he analyses attitudes associated with populism specifically. The sections dedicated to the other two features — nativism and authoritarianism — will not be analysed here. Before analysing the passage about populist attitudes from Mudde's (2010) study, it is a good idea to remind us about his definition of populism, formulated almost identically in "The Populist Zeitgeist" (2004), "Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe" (2007) and "The Populist Radical Right: A Pathological Normalcy" (2010):

[6] An attentive reader might notice that the ideational approach contrasts this argument. While this is true, both approaches study populist attitudes out there. Whereas the ideational approach focuses on how these out there -attitudes affect the *demand* for populist politics, Mudde (2010) focuses on how populist politics manages to capitalise on these same *a priori* attitudes (*supply* for populism). Both approaches presume such attitudes to exist ahead of both scientific measures and populist politics. Thus, as this thesis argues against such apriorism, this distinction will not affect the focus nor the argument of my study. Also, Mudde does not refer to the ideational approach in this article, presumably because it was written before the term "ideational" became associated with populism (Hawkins 2019). However, Mudde is one of the central theorists in the development of the ideational approach, which theoretically and methodologically owe a lot to Mudde's earlier analytical work (Hawkins 2019; Van Hauwaert, *et al.* 2018).

> The third and final core feature is *populism*, which is here defined as an ideological feature, and not merely as a political style. Accordingly, populism is understood as a 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 2007, 23.)

Since my unit of analysis is short enough to be presented in its full length here, I will present below the passage in which Mudde's analyses the "populist attitudes" in order for the reader to get the best possible understanding of the data I am analysing here. As can be seen in the passage below, Mudde (2010) operationalises his definition of populism by analysing "anti-elite" and "anti-establishment" attitudes.

> The ideological feature of *populism* can only be studied through its anti-elite or anti-establishment side. As the booming literature on *Politikverdrossenheit* has argued, and partly proven, growing groups of EU citizens hold negative attitudes towards the main institutions of their national democratic system, though not to the democratic system as such (cf. Dahl 2000). In fact, in 1999, 40 per cent of the EU-15 people were 'not very satisfied' or 'not at all satisfied' with their national democracy; ranging from 70 per cent in Italy to 22 per cent in the Netherlands (*Eurobarometer* 52, April 2000). Even though average satisfaction with democracy fluctuates over time, and there is no clear Europe-wide downward trend in satisfaction (e.g. Wagner *et al*. 2009), surveys do show consistently that significant minorities of Europeans are not very/at all satisfied with their national democracy.
>
> Similarly, trust levels of key democratic institutions are quite low. According to the *Eurobarometer* 66 (August 2006), the army is the most trusted institution (69 per cent), followed by the police (66 per cent). The three least trusted institutions are the national parliament (33 per cent), the national government (30 per cent), and political parties (17 per cent). While there also some people with no opinion, the vast majority of EU citizens do not trust the main political institutions of their country. Notably, 58 per cent and 62 per cent 'tend not to trust' their national parliament and government, respectively (*Eurobarometer* 69, June 2008). And a staggering 75 per cent tend not to trust their political parties (*Eurobarometer* 59, April 2003).
>
> Regarding the issue of corruption, a prominent staple of populist radical right propaganda, the *Special Eurobarometer 291* ('The Attitudes of Europeans towards Corruption'), of April 2008, reported that 75 per cent of EU-27 citizens

> totally agree or tend to agree that corruption is a major problem in their country. In countries like Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary and Romania some 75 per cent even 'totally agree' with the statement. To be fair, there is a north–south divide here, as in Northern Europe only a minority believe that corruption is a major problem in their country: around a quarter in Denmark and Finland and just under half in Sweden and the Netherlands.
>
> According to the *Special Eurobarometer 245* ('Opinions on Organized, Cross-National Border Crime and Corruption'), 59 per cent of the EU-25 believe that giving or receiving bribes is not successfully prosecuted. Of the categories of people that are believed to be corrupt, 'politicians at national level' top the list, with 60 per cent of the EU-25 respondents thinking they are corrupt; ranging from a low of 29 per cent in Denmark to a high of 69 per cent in Slovenia. Politicians at the regional level (47 per cent) and at the local level (45 per cent) are ranked fourth and fifth. Although the *Special Eurobarometer 291* reports lower figures, they are still significant minorities of 46 per cent (national politicians) and 37 per cent (regional and local politicians).
>
> Finally, a specific target of populist radical right propaganda is the European Union, which is described as a thoroughly corrupt bureaucratic Moloch. Surveys show that this view is shared by a substantial majority of Europeans. The *Special Eurobarometer 291* reports that no less than 66 per cent of citizens of the EU-27 believe that corruption exists within EU institutions; which is actually down from 71 per cent in 2005. Interestingly, the countries with the highest scores, Germany (81 per cent) and Sweden (80 per cent), score among the lowest with regard to corruption in their own country (though this is not a general relationship). (Mudde 2010, 1177–1178.)

As can be seen above, quite a lot of different propositions crammed into a one-page description of populist attitudes in Europe. Mudde (2010) does not define populism but studies populist attitudes *deductively*: he employs an *a priori* concept to explain something that until now has not been regarded as populism (at least as Mudde defines populism). Mudde *transforms* non-populist elements as presented in the Eurobarometer into populist elements. He presents his findings in *three central statements*: "growing groups of EU citizens hold negative attitudes towards the main institutions of their national democratic system"; "trust levels of key democratic institutions are quite low"; "a substantial majority of Europeans" think that there is corruption in either national or EU institutions (Mudde 2010, 1177–1178). Mudde presents in total twelve propositions to back up these three statements (*table 1*). These three statements and the entities associated with them

are *translated* through Mudde's methodological practices as the "anti-elite" and "anti-establishment" sides of populism.

Statement	Proposition	Source
Growing groups of EU citizens hold negative attitudes towards the main institutions of their national democratic system	EU-15 people *are not satisfied* with their national democracy	EB52 (Dahl 2000)
Trust levels of key democratic institu-tions are quite low	*The army* is the most *trusted* institution *The police* is the second most *trusted* institution EU citizens *tend not to trust* their *political parties* (least trusted) EU-citizens *tend not to trust* their national *government* (second least trusted) EU-citizens *tend not to trust* their national *parliament* (third least trusted)	EB66 EB66 EB66 & EB59 EB66 & EB69 EB66 & EB69
A substantial ma-jority of Europeans think that there is corruption in either national or EU in-stitutions	EU-27 citizens *agree* that corruption is a major problem in their country EU-25 *believe* that giving or receiving bribes is not successfully prosecuted EU-25 respondents *think* that 'politicians at national level' are corrupt (the most) EU-25 respondents *think* that 'politicians at regional level' are corrupt (the fourth most) EU-25 respondents *think* that 'politicians at local level' are corrupt (the fifth most) EU-27 *believe* that corruption exists within EU institutions	SEB291 SEB245 SEB245 & SEB291 SEB245 & SEB291 SEB245 & SEB291 SEB291

Table 1*: The statements and the propositions of Mudde (2010) enacting populism in Europe.*

I call these entities included from the Eurobarometer *propositions* because they are not yet self-evidences, yet they need to be articulated *in order for certain statements to be made*. They *collect* different entities to be transformed into statements about the nature of populist attitudes (Latour 2004). The fact that they lack strict figurations in the Eurobarometer (if they did not, they would travel very poorly) means that they are more suitable for translation than *a priori* well-articulated objects. For example, to say that "the police is the second most trusted institution in Europe" does not tell us much about populism by itself, but it is enough to be translated together with other propositions into a statement about populism.

For this sort of representativity to be possible, two methodological presumptions have to be met (Aldrin 2011; Signorelli 2012). First, there has to exist European attitudes *out there*, which may be described as *anti-elite* and *anti-establishment* attitudes. However, Mudde (2010) does not appear to study anti-elite or anti-establishment attitudes *per se*, but attitudes enacted by the Eurobarometer surveys yet to be associated with populism as an ideological feature.

Thus, we come to the second presumption: *equivalency*. None of the reported measures regard attitudes on either “anti-elite” or “anti-establishment” *per se*. Some *translation work* is needed. In the quote above, Mudde (2010, 1177) refers to the respondents’ *satisfaction* with their *national democracy* as an indicator for the “negative attitudes towards the main institutions of their national democratic system”. Notice here, that “*satisfaction* with the *national democracy*” is not the *same* as “*negative attitudes* towards *the main institutions* of the national democratic system”. In the next section, Mudde (2010, 1177) reports that “trust levels of key democratic institutions are quite low”. Now he has turned his attention to trust. “Not to trust” is not the same as “not to be satisfied” nor “to have a negative attitude”. But these are *translatable* as belonging to the same set of attitudes called anti-establishment or anti-elite (to which of these two the attitudes belong is not clarified in the article). The two attitudinal sides of populism are in other words *multiple* (Mol 2002): enacted somewhat differently in different survey questions.

Mudde (2010) does not analyse populism *per se*, nor anti-elite or anti-establishment attitudes, but a *multiple set* of different entities translated as a singular ideological feature of PRR. He analyses populism *as* anti-elite and anti-establishment attitudes. Here are two entities. But populism grows even more in multiplicity. Anti-elite and anti-establishment attitudes are enacted by further multiplicities: *satisfaction* with national democracy; *negative attitudes* towards the main institutions; *trust levels* of “key democratic institutions” and the “main political institutions”; *agreements* on whether corruption is a problem in their country; *belief* in whether or not giving or receiving bribes is successfully prosecuted. Each of these entities seem to be enacted in relation to “populism”. It seems like the concept of populism is the common denominator here: it to *collects* a multiplicity of propositions. “Populism” is enacted from a mess into a set of propositions about *many* attitudes about *many* issues into *one* ideological feature *(Figure 1*). There are two things that are important to notice in this figure. First, each translation makes the entities fewer and better articulated until they have been black-boxed as an object (populism) at the bottom. Second, the arrows point into two directions: mess is not only gradiently articulated — it is articulated *by a priori concepts and issues*. It is not a matter of a one-way movement: one needs not only to recognise how Mudde’s practices enact certain entities, but also how these entities enact the practices that translate populism.

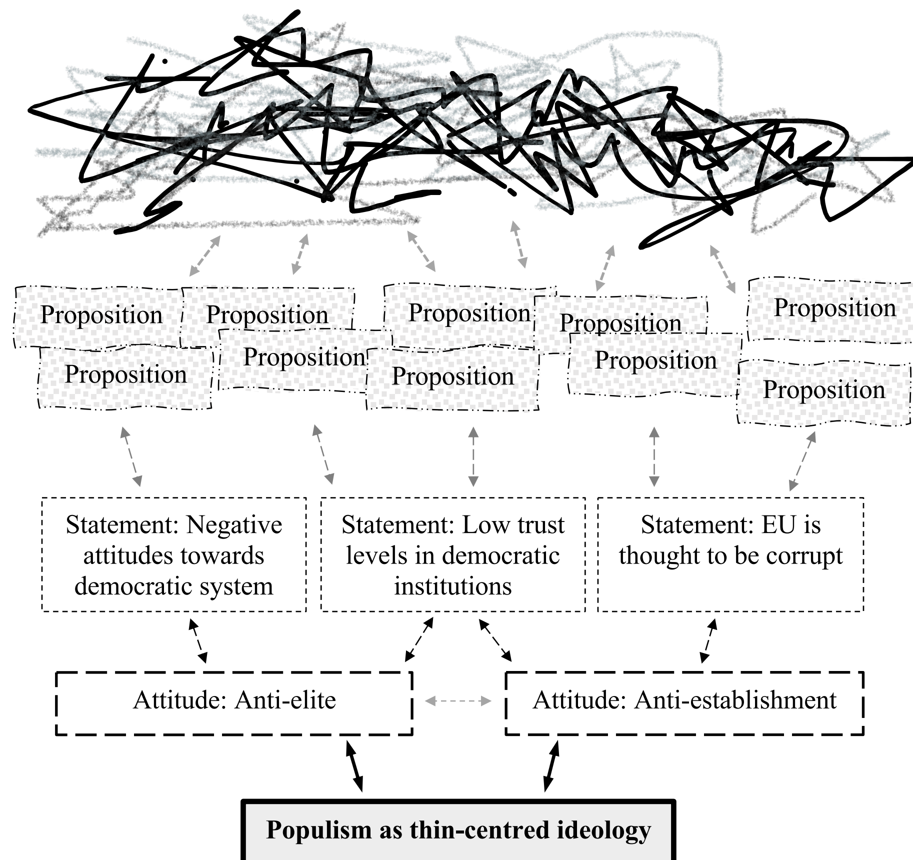

***Figure 1**: A mess is enacted as still uncertain and unorganised propositions about European attitudes. These are articulated further as statements about the mess: as slightly more certain and well-articulated issues. These statements are translated further as anti-elite and anti-establishment attitudes, which manifest the ideological feature of populism.*

The questions to be answered now are: *What* sort of actors are involved in this translation of the Eurobarometer results *as* populist attitudes? *How* do they affect the enactment of populism in this passage? *Why* are they associated with populism? *Where* do they enact and travel? I will attempt to answer these questions in three layers of enactors, each layer providing answers to some of the questions.

The first layer of enactors regards the *(human) actors* involved. I write "human" in parentheses because even though actors are always hybrids of human and nonhuman actors (Latour 1999a), the nonhuman element travels in these cases *through* the human, who consequently becomes a nonhuman hybrid as well. This layer regards the actors, who on the face of it appear as human actors: Cas Mudde, the interviewers, the respondents, the EU-citizens, the politicians, the police, and so on. I will start from the most obvious one, the author of the article.

In order for a study to be made, it needs a researcher. It is quite safe to say that without Cas Mudde (2010) this study would not have been made. However, Mudde (2010) is not an independent actor by himself — something must have enacted him. Some obvious enactors of Mudde are the institution he is working for, the funders of his research, the teachers and the funders of his education as a political scientist, possible uncredited co-researchers and research assistants (Mudde uses the "we" pronoun), and so on. The list of *potential* enactors could be expanded almost infinitely. Most of these are however necessarily Othered. Which (human) actors enact Mudde explicitly in the article?

The version I have downloaded from Cas Mudde's *researchgate.net* -profile has a short introduction of Cas Mudde which reveals that he works for the *University of Georgia*. The article is published in *West European Politics*, *volume 33*, *number 6*, published by *Routledge*, owned by *Taylor & Francis Group*. Mudde does not use his own data but relies on the *Eurobarometer* surveys conducted by the *European Commission*. Mudde would not be *the* Mudde enacted in the article without the thousands of actors enacting the institutions and publishers above[7].

But Mudde is still not an actor unless he acts. So, what does he do? He *analyses* surveys. He *researches* and he *writes*. He *studies* the specific enactments of attitudes presented in the Eurobarometer surveys *as* propositions to his statements about the pathological normalcy of populism. The Eurobarometer, on the other hand, is commissioned by the *European Commission*: an institution enacted by millions of actors. The Eurobarometer surveys present the responses of an undisclosed number of *respondents* interviewed by *interviewers* presented in graphs, numbers, percentages and text. Notice that, in the very first lines of the passage presented above, Mudde (2010, 1177) refers to the EU citizens as *holders*; they "hold" negative attitudes: "As the booming literature on *Politikverdrossenheit* has argued, and partly proven, growing groups of *EU citizens hold negative attitudes* towards the main institutions of their national democratic system" (the

[7] Bruno Latour (1999, 98–108) has written a descriptive passage about how each "scientific fact" is dependent on huge networks of "allies", "colleagues", "instruments" and "publics" (to present the fact to) in the chapter "The Circulatory System of Scientific Facts".

second emphasis added). The respondents are the *holders* of attitudes, neither of which can exist without the other: without respondents, there can be no access to attitudes; without attitudes, there are no responses that would make the respondent a respondent — as in someone who *responds*. More about the respondents and the interviewers follows in section 5.2.

What about the non-human objects? They enact Mudde too. Hence, we come to our *second layer: issues*. Namely, without "populism" there could not be a study *of* populism. Populism exists *because* it produces effects. Mudde, among many other political scientists, has recognized this existence of populism. However, here populism is not an issue in the singular, but it is a multiplicity of issues: *satisfaction* with democracy, *trust* in democratic institutions and *corruption* among key political actors, all translated as issues of *anti-elite* and *anti-establishment* attitudes. Just as populism, these exist too, since they enact populism and the multiplicity of actors associated with populism. They exist as *collectives* (Latour 2004).

But why do precisely *these* issues enact *this* conception of populism? Mudde (2010, 1175) references the attitudes presented in the Eurobarometer because it "is not only the only regular EU-wide socio-political survey, but it has also shown a particular interest in issues and values of relevance to this study." Mudde references the Eurobarometer attitudes, first, because Eurobarometer surveys might be the best source for European attitudes Mudde can get. Mudde (2007) has previously regretted that questionnaires he sent to different PRRP's did not provide any proper responses. Getting PRRP's excited, as a liberal scholar representing an intellectual "elite", about an extensive study of PRR is for sure not an easy task. For this reason, it might have been easier to study attitudes yet to be labelled as "populist". The first reason is a reason of convenience. The second reason is that the issues and attitudes presented in the Eurobarometer surveys are *translatable*, that is, "of relevance to" Mudde's study. Since populism is defined as a combination of anti-elite and anti-establishment attitudes, these are said to be *equivalent* to the issues presented in the Eurobarometer surveys.

This all needs to happen somewhere, hence the *third and final layer: locations*. These locations are enacted on different levels. The *first* level, and the most central location to

Mudde’s (2010) study, is *Europe* — he nevertheless studies populism as a pathological normalcy *in* Europe. Since the Eurobarometer is “the only regular EU-wide socio-political survey” (Mudde 2010, 1175), “Europe” is confined due to methodological restrictions to the EU — the *second* level. However, there are several EUs in play here. Mudde (2010) refers to “EU-15 people”, “EU-25 respondents”, “EU-27 citizens” and to “a substantial majority of Europeans” (Mudde 2010, 1177–1178). Europe — enacted as the holder of Mudde’s data — not only changes in size from consisting of 15 member states to 27 members states, but varies in time as well: EU-15 is enacted by the *Eurobarometer 52* and *59* in 1999 and 2003 respectively, while EU-27 is enacted by the *Special Eurobarometer 291* and *Eurobarometer 69* in 2007 and 2008. Despite this, Mudde is able to refer to “Europe” and the “EU” as singular entities.

The *third* level makes a distinction between Northern and Southern Europe: “there is a north–south divide here, as in Northern Europe only a minority believe that corruption is a major problem in their country” (Mudde 2010, 1177). Europe is here divided into two, not only according to the cardinal directions, but according to the *belief* in whether corruption is a major problem[8]. Then there is the *fourth* level included in Mudde’s (2010) report: *singular countries*, namely Netherlands, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Romania, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Slovenia and Germany. These are, however, only included because they have been member states of the European Union at the time of the respective Eurobarometer survey. *Fifth* level: *national*, *regional* and *local levels*. Mudde (2010) discusses politicians on different levels as *different politicians* enacted according to how corrupt “EU25 respondents” think they are. *Sixth* and final level: *institutions* such as governments and parliaments. These are after all not only institutions, but the locations where the corrupt politicians practice their corruption.

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[8] Even if it is not articulated as such in my data, this division between North and South is above all a historical division based on cultural, religious and socio-political dynamics, which still plays a role in EU-politics. For example, during the economic crash in 2008, it was common for Northern European politicians to blame Southern European countries for the recession. More recently, during the COVID-19 pandemic, a Dutch minister blamed Southern European countries for failing to cope with the economic shock caused by the virus. This kind of maintaining of a North-South divide does affect how Eurobarometer results are interpreted in certain ways, for example by Mudde.

Read allegorically, we could add to this list even more locations that have been Othered: the homes of the respondents; the office(s) where Eurobarometer surveys are analysed; Mudde's office either at home or at his university; the computer screens that present the responses to the surveys; the home page of the Eurobarometer on the internet; the postal offices and the hands of the postal workers who deliver the interview invitations to the (soon-to-be) respondents' homes. The list is virtually never-ending.

These different locations — either clearly articulated or read allegorically — are important to recognize in order to grant the practices and the knowledges they produce a "situatedness" (Haraway 1988); to present them as not only matters of linguistics or as mere textual practices, but as matters enacting practices, located and situated, *somewhere* (Barad 2003; Mol 2002). They are not objective knowledges represented by an objective political researcher, neither are they mere social constructs or artefacts presented in text, but *real* enacting entities produced, re-enacted and translated by someone somewhere. These practices have, one way or another, travelled from these locations to the passage in Mudde's (2010) article, via inscription devices and Eurobarometer reports. These are the locations in which the Eurobarometer, the issues, Mudde and his study, anti-elite and anti-establishment attitudes, and populism are enacted. But somewhere along the way, these propositions are black-boxed as independent objects in and by themselves, no longer attached to these particular locations, issues, actors and practices.

"Populism", as enacted by Mudde (2010), appears to be *collecting* multiple enactors, multiple issues and multiple locations, all coming together to produce multiple propositions and statements. We may conclude at this point that 1) Mudde's (2010) practices are dependent on reading the attitudes reported in the Eurobarometer surveys as attitudes out there; 2) the attitudes in the Eurobarometer surveys as reported by Mudde did not include the object of populism itself, but rather attitudes translated as *manifesting* its "ideological feature"; 3) much of what has been previously done in the Eurobarometer surveys in order to enact the issues associated with Mudde's conceptualisation of populism has been Othered either by Mudde or in the making of the Eurobarometer surveys; 4) the *concept* of populism and the manner in which it is defined does seem to determine what is collected: what is included in Mudde's study and what is Othered.

5.2 Enacting the Eurobarometer

In the previous section the focus of the analysis was on the object of *populism* in Mudde's study as presented in the article, "The Populist Radical Right: A Pathological Normalcy" (2010). Since Mudde's analysis depends on the data produced in the Eurobarometer, the next step in order to describe the multiple entities enacting Mudde's populism is to trace these entities back to their previous home.

There is already a wide range of critique directed towards the Eurobarometer by researchers *in* science (e.g. Aldrin 2010; 2011; Höpner and Jurczyk 2015; Signorelli 2012). This critique focuses especially on two aspects: the *methodological issues* with the Eurobarometer, and its *political function* as a "governance instrument" (Aldrin 2011; Signorelli 2012). The "sociological criticism" pointed towards the *methods* of the Eurobarometer is in line with the sociological criticism towards surveys and opinion polling in general, initiated by Pierre Bourdieu and Philippe Champagne (Signorelli 2012). It reviews in particular two methodological premises that make possible the very existence of public opinion surveys.

The first is the premise of *universality*: in order for an opinion about an issue to be inscribed and measured, opinions about the issues must be assumed to exist in the first place, and the issues must be universal enough to be understood the same way by different respondents. The second premise regards *equality*: while each respondent *has* a certain opinion about a certain issue *ahead* of the survey, the opinion must also be *relatable* to every other opinion and provide the possibility to be weighted by age, gender, social status, and so on (Aldrin 2011; Signorelli 2012). These two premises have been frequently criticised by sociologists. For example, it is unreasonable to assume that each respondent is as familiar as the others (or at all familiar) with certain political concepts used to measure attitudes about political issues; yet, by quantifying the responses as both universal and equal, such differences in political awareness are completely left unattended. The fact that political awareness is not distributed evenly across the European population means that such measures become matters of politics and social class, as Bourdieu (1984, 427)

has argued: “the probability of producing a political response to a politically constituted question rises as one moves up the social hierarchy”.

The *political function* of the Eurobarometer is summarised by Aldrin (2010) into three central goals. First is the “symbolic creation” of an “European public opinion”, that is, the enactment of the European community as a “romanticised whole” homogenised as *holders* of opinions on certain European issues that can be quantified in numbers, charts and percentages (Aldrin 2010; Law 2009). The second goal is to use this data as a justification for ongoing EU projects and to present the European Union as an organisation in search of “an enhanced culture of consultation and dialogue with citizens” and consequently practicing a “reformed European governance based on ‘participation’” (Signorelli 2012, 32). The third goal is the legitimisation of the European Commission as the central EU institution communicating with member states, as it is the only institution with a sufficient level of knowledge about the respective countries (Aldrin 2010). According to Aldrin (2011) and Signorelli (2012), the Eurobarometer surveys are *hybrid instruments*: not only scientific instruments, but political tools used for governance by the European Commission.

Despite this critique of opinion surveys pointed at the Eurobarometer by critical sociologists and researchers *in* science, and its relevance to this thesis, I wish to reiterate that my analysis is not intended to add to such a methodological critique. Many of the students from the critical tradition presented above do after all base their critique on social constructionist notions of knowledge production, as they question opinion surveys’ capability to represent the European population and its political opinions. They tend to focus on the “errors” (Bloor 1991) of knowledge production. On the contrary, we need to escape the notion of representation altogether. From a nonmodern perspective, criticism of the accuracy of representations becomes empty, since such a capability (successful or not) cannot exist *a priori: it too has to be performed*.

Hence, my analysis of the Eurobarometer surveys will describe the enactment of three layers of enactors of the attitudes “represented” by Mudde (2010). These three layers are 1) (*human) actors* (respondents, interviewers), 2) *issues* and 3) *locations*. Here the focus is on how the Eurobarometer *generally* enacts multiplicities into singular (human) actors,

issues and locations. Before continuing with the analysis, I want to present a question and the respective results as reported in the *Eurobarometer 52* (conducted in 1999). This particular question and enactment of an attitude is an example to which I will return during the analysis below. The question is documented in the annexes to the survey and the results in the report.

The question:

> 1.10 – SATISFACTION WITH NATIONAL DEMOCRACY (% by country).
> Question EN:
> On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in (OUR COUNTRY)?
> (EB52 Annexes, B.17)

The results: The *Eurobarometer 52* reports that 56 percent of the EU15 respondents are "Very satisfied" or "fairly satisfied" with the way democracy works in their country, whereas 40 percent of EU15 respondents are "not very satisfied" or "not at all satisfied". The "don't knows" are not shown in the report, but one may assume from the remaining percentages that their proportion is four percent. What is also Othered in the report is the proportion of "very satisfied" contra "fairly satisfied" in the reported 56 percent, and the proportion of "not very satisfied" contra "not at all satisfied" in the reported 40 percent. Luckily, I have access to the annexes. In the annexes, after searching for a while for the correct question, I find that indeed four percent of the respondents have answered "don't know". 11 percent have answered "not at all satisfied", 29 percent "not very satisfied", 48 percent "fairly satisfied" and, finally, eight percent have answered "very satisfied".

Layer one: (human) enactors

The Eurobarometer surveys are "public opinion surveys" (EB52, i); they measure opinions and attitudes *held* by a European public. This public, as the population of Europe, is represented by samples (*N*≈16 000) of "EU citizens" or "European citizens", enacted as "respondents" in the surveys. After reading the Eurobarometer reports allegorically, with a focus on the *enacting practices*, one may summarise at least the following four conditions that need to be met in order for these EU citizens to be enacted as respondents.

First, there are no respondents without *questions* to *respond* to. These questions partly determine the conditions by which the respondent is enacted. The respondent *becomes* a respondent *by responding* in particular ways to particular questions. If a respondent fails to respond to a particular question, (s)he is excluded from the respective data in the report. *Second*, someone needs to ask the respondents the questions. The questions are written on an electronic questionnaire which is filled with the respondent's answers, with the help of an *interviewer*. In case the respondent does not understand the question or the multiple-choice answers, the interviewer helps to translate and explain them to the respondent. The interviewer is a *mediator* between the respondent and the questionnaire. *Third*, the respondents must be presumed to *have* answers to the questions asked, that is, an *opinion* or *attitude* about a certain issue presented in the questionnaire. The respondent, in order to be enacted as such, needs to be enacted a *holder* of *a priori* attitudes to report. Without such *a priori* attitudes, no link can be made between a "European public opinion" out there and the survey data in here. *Fourth* and finally, there needs to be *issues* concerning the respondent in order for him or her to have an opinion or attitude about it. I will describe here how the first three of these conditions are fulfilled in practice. The fourth condition will be discussed under the layer "issues".

The respondents respond to a set of questions listed and coded in questionnaires. Without these questions, there would be no responses and subsequently no respondents. In EB52 (EB52 Annexes, B.17), for example, the following question is asked: "On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in (OUR COUNTRY)?" If this question were not asked, there would be no way of knowing whether the respondents even have an opinion about this particular issue.

Respondents are, by being asked the question above, enacted as having one of the following five *answers*: "very satisfied", "fairly satisfied", "not very satisfied", "not at all satisfied" or "don't know". If a respondent fails to answer one of these five options, (s)he ceases being a respondent to the particular question. A respondent, in regard to this issue in particular, *is* a European citizen who *holds* and *reports* an *attitude* about his or her country's democracy that can be categorized as "satisfied", "not satisfied" or "don't

know". By giving the respondent preformulated options for answers to preformulated questions, the questionnaire, with the help of the interviewer, *enacts* the respondent. The questionnaire *makes* someone, who might have earlier been a "father", a "pharmacist", or a "millionaire", *become* for a moment a "respondent" *with* an answer. The respondent-with-an-attitude is then re-enacted as a unit in a statistical analysis. The respondent ceases being a person answering a question and becomes a number or part of a percentage representing a (ideal) type of an attitude. This percentage is finally turned into a text articulating a statement about the European public opinion about national democracies. The respondent and the interviewer, as the enactors of the attitude, have been successfully Othered; what remains is a percentage, a graph and a text representing a public opinion.

Layer two: issues

This type of a representation of a "European public opinion" is only possible if we assume there to be such a public opinion in the first place (Aldrin 2011; Signorelli 2012). Respondents need to have certain attitudes about certain issues *ahead* of the interview. There has to exist attitudes *out there*, among the "European public", to be represented by the respondents *in* the Eurobarometer report. But from our performative ontology, such an *a priori* out there is impossible (Latour 1999a; Law 2004). Rather, what needs to happen is an enactment of the respondent as a holder of certain attitudes about certain *issues*.

Each Eurobarometer report has certain themes. These themes along with their contexts are usually presented in the introductions to the Eurobarometer reports. For example, in the introduction to the *Eurobarometer 59* (2003), the authors ask the reader to take into account the offensive against the regime of Saddam Hussein, launched by the United States and their allies, when interpreting the results of the survey. In the introduction to the *Eurobarometer 69* (2008), the authors warn that the "persistent turmoil in financial markets" and the "surging inflation rates" has had a negative impact on "consumer confidence in the EU". Such contexts are set not only to give the reader a better understanding of the report, but also to relate the issues in the survey to events out there, in the world outside the Eurobarometer.

These themes and issues are defined in advance and printed on the questionnaires. They are then presented to the respondent, through the questionnaire, as issues to have opinions about. For a moment, the respondent becomes interested and invested in enacting the issue further by having an opinion about it. By asking the respondent a question about a certain issue and giving the respondent a certain number of available attitudes to choose from, the respondent is enacted as a holder of a *certain* attitude about a *certain* issue. It does not matter whether or not the respondent has been interested in the respective issue before the interview: the issue, as a *Thing* (Latour 2005b), is always present and enacting in the questionnaire. The attitudes are enacted through the questionnaire *always in relation to an issue*. No connection needs to exists between issues out there and attitudes in here ahead of the survey, since both move through the same mediator: the questionnaire.

There are no attitudes nor a public opinion about a *national democracy*, unless national democracy is enacted as an issue in the survey. The interviewer asks *not* “on the whole, about *what* are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied?” but specifies that this is a matter of *your national democracy specifically*. The issue thus determines what the attitude soon-to-be presented by the respondent is going to be. Whatever the respondent answers now *is* an attitude about his or her national democracy. It does not matter whether or not the respondent ever thought about his or her national democracy as an issue in this particular sense before this particular event — the respondent is enacted as having such an attitude *now*; not before, not after, but at the very moment of the interview. The survey does not need to take into account whether or not an attitude ever existed, as it ends up existing in the questionnaire, *ahead* of the interview: all that matters is to have the respondent choose between four attitudes and one “don’t know”. The questionnaire *replaces the out there*, because the only access to attitudes is through the questionnaire. The questionnaire is not an intermediary between out there -attitudes and an in here -survey, but a *mediator* (Latour 2005a) and an *inscription device* (Law 2004): an actor in its own right *performing* the attitudes and the issues *as* existing out there. It never *represents* the out there: it enacts it. It *is* the out there.

Layer three: locations

At least five different levels of locations can be found in the Eurobarometer reports. *First*, the location of the *interview*. There is no information about the exact locations in which the interviews have been held (to protect the anonymity of the respondents), but the important thing is to recognize allegorically that *they have been held somewhere*. It could be at the respondent's home or in an office meant for conducting the interviews. In traditional sociology, this level could be called "micro".

The *second* level is the particular *territories* in which the interviews are conducted. The size and the amount of territories included in the different Eurobarometer surveys vary. The continent of Europe is a relatively large territory. The borders of the European Union, on the other hand, draw another large but slightly smaller territory, since not all European states are members of the European Union. These EU member states determine the size of the territory of the European Union not only in space but in time as well. As noted earlier, the territory of EU grows in time, from comprising 15 member states before 2004 to comprising 27 member states by 2007. There is a multiplicity of European Unions at play here: each of them is as much as the other a "European Union", but still radically different in size and content.

But there are also a few territories that the Eurobarometer surveys do not include *fully* — countries that enact the *context* of the survey but are not included in the samples nor the results. *The United State*s, its *allies* and Saddam Hussein's regime in *Iraq* enact the *Eurobarometer 59*, as they are recognised in the survey as the central actors in the Iraq War, to which the results of the survey are directly associated (EB59). Kosovo is another indirect enactor: it is included in the context for the *Eurobarometer 52*.

> In the spring of 1999, levels of satisfaction with the way democracy works in the respective Member States were significantly more positive than those obtained a year earlier. The two factors that were offered as explanations for this significant improvement were the war in Kosovo and media coverage of elections in the months leading up to the fieldwork period. (EB52, 12.)

The United States, its allies, Iraq and Kosovo affect how the results of the surveys are interpreted and explained, thus enacting the issues and attitudes presented in the surveys: the changes in the satisfaction levels with democracy in 1999 is explained by a war happening in Kosovo (EB52).

The *third* level: as in Mudde's article, the *Special Eurobarometer 291* divides Europe into Northern and Southern Europe, in order to demonstrate a "North-South divide in public opinion" on the issue of whether corruption is a major problem in the European countries. The *fourth* level: the member states create a collective called the European Union. This level of location is the totality of all EU member states comprised in the survey. Once again, this is not only a matter of a geographical territory, but an *organisation* — an *assemblage* of several member states brought together by common issues (*Things*). As noted already several times, this assemblage grows in time: increasingly more interested nations are accepted as members in this collective[9].

But what is the European Union if not a union of *European* countries? Hence the *fifth* level of location: *Europe*. The difference between "EU" (15, 25 and 27) and "Europe" is often blurred in the Eurobarometer, as in Mudde's study. As the surveys measure only samples from the EU's of the time (and from some additional territories), they also make Europe change in size and content, creating a multiplicity of European territories. For example, the introduction to the *Eurobarometer 52* (2000) begins with the words "This 52nd Eurobarometer Report presents the views of *European citizens* towards the European Union in the autumn of 1999" (EB52, vii, my emphasis). Not "EU15 citizens", but "*European* citizens". Europe and European citizenship are right in the first sentence of the report reduced to the 15 member states of 1999.

Europe and the EU do not only comprise a territory, but an *imagined community* as well (Anderson 1991, Law 2009). The Eurobarometer not only measures the "public opinion"

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[9] On the other hand, following the unprecedented Brexit referendum in June 2016, the size of EU may also decrease. However, the United Kingdom is not the first member to withdraw from a European institution. Algeria (upon independence) left the EU predecessor EC (European Communities) in 1962, Greenland left the EEC (European Economic Community) in 1985 and Saint-Barthélemy ceased having the status of an "outermost region of the EU" (OMR) in 2012.

of EU citizens but *performs Europeanness*. As the Eurobarometer reports what the attitudes of Europeans are, they define what is to be "European". Europe is not only enacted as a certain geographical and continental space, but as a community of Europeans with *homogeneous European attitudes*. Europeans are enacted as either having certain attitudes about certain issues or not. Europe is not only a continent, but a holder of a *public* with *opinions*. *The European public* is performed to hold attitudes, ready to be collected by the survey.

This imagined community of Europe comprises all the other levels above: almost everything that happens in the survey happens in Europe. But not everything. Europe, as enacted in the Eurobarometer, does not only enact the European public, but the United States and Iraq as well. By making a difference to what *Europeanness* is by enacting *European attitudes*, these territories are enactors of Europeanness. They become a part of the European collective of attitudes. To conclude, there is a multiplicity of Europes: Europes as geographical territories of different size (EU15, EU25, EU27 and all the additional associated territories), Europes of different times (1999, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008), and Europes as different but homogenized communities comprised of a multiplicity of different attitudes from different samples, locations and times.

5.3 Re-enacting statements

Now that I have illustrated how an attitude is enacted in the Eurobarometer, let us see how these kinds of enactments *travel* to Cas Mudde's (2010) study of populism as a "pathological normalcy". As discussed above, these mute entities have been *made to speak* by the surveys (Latour 2004). Out there, they are invisible and untraceable — they might not even exist as attitudes at all, as social psychological constructs, or as anything for that matter, since they are only enacted as *beings* in the survey. The only way of "capturing" these creatures, presumed to reside out there, is by enacting the out there with an inscription device (Law 2004), such as the questionnaire. Whether or not such attitudes exist ahead of the surveys is now irrelevant: the surveys *make* them exist anyway. Cas Mudde (2010) uses his own description devices and methods to translate something, that before him was not populism, into populism. Just as attitudes do not exist by themselves

in a domain out there to be represented by a survey, neither does populism: it needs to be enacted to act upon others.

Mudde (2010) makes three statements using in total twelve propositions in his passage about populist attitudes, using the data from the various Eurobarometer surveys referenced in his article in order to enact his conception of populism as a pathological normalcy (*table 2*). The three statements are: “growing groups of EU citizens hold negative attitudes towards the main institutions of their national democratic system”; “trust levels of key democratic institutions are quite low”; “a substantial majority of Europeans” think that there is corruption in either national or EU institutions (Mudde 2010, 1177–1178). These three statements translate the attitudes that have travelled from the Eurobarometer surveys to Mudde’s study into anti-elite and anti-establishment attitudes. I will now review each statement in turn in order to trace how it has been enacted in the Eurobarometer, and how it has travelled to and been translated by Mudde’s study.

Attitudes (Europeans…)	EB52	EB59	EB66	EB69	SEB245	SEB291
are not satisfied with their national democracy (not very/not at all satisfied)	40 %	40 %	-	-	-	-
tend to trust their *army* (tend to trust)	-	66 %	69 %	70 %	-	-
tend to trust their *police* (tend to trust)	-	67 %	64 %	63 %	-	-
tend not to trust their *political parties* (tend to trust)	-	16 %	17 %	18 %	-	-
tend not to trust their *political parties* (tend not to trust)	-	75 %	-	76 %	-	-
tend not to trust their national *government* (tend to trust)	-	37 %	30 %	32 %	-	-
tend not to trust their national *government* (tend not to trust)	-	53 %	-	62 %	-	-
tend to trust their national *parliament* (third least trusted)	-	42 %	33 %	34 %	-	-
tend not to trust their national *parliament*	-	46 %	-	58 %	-	-
agree that corruption is a major problem in their country (*totally agrees/tend to agree*)	-	-	-	-	72 %	75 %
believe that giving or receiving bribes is not successfully prosecuted	-	-	-	-	59 %	58 %
think that politicians at national level are corrupt (the most)	-	-	-	-	54 %	46 %
think that politicians at regional level are corrupt (the fourth most)	-	-	-	-	47 %	37 %
think that politicians at local level are corrupt (the fifth most)	-	-	-	-	45 %	37 %
think that the EU is corrupt (corruption exists in European institutions)	-	-	-	-	71 %	66 %

***Table 2**: Listed on the left are the attitudes that have travelled from the Eurobarometer surveys to Mudde’s (2010) passage about populism. The texts inside brackets indicate how the question has been formulated in the survey. On the right of the attitudes are the many enactments of the same attitude in the different Eurobarometer surveys. The percentages in green are the enactments included in Mudde’s (2010) enactment of populism. The percentages in red have been Othered in Mudde’s (2010) report. The empty spaces indicate that the question (the attitude) has not been included in the specific Eurobarometer survey.*

A short disclaimer before the review. First, I would like to state that nowhere in any of the Eurobarometer reports do the words “populism” or “populist” appear. It seems to be that *none* of the Eurobarometer surveys included in Mudde’s study have enacted “populism” *per se* as they have been reported. Second, I would like to state that it is not my purpose to focus on any possible “errors” or “mistakes” made by Mudde. The purpose of

this re-view is to study allegorically what Mudde appears to have done and what kind of enactors these practices have enacted, and not to evaluate the accuracy of Mudde's work.

Statement one: Growing groups of EU citizens are not satisfied with their national democracy

> The ideological feature of *populism* can only be studied through its anti-elite or anti-establishment side. As the booming literature on *Politikverdrossenheit* [political apathy] has argued, and partly proven, growing groups of EU citizens hold negative attitudes towards the main institutions of their national democratic system, though not to the democratic system as such [– –]. In fact, in 1999, 40 per cent of the EU-15 people were 'not very satisfied' or 'not at all satisfied' with their national democracy; ranging from 70 per cent in Italy to 22 per cent in the Netherlands (*Eurobarometer* 52, April 2000). (Mudde 2010, 1177.)

In the statement above, the results from the *Eurobarometer 52* represent the political apathy (*Politikverdrossenheit*) that is translated as the anti-elite and anti-establishment sides of the ideological feature of *populism*. In fact, there are several statements in the passage above merged into one: *dissatisfaction with democracy is an indicator of populism*.

Eurobarometer 52 (2000, 12) reports that 40 percent of the EU15-respondents reported being "not very satisfied" or "not at all satisfied" "*with the way democracy works in their country*". Mudde (2010, 1177), on the other hand, associates this dissatisfaction with holding negative attitudes "*towards the main political institutions of their national democratic system, though not to the democratic system as such*", which, taken separately, is not the *same* entity as the one enacted in the *Eurobarometer 52*. This is associated further with "political apathy", "anti-establishment" and "anti-elite". By simultaneously associating political apathy with populism and the dissatisfaction of EU-15 people, Mudde (2010) translates "dissatisfaction with the national democracy" as an indicator for the anti-elite and anti-establishments sides of populism.

The proportion of respondents dissatisfied with their democracy is reported as the same in both the *Eurobarometer 52* (2000) and *59* (2003). Both reports enact a dissatisfied European minority of 40 percent. The question regarding satisfaction with the national democracy is not asked in any other of the referenced Eurobarometer reports.

Statement two: Trust levels of key democratic institutions are low

> Similarly, trust levels of key democratic institutions are quite low. According to the *Eurobarometer* 66 (August 2006), the army is the most trusted institution (69 per cent), followed by the police (66 per cent). The three least trusted institutions are the national parliament (33 per cent), the national government (30 per cent), and political parties (17 per cent). While there also some people with no opinion, the vast majority of EU citizens do not trust the main political institutions of their country. Notably, 58 per cent and 62 per cent 'tend not to trust' their national parliament and government, respectively (*Eurobarometer* 69, June 2008). And a staggering 75 per cent tend not to trust their political parties (*Eurobarometer* 59, April 2003). (Mudde 2010, 1177)

There are at least five propositions to Mudde's statement "trust levels of key democratic institutions are quite low": the army is the most trusted democratic institution (69 percent); the police is the second most trusted (66 percent); the national parliament is the third least trusted (33 percent); the national government is the second least trusted (30 percent); the political parties is are the least trusted (17 percent). Here, as a minor side note before continuing with the analysis itself, it should be clarified that the *Eurobarometer 66* (2006) reports the trust in the police as *64 percent* and not as 66 percent as reported by Mudde. This, I believe, is a simple and honest mistake, but it does add to the mess.

The question stated in the questionnaire is: "[QA6.] I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain institutions. For each of the following institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it?" (EB66, 64). The percentages that have travelled to Mudde's study thus include those respondents who answered "tend to trust" for the institution in question. However, the percentages included by Mudde only appear *as such* in the *Eurobarometer 66*; other Eurobarometer surveys report different numbers. The *Eurobarometer 59* (2003), for example, reports that *66 percent* tend to trust their army and *67 percent* tend to trust their police, making the police the most trusted institution, contrary to what Mudde reports. Whereas Mudde (2010, 1177) reports that "58 per cent and 62 per cent 'tend not to trust' their national parliament and government, respectively (*Eurobarometer* 69, June 2008)", *Eurobarometer 59* reports that only *46 percent* tend not to trust their parliament and *53 percent* tend not to trust their government in 2003.

The standard explanation of these differing numbers is that the attitudes have *changed*, as is the case in *Eurobarometer 52* (2000, 12, my emphasis): "In the spring of 1999, levels of satisfaction with the way democracy works in the respective Member States were significantly *more positive* than those obtained a year earlier." However, given our golden rule that no entity is an entity by itself, talking only about a *change* is problematic, because it would erase the context set in the introductions to the reports and the different *actors* enacting the "public opinion" in different *locations* at different *times*. If we were to talk about the *same* object that has, however, changed in time, then we would make the multiplicity of enactors *invisible*. Talking about the trust levels from 2003 and 2008 as the same object does nothing but black-box it: we recognize the change itself, but not the actors *enacting the change*. "Trust in institutions" becomes a thing in itself, rather than an "actor-enacted" (Law and Mol 2008). If there indeed is a change, then the being at the beginning and at the end of the "change" cannot be the same entity, since it is enacted as a different entity by different enactors at different times. A better metaphor could be "metamorphosis": the entities do not only change — they are *reproduced* with *new* figurations. There is a multiplicity of *one*, albeit a re-enacted public opinion.

The fact that the *Eurobarometer 59* and *69* report such different numbers is a strong indicator that something has indeed happened between 2003 and 2008 that has enacted such a "change" in public opinion. The *Eurobarometer 59* contextualised the report by referencing the Iraq War — a war that continued until 2011 and presumably affected the public trust in institutions such as the armies and the national governments of the countries involved in the war. The *Eurobarometer 59* even mentions a "split between 'old' and 'new' Europe" (EB59, *preface*). The *Eurobarometer 69* (2008, "1. Values of Europeans", 2), on the other hand, contextualises the report by mentioning the 2008 financial crash and the "economic unease" that "is having an effect on the values of Europeans". If we are to accept these contextualisations as true, then surely we are talking about *two*, separate and different, public opinions rather than *one*, same but changed, public opinion. The *first* is not enacted by the 2008 financial crisis, the *second* one is; the *first* one is enacted only by the first offensives against the regime of Saddam Hussein, the *second* by five years of destructive war in Iraq. Is it not unreasonable to suggest that these two are in fact *not* the

same attitudes, but rather two different objects *translated* as *one* attitude in relation to *one* issue: "trust in key democratic institutions".

Mudde (2010) *could have* referenced the EB59 or the EB69 when he referenced the EB66 — but he did not. He *could have* reported the "46 percent" rather than the "58 percent" — but he did not. These choices, for whatever reason they were made, remain manifested in Mudde's enactment of populism. Given that Mudde *could have* chosen other data, other propositions and other statements — that is other enactors altogether — populism *a la* Mudde (2010) could have been enacted as a different object than it is in its current manifestation. That object would not have been more "right" or "wrong" than the one enacted in Mudde's article, but it would have been *different*. But he did not enact *that* object, he enacted *this one* — making the other potential populisms invisible in the *Hinterland* (Law 2004) of Eurobarometer surveys, waiting for some other enactors to re-enact them.

Statement three: a substantial majority of Europeans think that there is corruption in either national or EU institutions

> Regarding the issue of corruption, a prominent staple of populist radical right propaganda, the *Special Eurobarometer 291* ('The Attitudes of Europeans towards Corruption'), of April 2008, reported that 75 per cent of EU-27 citizens totally agree or tend to agree that corruption is a major problem in their country. [– –] According to the *Special Eurobarometer 245* ('Opinions on Organized, Cross-National Border Crime and Corruption'), 59 per cent of the EU-25 believe that giving or receiving bribes is not successfully prosecuted. Of the categories of people that are believed to be corrupt, 'politicians at national level' top the list, with 60 per cent of the EU-25 respondents thinking they are corrupt [– –]. Politicians at the regional level (47 per cent) and at the local level (45 per cent) are ranked fourth and fifth. Although the *Special Eurobarometer 291* reports lower figures, they are still significant minorities of 46 per cent (national politicians) and 37 per cent (regional and local politicians).
>
> Finally, a specific target of populist radical right propaganda is the European Union, which is described as a thoroughly corrupt bureaucratic Moloch. Surveys show that this view is shared by a substantial majority of Europeans. The *Special Eurobarometer 291* reports that no less than 66 per cent of citizens of the EU-27

> believe that corruption exists within EU institutions; which is actually down from 71 per cent in 2005. (Mudde 2010, 1177–1178)

Once again, we have a handful of propositions to take into account: "75 per cent of EU-27 citizens totally agree or tend to agree that corruption is a major problem in their country"; "59 per cent of the EU-25 believe that giving or receiving bribes is not successfully prosecuted"; "of the categories of people that are believed to be corrupt, politicians at national level top the list, with 60 per cent of the EU-25 respondents thinking they are corrupt"; "politicians at the regional level (47 per cent)" are ranked fourth; "politicians at local level (45 per cent)" are ranked fifth; and, finally, "66 per cent of citizens of the EU-27 believe that corruption exists within EU institutions" (Mudde 2010, 1177–1178). Six propositions to enact one statement about one issue: *corruption*.

Both the Special *Eurobarometer 245* and *291* presumably represent the same objects: the same questions are asked about the same issues. However, as discussed above, the samples (EU25 and EU27), the times (2005 and 2007), and the contexts are different. I am not going into detail about these here, since the multiplicity associated with size, time and location have been discussed already. However, there are two (or three) points to be made about the enactment of "corruption" here.

First, I want to get out of the way another error made by Mudde. The *Special Eurobarometer* 245 (2005, 16) reports that *54 percent* of the respondents believe that politicians at the national level are corrupt, contrary to the *60 percent* reported by Mudde. Another honest mistake, perhaps. Second, both Mudde and the *Special Eurobarometer 291* Other the distinction between "totally agree" and "tend to agree" by reporting these proportions as a singular object: as the *75 percent* who either totally agree *or* tend to agree that corruption is a major problem in their country; instead of reporting that *39 percent* totally agree, and *36 percent* tend to agree (SEB291, 3). Never mind that we cannot know how the respondents themselves interpret these two options (thus making such statistical multiple-choice questions controversial and problematic in general), the pressing thing to recognize here is that these are two separate objects enacted separately in the survey. Agreeing "totally" and "tending to agree", as enacted by the survey, are *not* the same entities.

Thirdly, let us consider the final paragraph of the citation above. Mudde (2010) associates the populist radical right propaganda with the *Special Eurobarometer 291* results regarding the *belief* whether corruption exists within the EU institutions. The belief that the EU institutions are corrupt is argued to *explain* why the PRR propaganda targets the EU specifically. But who enacts the link between the propaganda and this belief? What does this propaganda *really say?* Mudde does not clarify this, thus black-boxing the association between corruption and PRR propaganda. The practices that enact the propaganda are completely Othered. The connection ends up being irrelevant, since it is Mudde who enacts a representation of the belief out there by the propaganda in here.

6 Conclusions and discussion

This thesis set out to describe the multiplicity of practices and enactors behind the concept of populism, as it is practiced in Mudde's (2010) study, in order to argue for an ontological turn away from the representationalist paradigm, which seems to have driven the conceptualisation of populism to a dead-end. By presenting an alternative ontology (non-modern multiple ontology) and a methodological approach (allegorical praxiography) to studying the mess and multiplicity that begin to appear once we abandon the tenets of modern representationalism, I have presented an example of such multiplicity of populism by studying the many practices and entities that enact Mudde's (2010) study.

6.1 Findings

In line with the ideational approach, Mudde (2004; 2007; 2010) has conceptualised populism as a thin-centred ideology with a certain content: *anti-elite* and *anti-establishment* attitudes. These *types* of attitudes manifest the ideological feature of populism. In order to argue for a paradigm shift towards a "pathological normalcy thesis", Mudde (2010) demonstrates that such PRR attitudes are indeed "normal" in Europe — in other words, present in the majority of Europeans — by analysing the attitudes enacted in recent Eurobarometer surveys. However, as this thesis has argued, none of the objects (attitudes as enacted in the Eurobarometer) referenced by Mudde (2010) regard "populism" *per se*, but are *translated as* equivalent with anti-elite and anti-establishment attitudes by the methodological practices of Mudde. Mudde (2010) produces such an equivalency in three central statements and twelve propositions.

A precondition to studying populism as an attitudinal or ideational construct is the presumption that there *are a priori* attitudes *out there* equivalent to the ideological feature of populism. This is also a precondition to representationalism in general (Barad 2003, Law 2004), and to the methodological premises of the Eurobarometer surveys in particular (Aldrin 2011, Signorelli 2012), which claim to measure European public opinions and attitudes about issues related to the European Union. However, as this thesis has argued, by studying the three central layers of enactors of the Eurobarometer results — *(human)*

actors, *issues* and *locations* — the Eurobarometer never measures nor represents *a priori* attitudes about *a priori* issues. Rather, in order for such attitudes to be "represented", a questionnaire as an *inscription device* needs to be set up in order to enact the issues and attitudes *in here* — in the survey itself. The attitudes, the issues and the locations are *performed* to represent a reality out there.

The attitudes only become enacted as such in the context of the surveys. The respondents do not hold *a priori* attitudes about the exact issues as they are enacted in the survey (or this is at least highly improbable). Rephrased slightly, it does *not matter* whether or not the respondents hold *a priori* attitudes. What matters is the enacting practices of the questionnaire. It is enough that the respondent acts (responds) according to the framework and the logic set in advance by the survey. The survey does not, in any instance, represent the "out there" — it *produces* attitudes out there, by defining in advance the issues, the context and the framework onto which the attitudes may be situated. It *performs* the out there which it claims to represent. The attitudes are never derived from a European public existing independently regardless of the producing power of the surveys. The European public, as the holder of European attitudes, is as well performed in the surveys with reference to multiple levels of location, multiple issues and certain European attitudes. If we take the multiplicity of enactors, issues and locations seriously, the attitudes that enact "populism" in Mudde's study no longer appear to be singular, but *multiple* — more than one, less than many (Mol 2002).

What happens as these attitudes travel to Mudde's (2010) study and are translated as populist attitudes is a sort of a double enactment. Not only are these attitudes enacted as representations of the European public opinion in the Eurobarometer, Mudde (2010) enacts them in fact *again* as *new* objects: anti-elite and anti-establishment attitudes. However, not all attitudes enacted in the Eurobarometer are granted the privilege to be re-enacted as populism, only a few chosen ones — those that fit the conditions of equivalence set by the concept of populism, and which are thus welcomed into the collective (Latour 2004). Indeed, from the perspective of performativity and multiplicity, the concept seems to *act*. It works, together with Cas Mudde, as a hybrid gatekeeper, only letting some attitudes through. It has become active and mobile. It discriminates. It finally *works*!

Now we can discover what practices enact populism and what populism itself enacts — here, in the case of a study by Mudde (2010) — by recognising the performativity of the concept. We have recognized *actors* and *practices* (respondents who respond, interviewers who interview, questionnaires that inscribe, reports that translate), *issues* (satisfaction with democracy, trust in institutions, and belief in corruption) and *locations* (nations, territories, organisations and imagined communities) — each of these entities participate in the enactment of populism as an attitudinal construct and an ideological feature as defined by Cas Mudde in his article "Populist Radical Right: A Pathological Normalcy" (2010).

But this movement is not one-way traffic. It is not sufficient to state that the entities enacted in the Eurobarometer have simply travelled to another study in order to enact another entity in it. In addition, there is a movement *from* Cas Mudde *to* the Eurobarometer. By using the concept of populism as an inscription device to translate the disparate attitudes presented in the Eurobarometer as equivalences to populism, Mudde — both as a *product* and a *producent* of nonhuman enactors — *re-enacts* the Eurobarometer as data regarding populist attitudes. By studying populism and the Eurobarometer deductively, Mudde in fact enacts the concept populism as a methodological device to tell something about the Eurobarometer — and vice versa. Without this reverse movement, the attitudes could never travel well enough to be translated as anti-elite and anti-establishment attitudes. They cannot travel by themselves: they need a push, some guidance. Without an *a priori* concept of populism and this double movement, Mudde would not know what he should be looking for in the Eurobarometer data, and the attitudes would not travel. Without organising concepts, the world appears as a mess.

This leaves us with the question of what the concept of populism *is* in all this mess. If it is not a theoretical model granted with representativity of the "real" phenomenon out there, what does it do for us? What does it tell us about the *real world*? After all, the nonmodern ontology is not against realism *per se*, only against an essentialist conception of the real (Latour 1999a). A way to strive towards a nonmodern conception of the reality of populism is not to focus on what the *object* of populism *is* — since it is an ever-changing mess of multiplicities always enacted differently in different settings by different actors (Law 2004, Mol 2002) — but to focus on what the *concept* of populism *does*: how it

is enacted and, consequently, what sort of populist realities it enacts. By observing how it is produced in multiple sites by multiple actors, we might find out how it is enacted to *being* something.

This move away from essentialism and representationalism entails an understanding of the concept *not* as an object or a representation of an object, but as a *Thing* — an *actor* being made to act; a *subject* enacting *others*. It does not represent; it *assembles* a collective of actors to discuss, debate and articulate sets of issues. It is not a matter of fact in the sense that one could conclude that "populism is *this* and its content is *that*", but it is a matter of concern to a huge collective of political scientists, politicians, voters, journalists — but also nations, surveys, percentages and Master's theses. Populism is some-*thing* that "creates a *public* around it" (Latour 2005b, 6) and then it *acts*. Instead of black-boxing it as an object-in-itself, now is the time to study how it acts and how it is *made* to act.

6.2 Reflections

This has been a case study, a praxiography in the practices of Cas Mudde (2010) and the many associated actors. However, even though this is a case study, the results of this study are *ontologically* generalisable, since they have been produced by similar methods as practiced by Mol (2002) and Law (2009) among others. If I managed to display some of the many practices and actors enacting *this* conception of populism in *this* specific case, then I see no reasons as to why a similar study could not be done about other conceptualisations or other political concepts for that matter. However, due to the situatedness of this study, I do not claim that similar case studies will produce similar results. The practices, as enacted by specific concepts, matters, and researchers, vary from case to case. Nevertheless, I believe there to be one significant constant, which is also emphasized in this thesis: the multiplicity of reality.

A methodological problem with these kind of science studies, approaching the research object from a standpoint of multiplicity and mess, is that the entities in question lack *a priori* boundaries, because once one accepts that nothing has an essence, the problem one encounters very quickly is the difficulty of drawing a boundary for a study of such a

boundaryless case. A network of practices, that is an "actor-network" in the vocabulary of Actor-Network Theory (ANT), has no "outside" (Latour 1996). This is one of the main methodological criticisms towards ANT. How, where and when do you stop? At some point the analyst always reaches an uncertainty, since these networks are by definition infinite. But as John Law (2004, 2) writes about studying a mess:

> If much of the world is vague, diffuse or unspecific slippery, emotional, ephemeral, elusive or indistinct, changes like a kaleidoscope, or doesn't really have much of a pattern at all, then where does this leave social science? How might we catch some of the realities we are currently missing? Can we know them well? *Should* we know them? Is 'knowing' the metaphor that we need?

Is "knowing" the metaphor that we need? The answer, from a multiple ontology that deals with a mess, is *maybe*. Knowing *certainly*? No. There is no way of reaching certainty about a mess. Knowledge, from this standpoint, *is uncertain*. Instead of striving towards a positivist version of realism, the better option would surely be to remain uncertain as long as possible (Harman 2014, Law 2004). And *uncertain* is definitely what I have been as I have been working on this thesis.

Another issue central to this ontology is the demand for constant self-reflection. There is no escaping the fact that *I am myself enacted in this study*. If the premise of my ontology is that each actor is enacted by some other actors, then I need to accept that I am myself enacting the very actors described in this thesis. In other words, I have not *revealed* or *presented* the multiplicity of actors performing the objects central to Mudde's (2010) study and the Eurobarometer — I have *produced* these entities as they are described in this thesis, just as the Eurobarometer produces public opinions and Mudde (2010) produces PRR attitudes. On the other hand, would I be writing a thesis about the concept of populism as a multiple concept if I had not become *interested* in this *Thing* and thus been *enacted* as a sociologist doing a science study of populism? *No*. I am in the very middle of a network of practices enacting "populism". Exactly where I stand in this mess, I do not know for sure.

I also want to reiterate that my intention has not been to do a "sociological critique" in the Bourdieusian fashion, as presented by Aldrin (2010) and Signorelli (2012), nor a study *in* science (Bowden 1995), but a study *of* the many practices and actors needed to enact a

certain conceptualisation of populism in a political study. The methods of Mudde (2010) and the Eurobarometer are of course criticisable, but for such a critique to make sense within the epistemologies in which they are situated (Haraway 1988), my view is that one should direct the critique from a similar standpoint (Harding 2014). Mudde's (2010) methods might make sense from the standpoint of a "representationalist" ideational approach; as might the methods used in the making of the Eurobarometer make sense, if one accepts the premises of public opinion surveys as ontologically valid. On the other hand, someone doing such a methodological critique might find that these methods are not "methodologically proper" — Mudde (2010) indeed *seems* to have made questionable methodological choices. However, these kinds of social "errors" have not been my focus in this study. For this reason, I do not see this as a methodological critique of Cas Mudde specifically, because I do not criticise *his* methods *per se*, but this is definitely a critique of the ontological presumptions validating such methods in general. From my standpoint (Harding 2014), where I am situated (Haraway 1988), these sort of representationalist methods are in general problematic.

I also do not wish to undermine Mudde's expertise as a political scientist and his reputation as an expert in populism. As mentioned, Mudde is one of the most established and recognized experts on the populist radical right. This said, his position as an expert with a certain authority to make claims about the nature of populism does not mean that this position of authority should not be challenged, and his statements questioned. This would, however, require a detailed study *in* Mudde's methodology from a more explicit critical standpoint than in this study.

This thesis lacks such a perspective on expertise, power and authority. There are many science studies scholars who have discussed the role of expertise in the production of knowledge (e.g. Collins and Evans 2002; Epstein 1995; Wynne 1996) — a field of study that could have been taken into account in this thesis, given Mudde's expert position in the field of populism studies. For now, however, it is enough to state that given that Mudde exercises a certain expertise and authority over his research objects and the readers of his study, he might have had more freedom to Other relevant practices, which might have been placed under scrutiny had it been someone else doing a similar study in populist

attitudes. In addition, readers who are unfamiliar with the issue of populism and new to the field of populism studies might not have the tools to question these black-boxed statements made by experts such as Mudde. However, this sort of Othering is difficult to place under scrutiny; after all, everything cannot be included in 15-25-page academic journal articles, which (somewhat ironically to the topic of Mudde's article) leaves the reader with the issue of *trust* in Mudde's expertise and the institution of social sciences. As for myself, I too have Othered an awful lot to make my findings fit into these 70 pages. I too leave the reader with the issue of trust.

Since Cas Mudde is one of the most cited scholars in the field of populism studies, and because "populism" is such a contested concept, a lot of scholars are already critical of Mudde's concept and methodology. Benjamin Moffitt (2016) is arguably the most known critic of Mudde. Carlos de la Torre and Oscar Mazzoleni (2019), on the other hand, summarise both methodological advantages and disadvantages of Mudde's concept, albeit from a rather representationalist perspective. From the ontologically performative front, an example of a feminist critique of Mudde — and the field of populism studies in general — is an article by Bice Maiguashca (2019), who criticises the conception of a populism "out there". However, I am not aware of any critiques of Mudde nor of the field of populism studies from the standpoint of ontological multiplicity.

Another focus which could have been included in more detail in this thesis is a focus on materiality. Most theorists referenced in relation to the nonmodern multiple ontology have emphasised the role of nonhuman matter in the production of social theories, arguing for a posthumanist approach to social sciences (e.g. Barad 2003; Haraway 1988; 1991; Latour 1993; 1999a; 2004; Law 2004; Mol 2002). Such a focus on materiality is not specifically emphasised in this thesis, even though I have discussed the role of *inscription devices* as enactors (for example questionnaires and reports). The nonhuman agency discussed in this thesis has regarded "ideas" rather than "matter": the agency of concepts, issues, locations, nations, organisations, etc. In other words, *Things* that are difficult to treat as matter — even though these are all also matters of matter (Barad 2003). A closer focus on the *matter* enacting a study of populism would, I believe, have required an ethnographic access to the matters in question, rather than an analysis of textual reports.

Finally, I wish to state that this is definitely an unfinished project. While the social sciences have in general started to adopt a "nonmodern ontology" — the success of ANT and the ontological turns in STS being indicative of such a move away from modernist epistemologies (Law 1999; Jensen 2017) — political science still relies heavily on representationalist models of politics. This Master's thesis is my contribution to an ontological turn in political science in general and in populist studies in particular. However, it is certainly not possible to argue convincingly enough for an ontological turn in one of the largest fields of study in contemporary political science in a single (although multiple) Master's thesis. Such a turn requires that more political scientists and science studies scholars come together to form a trans-disciplinary movement towards an alternative ontology. As Bueger and Bethke (2014) have noticed, quite little attention has been spent on how political concepts are produced and sustained *in practice*. A reason to why STS-scholars might not have given political concepts quite enough attention is that the concept of politics itself is a contested concept in STS (Brown 2015, 4). Graham Harman (2014, 1) has noted that even though Latour has been "thoroughly political from the very beginning of his career" — that is, emphasised the political aspects of science-making —, he has not been able to develop a very coherent and well-articulated political philosophy.

However, a potential model theorised by Bruno Latour (e.g. 2003; 2005b; 2007), which could be reworked to meet the demands of the concept of populism, could be the "political circle". In this notion of "the political", politics is not understood as a domain, in which *a priori* political actors do *a priori* political things. Rather, the *Things* assemble not only political actors, but any relevant actors, to talk *politically* about any sort of issues. Nothing is political in advance, rather anything can be talked about politically. Instead of being a specific domain in the society, politics becomes rather a *way* of solving conflicts, discussing issues and assembling collectives — a particular *manner of speech* (Latour 2003; 2013). It becomes a circular process sparked by a *Thing*, hence Latour's fondness of the term *Dingpolitik* over the term *Realpolitik* — a politics interested in *Things* and *issues* rather than representations of "the real" (Latour 2005b). Instead of being a model of politics *per se*, it is a model that accounts for how politics is performed in certain settings. This sort of a modification of the "the political" could work as a reference point for scholars interested in discussing populism as such a *Thing*. Such a framework could also be

especially helpful in evaluating studies depending on public opinion surveys, as the political circle takes into account how such publics are performed for an issue to be dealt with politically. No issue, no public, no politics.

> Here is a Copernican revolution of radical proportions: to finally make politics turn around topics that generate a public around them instead of trying to define politics *in the absence* of any issue, as a question of procedure, authority, sovereignty, right and representativity. (Latour 2007, 814 – 815)

In such an understanding of politics, "populism" ceases being an object that represents a thing out there; it becomes the *Thing itself*. There is no longer a way of distinguishing the concept from the phenomenon out there, since the phenomenon out there ceases to exist without the concept. It is the concept that assembles everything we "know" about it. Without the concept of populism, there is nothing that could assemble all the necessary actors, practices, effects, consequences, issues and locations into a singular phenomenon. As stated at the beginning of this thesis: there is nothing wrong with the concept! The concept cannot be right or wrong, accurate or diverse, good or bad, when there is no longer anything to be right or wrong about — something to represent *accurately* or *well*. The concept is not *too* ambiguous, on the contrary, the real issue is that it is not understood *ambiguously enough*. It is a mess! It is supposed to be! By treating it as a particularity, we rob it of its productivity. The concept does not describe, capture or represent populism. It *does* populism. It *is* populism.

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