

With Us but from Outside? Problematizing the Conceptualization of Migration in Left-Wing Populist Discourses: the Case of La France Insoumise

Charles Torron

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to obtaining the degree of Master of Arts in Transnational Governance of the European University Institute

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School of Transnational Governance

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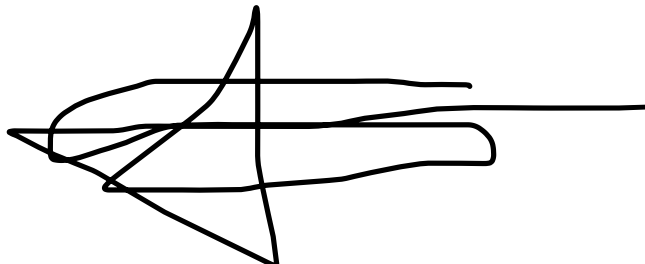
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ABSTRACT:

In the contemporary situation of migration securitization, it is necessary to challenge how progressive political agents conceptualize inclusivity towards outgroups. In only a few years, new left-wing political parties, labelled as populists, progressively made their way to the forefront of the European left-wing political stage, and showcase an opportunity to complete this endeavour. Specifically, the French case crystallizes faithfully all the trends listed above: a strong securitization of migration, an anti-immigration political party ever closer to win the presidential election, and La France Insoumise, a left-wing political party, that managed to reorganize the domestic political stage in only a decade. This leads to the research question the thesis seeks to address: *Can La France Insoumise be considered as a case of inclusive populism?* Findings showcase that the populist party does challenge the symbolic borders that migrants face upon their arrival but could complete better inclusivity by de-essentializing its vision of the domestic job-market. Finally, the thesis suggests that problematizing inclusivity around the specific symbolic borders that migrants come upon opens new pathways to assess progressive agents' conceptualization of migration.

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INTRODUCTION:

“I don’t want to defend myself anymore against the accusation of populism. People are disgusted by the elites. Do they deserve anything better? They should all quit! I’m calling upon the energy of the many against the arrogance of the privileged classes. Am I a populist? Yes, I am!” (Mélenchon, 2010). Already in 2010, Jean Luc Mélenchon, the leader of the French political movement ‘La France Insoumise’ (LFI) assumed his affiliation with a concept fiercely debated in academia, that has made its way in mainstream vocabulary as both a ‘synonym’ of demagoguery and the monopoly of the far-right – populism. That did not stop him from gathering ever more votes through the successive elections he campaigned for since that declaration, and to organize around his program what can be considered as the strongest left-wing coalition in Europe today.

This is not only a French story, and while traditional left-wing political parties have undergone a crisis of confidence among European electorates since the 1980s’, new parties, labelled as left-wing populists, managed to attract the attention of the electorate in only a decade (Katsambekis and Kioupkiolis, 2019). Criticized by some as an impoverishment of the left and an abandonment of the class struggle, regarded by others as a possible opportunity to finally reconnect with political victories, it is however impossible not to acknowledge that in only a decade, left-wing populist parties have reached the forefront of the European left-wing political stage. Indeed, along the current election cycle, the four political parties that gather the most seats among ‘The Left’ European political coalition, supposed to bring together the most radical fringes of the left at the European Parliament, all share populist traits. Hence, left-wing populist parties can be rightfully considered as the heirs of the political tradition of the radical left.

As such, the paper assumes that they are not just any political agent, but progressive political agents: they bear the responsibility to struggle for the emancipation of all individuals, and to oppose structural mechanisms of oppression regarding class, gender, and race (De Lagasnerie, 2012). In a contemporary context of repeated political victories on the side of the far-right, this raises expectations and challenges about those new actors’ potentiality as progressive agents. In France particularly, society is getting more polarized and ‘Le Front National’, Marine Le Pen’s anti-immigration party, is getting ever closer to a political victory at the presidential election, challenging LFI’s capacity to propose a counter-narrative to anti-immigration

hate speeches. Further, in France as elsewhere, this trend does not only materialize through anti-immigration parties' rising electoral successes, but also through the increased use of their rhetoric within mainstreamed politics (Mondon and Winter, 2020).

Indeed, France has passed thirty 'immigration bills' since 1980, which means two bills every 3 years and can be considered as a strong case of a widespread European trend - migration securitization (Bourbeau, 2008). While those laws have enacted harsher control policies towards asylum seekers and refugees, their effect is also symbolic: it is about signposting that the government is being 'harsh' on migration. Indeed, beyond a mere connexion between migration and security, this shift tends to increasingly essentialize migration as an existential threat (Buzan et al. 1998). Discourses revolving around distributive conflicts on welfare, threats to cultural cohesion and security issues share a same characteristic: they ultimately essentialize migrants as 'the other', threatening the survival of the receiving society (Wæver, 1995). While migration is evermore captured in exclusionary ways, many mechanisms in world affairs, such as climate change, could induce further arrivals of displaced people. This challenges both academics and policymakers to rethink how to open both symbolic and physical borders that migrants face upon their arrival.

The purpose of the thesis lies at the crossroad of those two contextual elements: the progressive rise of new left-wing political actors labelled as populists and the increased securitization of migration among mainstream political discourses. Indeed, inclusivity to outgroups is supposed to be a core factor defining left-wing populist parties (Stavrakakis et al. 2017) and the contemporary context of migration securitization incites us to rethink and challenge what it means to be 'inclusive to migrants'. The case of France is particularly compelling to synthesize both elements: Marine Le Pen's anti-immigration narratives have only gained visibility through the last decade and LFI has become a transnational political actor, articulating ties with social movements in several continents, assuming openly its populist nature and having already been deemed as a case of 'inclusive populism' (Castano, 2018). However, the thesis argues that the concept of 'inclusivity', as it is utilized in the populist literature, is limited to unpack how left-wing populist parties address migration. Particularly, the literature upholds its conceptualization of inclusiveness from the specific symbolic barriers that migrants face upon their arrival. Hence, this leads to the main question of the thesis: *Can La France Insoumise be considered as a case of inclusive populism?*

The thesis seeks to address this problematic by presenting the scope of the discussion along a review of the existing literature (1) and by problematizing the concept of inclusivity with regards to the symbolic essentialisms that migrants face upon their arrival (2). After presenting the modalities of its application (3), the thesis uses Critical Discourse Analysis to analyse LFI's conceptualization of migration on a series of interviews that Jean-Luc Mélenchon gave between 2015 and 2017(4). Findings showcase that the populist party does challenge the symbolic borders that migrants face upon their arrival but could complete better inclusivity by de-essentializing its vision of the domestic job-market. Finally, the thesis suggests that problematizing inclusivity around the specific symbolic borders that migrants come upon opens new pathways to assess progressive agents' conceptualization of migration.

CHAPTER ONE: LITTERATURE REVIEW

Along this review of the literature, the thesis aims to expose how scholars have thought to conceptualize the position of political parties in general (1) and populist parties specifically (2) towards migration.

Party Politics and Migration

The issue of securitization can be understood as part of the Copenhagen school, which understands security issues as always being related to matters of existential threat. Within the Copenhagen model, it is widely accepted that political entrepreneurs play a major role in constructing immigration as a security concern in public debates, through either their strategic actions or routinized practices (Gattinara and Morales, 2017). When observing how political parties portray migration, scholars have reached a consensus in demonstrating a general trend in this direction. They differentiate however between processes of politicization and securitization of the immigration issue. Securitization considers, in essence, that migration is an existential threat while politicization challenges the spatial concentration of migrants, it is localised and situated. To differentiate both concepts, Bourbeau (2011) relates securitization with negative politicization, while politicization itself is linked with processes of intensification of the debates among parties.

Another branch of the literature focuses on the possible reasons for engaging with migration among political parties. Some scholars look at positional disagreement and issue conflict to unpack how party competition can increase polarization (Schattschneider 1960) while others consider the relative salience of migration in society as a factor to explain political actors' engagement (Jones and Baumgartner 2005). There is however little debates on the fact that polarization and salience contribute jointly to explain political actors' action. Hence, both the rise of anti-immigration political parties (Davis, 2012) and the growing political salience of migration (Dennison and Geddes, 2019) are signs that can explain, partially, why political parties have increasingly positioned themselves either 'for' or 'against' migration. The thesis builds on this strand of literature to delimit the time frame in which discourses are selected. Indeed, between 2015 and 2017, we are both in the midst of what has been labelled 'the refugee crisis' and in the preparation of the electoral campaign for the French presidential elections in 2017. Hence, the salience of immigration significantly increased (*Ibid.*) and political competition intensified,

situating that time period as particularly relevant to analyse discursive engagement with immigration among political parties.

Some scholars have looked particularly at party positioning on migration with regards to their location on the right/left political spectrum. Through this lens, no consensus is to be found. To some, the left/right binary is systematically incoherent to observe the securitization of immigration policies, as there is no robust effect that relate party ideology of both governments and parliaments with this trend (Natter, 2020). To ideology, they substitute trade-offs that parties face, linked with economic growth and the structuring of political systems, that reflect a plurality of interests along and between parties. For instance, by studying immigration laws in the UK, Germany and France; Givens and Luedtke (2005) argue that partisanship does not affect immigration policy making per se, but rather predict the extent to which laws are restrictive. The symbolic shock of the 'refugee crisis' and the electoral run constitute two different trade-offs for LFI, and both continuity and inflexion in its discourse can characterize the extent to which the left/right spectrum is relevant to evaluate party positioning on migration.

According to Bonjour (2011), right-wing political parties have been in favour of less restrictive immigration policies to benefit from migrants' labour in the 60s, and were also more lenient concerning family reunion, due to prevalent conception of family values. On the other side of the political spectrum, both communist parties and unions have been more cautious about immigration. Indeed, as immigrants tend to accept harder working conditions, some figures of the French communist party, such as George Marchais, opposed migrants to French workers, foreseeing that their arrival would weaken the balance of power between capitalists and workers (Molina and Vargas, 1978). Nonetheless, the radical left has also openly advocated for citizenship and socio-economic rights of migrants already entered in the national territory, always in the perspective of preventing their arrival from causing downward pressure on employment and wages for native workers (Haus, 1999). Analysing the case of Spain, Wutts (1998) has evidenced the existence of paradoxical alliances that shatter political cleavages when engaging with immigration policies, either between cultural conservatives and trade unions or human right advocates and businesses.

Sciortino (2000) argues that this internal divide is showcased in each party, between actors being closed to either an economic or a socio-cultural tradition. In this view, left-wing cosmopolitan-humanitarian streams would be favourable to migration, along

with market liberalists; but left-wing economic protectionists, along with cultural conservatives, would tend to approve more restrictive policies (Perlmutter, 19996). Delving on that, Money (1999) argues that, while the political cleavage is reliable regarding integration policies, immigration control splits both political forces in various and undetermined ways. Nonetheless, it is widely accepted that policies targeting asylum seekers and border controls have generally been increasingly securitized within the whole political spectrum (De Hass et al., 2018).

Hence, either for strategic reasons or ideological ones, the political cleavage does not seem to foresee positioning on migration, and more specifically on border control, with great accuracy. When addressing migrants' needs and advocating opened borders, political parties seem to be facing a plurality of trade-offs. Particularly, a chunk of the literature differentiates a two-fold dichotomization of the political field around economic concerns and cultural ones. Interestingly, when focusing on the economic polarization, the political spectrum is reversed: left-wing protectionists would oppose open borders while market liberals would seek them. The thesis aims to delve on this apparent contradiction in terms within its conceptual framework and problematize why left-wing parties would consider migrants' arrival as adverse to workers' rights and working conditions.

Populism, Left-Wing Populism and the Relationship between People and Nation

As previously mentioned, populism remains a fiercely debated term. After showcasing the main attempts at defining the concept, this section delves specifically on left-wing populism, how it can be defined, and how these definitions relate to the inclusion of migrants.

a. Populism

Among political ideologies, the concept of populism has been particularly hard to classify, and its definition still create long lasting debates in the literature. Cas Mudde attempted to define populism as a thin centred ideology which "considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' and the 'corrupt elite,' and which argues that politics should be "an expression of the general will of the people" (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2013: 8). According to him, populism is ideological, but it must be carried out by a host, such as socialism or conservatism (Mudde, 2004). Operationalizing an otherwise

ambiguous concept for analysis, Mudde's perspective has become the mainstream in the literature. Others, such as Ostiguy (2017) and Moffitt (2016) prefer to consider populism as a rhetorical modus operandi that could be enacted by anyone, to broaden its applications.

Finally, through the last two decades, a field of discursive critical populism has emerged, following the seminal work 'On populist reason' written by the Argentinian political thinker Ernesto Laclau (2005). He recuses both former approaches and assert that populism is rather a political logic. As such, populism corresponds to an articulation of different demands arising from society that are subsumed under one 'empty signifier' (*ibid.*). In this view, the antagonistic battle between elite and people, generally assumed as a populist particularity, is a core assumption of all politics. Therefore, Through their respective conceptual toolkits, scholars consider populism to either be a form of discourse (Stavrakakis, 2017) , a thin-centered ideology (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017), or a communicative style (Moffitt, 2016), but they all converge in considering populism to be a distinct form of doing politics that appeals to "the people" and opposes it to an "elite" (Katsambekis and Kioupkiolis, 2019).

Among them, Laclau's discursive approach stands out as it considers populism to be an articulation of popular democratic demands as antagonistic to a dominant bloc, but also considers any politics to be antagonistic (Laclau, 1977: 173). Further, Laclau embeds populism within the wider context of neoliberal hegemony and post-democracy in western politics, linking its emergence with the delegitimization of any political articulation antagonistic to the hegemon. Laclau's discursive approach stands out because it considers hegemonic variables determining western politics and comprises pathways to strategically use populism against a hegemon.

b. Differentiating Left- and Right-Wing Populism

However, having such a broad basis on which to define populism raises further questions on the distinction between left and right-wing populist parties. Albeit in different ways, scholars converge in differentiating both fringes of the populist spectrum, relying principally on the link between the people and the nation. It allows to distinguish between exclusionary populism, relying on a nativist exclusionary vision of the people as ethnos; and inclusionary populism, that does not present such traits and showcase inclusion for outsiders of the polity, such as migrants, as part of the people (Stavrakakis et al. 2017). De Cleen and Stavrakakis differentiate between

vertical and horizontal axes of inclusion: inclusionary populism operates on a vertical axis, with the people 'as underdog' opposing the elite from above, while exclusionary populism entails a horizontal axis of exclusion between natives and migrants (De Cleen and Stavrakakis, 2017).

Moreover, some scholars argue that right-wing populism is primarily nationalist while left-wing populism is traditionally oriented towards post-nationalism or internationalism, again making the linkage between populism and nationalism the primary mean to distinguish between left- and right-wing populism (Wodak, 2015: 8). Others use the distinction between popular and national sovereignty: while right-wing populists rely on national sovereignty which conditions the inclusion within the people on bloodlines, left-wing populists rely on popular sovereignty, whereby citizenship goes beyond its ethno-cultural articulation (Akkerman, 2015; Stavrakakis et al. 2017; Custodi, 2020).

Hence, albeit in different ways, it is widely accepted in the literature that it is the articulation of discourses on the nation, and its equation with the people, that traces a line differentiating left wing populism from its right-wing counterpart. Further, the main differential criteria between left and right-wing populism is that of inclusivity to outgroups: left-wing populism is considered inclusive while right-wing populism is considered exclusive. Crucially, this makes the inclusion of migrants the key factor to judge of populist parties' position on the political spectrum.

c. The Relationship Between People and Nation, and Its Implications for Migrants

The nature of the linkage between populism and nationalism is however still widely debated among scholars. To some, both notions might be distinct, but they are not independent as there is a necessary horizontal dimension of exclusion of those 'at the margins', such as migrant communities (Brubaker, 2020). To others, it is necessary to operate a conceptual distinction between populism and nationalism because even if they coexist, one necessarily prevails on the other (De Cleen and Stavrakakis, 2021). Hypotheses on this question mainly vary according to how the nation is defined: either exclusively through an exclusionary nativist approach (Lobera and Roch, 2020) or holding the potential for rearticulations (Custodi, 2022). The paradigmatic case of Podemos illustrates the latter, whereby the inclusion of migrants in Spain is reframed as a sign of national pride.

Hence, the academic literature reached a consensus to accord value to the distinction between left-wing and right-wing populism. Albeit in different ways, this distinction is primarily made in relationship with nationalism, and how much a party frames outsiders of the nation as possibly belonging to the people. Crucially, this makes the inclusion of migrants the key factor to judge their position on the political spectrum. However, when addressed at all, the inclusion of migrants within those parties is generally considered in very abstract terms, as the absence of ethnocultural references to the people. While the articulation of an ethnos is indeed crucial to judge of inclusivity, it is however insufficient. Indeed, critical studies have illustrated how problematic it can be to assess inclusionary national narratives in a vacuum. Despite the distinctions listed above, articulating a people as tied to a territory cannot abstract from the ethno-cultural foundations of European citizenship through history (Foucault, 2003; Meister, 2009; Balibar, 1989). Above all, any national community is confronted to the necessity to delimit its exterior, as any community relies on a process of exclusion constitutive to its existence (Mouffe, 2018; Eklundh, 2021). The thesis introduces these concepts further within its conceptual framework in order to problematize the reified vision of the nation that migrants are presented with.

By mainly considering inclusion as an absence of exclusion, scholars have not yet qualitatively researched migration narratives among the populist left. Crucially, they uphold the inclusion of migrants from the structural variables that determine its efficiency and hence fail to interrogate the radicality of a given narrative. Hence, the thesis, by analysing a case of inclusive populism through a lens centred on migrants, aims to assess the solidity of this framework.

CHAPTER TWO: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

As it was evidenced in the literature review, the literature on left-wing populism has focused its understanding of inclusivity on the articulation of ‘the people’. While it does seem to be a key factor, such level of analysis disregards the specific challenges and borders that migrants face upon their arrival. The thesis aims to bridge this gap and assess whether LFI’s qualification as inclusive populism stands when the analysis is centred on migrants’ experience, the way they are qualified regarding the job market, their cultural differences, or even themselves. Indeed, what makes migrants’ case so specific is that in all cases, they do not control their enunciation, they are talked about but cannot articulate a narrative of their own, or to frame it in a Laclauian way, they cannot emit popular democratic demands. To shed light on the symbolic borders of status that migrants face and subsequently analyse how LFI position itself towards them, the thesis brings three conceptual elements forward: the essentialization of capitalism (1), of the nation state (2) and of migrants themselves (3). This conceptual framing follows the purpose of evidencing those essentialisms, and hence delimitating challenges for any progressive political agents in their framing of political realities on migration.

1. Distributive Conflicts: Essentializing Capitalist Mechanisms

In the public sphere, one common narrative has progressively made its way to the mainstream, according to which there would be a trade-off between the welfare state and open borders. Along this view, the welfare state is only available in limited amounts, and newcomers would thus weaken the capacity of the national community to get access to such services (Ypi, 2018). Interestingly, this image is even relayed by defenders of open border policies, such as Joseph Carens, who declared that “in our highly inegalitarian world there is some evidence that welfare state differences play some role in motivating patterns of immigration.” (Carens, 2013: 283). Historically, this argument has also been defended by Unions and Communist parties alike, as illustrated in the literature review. However, it showcases an essentialized vision of the neoliberal state, that can be unpacked by developing a class-based analysis.

Indeed, when conceptualizing access to welfare as a rival good disputed between ‘natives’ and ‘migrants’, the underlying assumption is that ‘all natives’ have access to resources that ‘all migrants’ lack. Both essentialisms fall short in unpacking political realities around welfare access. The concept of neoliberalism portrays how the state

has been progressively influenced by capitalism, and how the logic of the Westphalian state has progressively shifted towards the logic of Markets (Centeno, 1993; Strange, 1999). It corresponds to a set of policies that ease deregulation and financialization on the one hand, and underfund welfare access, thereby organizing the progressive privatization of public life, on the other. This shift of the state as an actor amplifying rather than diminishing the social effects of capitalistic power relations can be retraced to the 1980s and is independent to migration (Strange, 1999). Taking on a Marxist lens, distributive conflicts over welfare are thus rather entangled with the actions of domestic employers and financial elites rather than migrants (Wright, 2009). It is not 'natives' that suffer from scarce access to welfare, but every component of the working class that relies on it because it cannot purchase private healthcare structures (Selwyn, 2015). Hence, taking a class-based analysis reveals that such articulations of distributive conflicts obscure wider class-based social power relations.

Regarding access to the job market, the same logic applies. Indeed, as George Marchais, former leader of the French Communist Party, infamously declared: "We must stop immigration, otherwise we will throw new workers out of work (...). Let me be clear: we must stop official and illegal immigration. » (Marchais in Schain, 1988: 603). According to Marchais' logic, there is a limited amount of work opportunities in the job market, and the arrival of newcomers threaten native workers' capacity to get job opportunities. Underlying this argument is an interpretation of a concept present in Marx's seminal work *Capital* – the reserve army of labor. However, this rearticulation is unfaithful to Marx's thinking. Indeed, according to his own words:

"That is to say, the mechanism of capitalistic production so manages matters that the absolute increase of capital is accompanied by no corresponding rise in the general demand for labour. And this the apologist calls a compensation for the misery, the sufferings, the possible death of the displaced labourers during the transition period that banishes them into the industrial reserve army! The demand for labour is not identical with increase of capital, nor supply of labour with increase of the working class. It is not a case of two independent forces working on one another. Les dés sont pipés. [the game is rigged]" (Marx, 2018: 36).

According to Marx, the production of the army of labor comes from an inner mechanism comprised in capitalism whereby the increase of capital never matches with the increase of labour. The capitalistic game is 'rigged', independently of the presence – or absence – of migrants. Indeed, according to Marx's general theory of accumulation, socio-economic inequalities benefit capitalist productivity-seeking

endeavours (Starosta, 2016: 8). As the productivity of capital increases, it replaces labor in the cycle of production, creating de facto this 'reserve army of labor', driving wages down and impacting workers' capacity to protest the worsening of their working conditions (Adler, 1990: 791). To George Marchais, or any other political leader supporting the idea that migrants threaten 'native' job markets, there is de facto a reserve army of labour, which naturalizes a capitalistic mechanism as an unsurpassable horizon. Interestingly, as demonstrated by Caterina Froio, extreme-right organizations such as Casa Pound have re-articulated the concept of 'reserve army of labor' in their own narrative (Froio, 2015).

In this case, like in the case of the welfare system, the economization of migrants as threats to 'natives' jobs and welfare comes from an essentialization. The latter should be challenged by progressive agents when framing their migration narratives by focusing on obstacles that both encounter: by articulating a class-based 'us'.

2. *'A Threat to Cultural Cohesion': the Essentialization of the Nation State*

Another narrative that is widely employed when arguing against open borders concerns cultural cohesion. Following this line of thought, migrants bring their cultural diversity with them in the receiving countries, which might undermine the links of solidarity and trust that are required for a functioning nation-state (Ypi, 2018). Between migrants and natives would lie an implicit contract, whereby migrants need to accept the norm and values that characterize the receiving country, thereby renouncing, at least partly, their own. In policymaking, this is mainly embodied by citizenship tests, that grant migrants citizenship under the examination of specific national knowledge and adherence to values. As David Miller, a fierce advocate of such policies, puts it "in order to function as a citizen a person must also align itself with the political system of which she now forms a part." (Miller, 2016 :7).

Here also lies the naturalization of a political concept: that of the nation. Indeed, it assumes that the nation and its values constitute a solid 'already there'. However, the construction of a national narrative is neither linear nor objective, it is a matter of constant political dispute among opposing 'native' political forces (Ypi, 2018). Coercing migrants into accepting a reified identity-based narrative discourages them from actively engaging with this political debate, but rather categorizes them as passive receivers (Turner, 2016). Further, it assumes that there exist a set of values that

'all natives' share among them whilst 'all migrants' lack it. Only by sticking to this abstraction, it already appears to be a fallacious statement. For instance, an American survey has showed that over two third of the national population would not pass the citizenship test, while 90% of migrant applicants complete it, clearly disproving such narratives (Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship foundation, 2018). Hence, the conceptualization of the nation state is a contested ideological space, and migrants are not an heterogenous element integrating an homogenous assemblage, but rather an additional plurality.

Moreover, the nation-state is not politicized in a space detached of migrants' life. European narratives over sovereignty and citizenship are deeply tied with exclusionary set of values on migrants, which need to be problematized further. Indeed, critical bodies of literature on sovereignty have argued that the European identity project as a whole has relied on the articulation of a people as tied to a particular territory (Eklund, 2021). As such, the sovereign people articulated by nation-states is assumed as a community of birth, and is deeply tied to processes of racialization (Meister 2009). As the philosopher Jacques Rancière (1999) puts it, western democracies have not relied on a sense of equality, but rather on difference. This is not without consequences to outgroups, that, if they do not share the 'foundational values' of the nation, could be subsumed to racialized persecutions (Meister 2009: 133). Beyond those core foundational values of the nation lye a 'racial contract', that attributes certain characteristics to natives over migrants to ensure the continuation of the Western domination over the rest of the world (Mills, 1999). This is never made explicit, but rather hidden behind appeals to rationality, reason and universalism as comprised within democratic theory, which are designed as the attributes of the white civilized man (Mills, 2017). Indeed, some of the core scholars that articulated our modern understanding of popular sovereignty were, simultaneously, fierce advocates of racial discrimination and slavery (Eklund, 2021). Hence, beyond obvious processes excluding migrants that are used by anti-immigration parties, it can be argued that any European national discourse has, to some extent, ethnocultural foundations.

Further, Europe's development relied on an imperialistic logic and subsumed colonies to structural racial domination for centuries (Wood, 1991). Such power relations are still, to some extent, at play in free-trade relations between Europe and its former colonies (Selwyn, 2015). This poses a challenge to European progressive agents: that of being critical of Europe's colonial past, thereby challenging the symbolic

borders between 'migrants' and 'natives' comprised in their own cultural heritage. Indeed, as Morrison and Balibar argue, one cannot just abstract past processes of racialization, and racelessness is itself a racial act (Morrison, 1992; Balibar, 1989).

Hence, arguments revolving around 'cultural habits' and other defining of the nations might, if not problematized or reframed, directly hinder migrants capacity to integrate a given national entity. Indeed, such essentialism abstract the power relations at the heart of national value heritage – one of imperialist domination. This commends progressive agents to problematize such notions, de-essentializing the nation and showcasing the imperialist past of their country.

3. *'The Migrant': Essentialized Patterns of Dehumanization*

Besides the trade offs mentioned above, migrants face another symbolic barrier, that of their own enunciation. As Patrick Page puts it, beyond clearly exclusionary discourses, "[...] there lurks an official language, a specific jargon, deployed by government officials in its day-to-day operation of immigration enforcement". (Page, 2018: 3). Indeed, it is not enough to deconstruct the cultural and economic frontiers that are laid on in their way, and their very evocation is also subjected to many linguistic mechanisms designed to other and dehumanize them. Three elements may induce dehumanization: "when a person is subjected to "conditions or treatment that are inhuman or degrading", (b) when a person is portrayed "in a way that obscures or demeans that person's humanity or individuality", or (c) when human involvement is removed or reduced" (Lazovic, 2021: 117). As Guillard and Harris (2019) argue, such linguistic patterns may have a direct influence on the inclusion of migrants by presenting them as "an object that must be handled in a rational and unemotional manner, absolving the agent of guilt, empathy and social or moral responsibility" (Stollznow, 2008: 194).

Among the many linguistic patterns that may achieve such goals, this section maps the principal linguistic patterns that are particularly widely communicated in the public sphere. The first pattern that is almost universally employed is the collocation of the terms 'refugee' and 'crisis'. Indeed, qualifying the arrival of refugees in Europe following the Syrian civil war might appear neutral at first, considering that there was a significant increase in arrivals at that time. However, when visualized in relationship with both the repartition of refugee populations worldwide and the welcoming

capacities that Europe *could* put in place, the term of 'refugee crisis' appears to be ideologically charged: it is both unnecessarily alarming and stigmatizing (Krzyzanowski et al., 2018). To Baldwin-Edwards "[t]he framing of migration management as a "crisis" has been used to justify extraordinary and exceptional measures, which can be characterized as rapid, informal and flexible policy instruments at odds with the rule of law and the fundamental rights of refugees and other migrants" (2018: 11).

A second mainstreamed trope of exclusion is the constant differentiation between refugees and migrants. Indeed, migrants are regularly differentiated along a binary between the 'persecuted' refugee 'fleeing' from conflict or a 'migrant' that left his country by choice to prosper economically (Whitham, 2017). First, this Manichean binary has been challenged by the literature, it is reused by politicians to minimize migrants' reasons for departures and limiting welcoming capacities of any migrant overall (Whitham, 2017). Secondly, when granting specific attention to how this binary considers migrants, it appears that they are constantly referred to as victims with no agency. Indeed, they are either resettled, integrated, assisted, or killed: they are constantly qualified through things happening *to them*. This passive victimization through language treats migrants purely as form of biological life and suppresses their political subjectivity (pass: 143). In other world, and as signposted above, migrants are continuously robbed of their agency, which materializes particularly through language. However, while some might object that, indeed, migrants' material condition is that of enduring and receiving, this is disproved by the literature. For instance, refugees among the Palestinian youth "respond to the uncertainty of their lives with a sense of agency, as well as clearly identifiable aspirations" (Chatty, 2009: 319).

Further, migrants are referred to through the lens of law enforcement and legal status. Those discursive patterns suggest an underlying causal link between crime and migration, which implicitly essentialize migrants as inevitably illegal (Kansteiner, 2018). Nicholas De Genova (2015) reverses this inference: it is border injustice institutionalized in immigration law that produce migrant 'illegality' and the 'border spectacle that "Spectacle systematically re-renders that same "illegality" into a quasi-inherent deficiency of the migrants themselves" (De Genova, 2015: 3). Further, this kind of legal classifications are specifically dehumanizing because it attributes to certain individuals and groups characteristics that are never used to qualify citizens, no matter their actions. As Braimtan puts it "even individuals who have committed

violent acts such as murder and rape” are never referred to as “illegal citizens”, nor are those caught driving under the influence described as “illegal drivers”. This confirms that the designation ultimately “indicts a person’s entire existence, rather than an action” (Kansteiner, 2019: 151).

Finally, the quantification of migrants, also employed continuously, is even more dehumanizing linguistically than the legal vocabulary exemplified above. Indeed, the relentless use of migration numbers by both institutions and media outlets play a key role in the construction of a migration ‘crisis’ (Stierl et al., 2019). It generates “the homogenized and aggregate representations that are decisive for erasing the individuality and political subjectivity of people on the move, as well as effacing their collective struggles and hardships” (Baker, 2020: 9). As migrants get quantified, they become an invisible mass, an abstract flow of life that shadows the humanity of migrants. This is a major phenomenon, as a report conducted by Baker (2005) showcased that one on five reference to refugees and asylum seekers is enunciated with a number, most of them being very abstract, such as “more and more refugees” or “tens of millions” (*Ibid.*: 202). Overall, migrants are faced with dehumanizing narratives that objectify, quantify, and illegalize their persons. It is therefore crucial to challenge and counter such tropes to adequately secure an inclusive discourse on migration.

Henceforth, the conceptual framework has demonstrated that the borders migrants face upon their arrival can be identified as three distinct essentialisms: over the economy, the nation, and over migrants themselves. Furthermore, with specific regards to the second section, it has been argued that, as outgroups, migrants can never be an integrant part of an ‘us’ that is formulated by a national party. However, the thesis assumes that despite this situation, there is still space for inclusion through politicization, by challenging the symbolic barriers listed in that section. Hence, those essentialisms will now serve as analytical building block to assess LFI’s ‘inclusive populism’.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1. Critical Discourse Analysis

Discourse Analysis can be summed as a qualitative method that considers language to be an ideologically driven social act and aims to use it in order to study social practices and unpack the social mechanisms they bare upon (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a branch of that methodological framework that specifically targets power and inequality. Within this methodological toolkit, “language is treated as a system of lexico-grammatical options from which authors make their choices about what to include or exclude and how to arrange them” (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006: 108). Particularly, the assumption that social relations of power are generated and enacted through discourse is a core ideological pillar within CDA. This qualitative methodology aims at studying how linguistic structures and enunciation processes shape mental representations, and how domination and inequality are produced through texts (Van Dijk, 2008). Classic domains of research involve how racism is reproduced and legitimized discursively. Hence, it appears as particularly fitting to unpack migration narratives among political parties, and critical discourse analysis will be used on a corpus of interviews delivered by Jean-Luc Mélenchon between 2015 and 2017.

3.2. Speaking the Language of Exclusion

Using Critical Discourse Analysis in the specific case of migration narratives requires to problematize further the concept of representation. This notion questions the way language is used to represent what we know, believe, and think (Wilson, 2001). Along their discursive exploration of race and nationality, Wodak and Meyer (2001) advance a method that showcases five discursive strategies on representation. The first one is referential and considers the processes of enunciation that participate in the inclusion or the rejection in a social group. It focuses on linguistic devices such as metaphors to assess how members are categorized. Secondly, predication aims at identifying if individuals are characterized in terms rather positive or negative when being mentioned. The third component observes the arguments used in the discourses, to either legitimize or disqualify exclusion and discrimination (*Ibid.*). The two last strategies concern the context in which the discourses have been produced, if the orator speaks in his own name and if, overall, his discourse aims at intensifying discrimination or not. Further, one other key discursive component the thesis looks at

when applying CDA is the discursive construction of 'us' and 'them'. Those linguistic practices are at the heart of the methodological framework, which offers a very detailed toolkit to "say the 'us' in the refusal of 'them'" (Devriendt et al., 2018: 13).

3.3. Case Selection and Data

This thesis applies Critical Discourse analysis to a selection of interviews delivered by Jean-Luc Mélenchon between 2015 and 2017 and focuses its analysis on the key discursive strategies delimited by Wodak and Meyer in their research. Several reasons motivate the decision to limit the analysis to Jean-Luc Mélenchon. As evidenced by Philippe Marlière (2019), Jean-Luc Mélenchon single-handedly created La France Insoumise, and he has most, if not all, the responsibility of articulating the party's line of argumentation. Indeed, the centrality of the figure of the leader is a classic populist trait to which La France Insoumise is a paradigmatic case. Further, as a candidate to the presidential election in 2017, his declarations do not only follow the purpose of qualifying political realities, but also challenging all other migration narratives and imposing his own, showcasing LFI's populist strategy with particular accuracy.

Additionally, the temporality in which discourses have been selected also answer to a plurality of criteria. As signposted in the literature review, this period has been selected because it witnessed a higher salience of migration due to the Syrian refugee crisis. Both the higher salience granted to migration and a general period of disaffection for the left among European electorates justifies categorizing this period as a "crisis" for the left. As such, this period is assumed as an open moment, particularly fertile for the rearticulation of inclusionary migration narratives among the European populist left (Pautz, 2018). Further, the assumption of 'crisis as open moment' has particular credence considering that those years comprise Mélenchon's political campaign for the 2017 elections, which was declared in early 2016.

The primary data on which the analysis relies is composed of political interviews delivered by Jean-Luc Mélenchon in mainstream French media outlets. Hence, primary data consists of oral declarations retrieved on the internet, in the archives of major French TV channels, that were manually transcribed and translated into English. The selection of a small number of interviews, along with the decision to rely on interviews, both build from methodological observations showcased by CDA scholars. Indeed, as Van Dijk and Fairclough argue, the quality of the results benefit from a selection of a small number of texts, that should arise from mass media in order to

showcase power relations with more clarity (Van Dijk, 2008; Fairclough, 2003). Further, secondary data encompass news articles during the same time frame.

The research follows a 'corpus driven' approach, whereby the analysis aimed to 'let the data speak' and then select the relevant elements to answer the paper's research question. approach is inductive, and the analysis functioned a posteriori, grounded in the data extracted from the interviews. In turn, specific elements of the data were selected in accordance to their relevance with the literature and more specifically to the three symbolic essentialisms presented in the conceptual framework. This inductive approach does not aim to confirm or disprove hypotheses on LFI's conceptualization of migration, but rather to observe how meaning-making on migration is formed among the selected interviews.

3.4.Limitations

The result of the research comprises several possible limitations. First, the selected discourses are originally oral declarations that have been transcribed for the purpose of the analysis. Transcription entails the capture of a discourse within a temporal and spatial frame. It is crucial to bare in made that any transcription is a biased representation of data (Edwards, 2001). The researcher ultimately decides which information to include, where the analysis begins and where it ends, and how the findings are presented.

Secondly, the researcher, that ultimately subjected the selection of interviews, their translation, and their analysis to its own judgment, is emotionally and politically engaged with the topic of migrant inclusion. Hence, Critical Discourse Analysis might have been subjected to biased selectivity (Gross, 2018). This is mitigated by reviewing a wide array of interviews before operating a selection and by rigorously sticking to the chosen methodology.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS

The analysis of the data is divided as follows: first, Mélenchon's processes of enunciation regarding migrants are analysed. In turn, the text focuses on each of Mélenchon's argumentative pillars when speaking about migration. When using Critical Discourse Analysis, specific attention is granted to the three 'barriers of essentialism' that hinder migrants' inclusion (see chapter II).

1. Processes of Enunciation and Predication

When Jean-Luc Mélenchon designs migrants, the most frequent terms he uses is that of 'people', used as a plural (*les gens*) and of 'persons'. He also privileges the term of 'refugees' instead of 'migrants', who is comparatively more employed than the latter. This is revelatory of how Jean Luc Mélenchon envisions them, as refugees have a legal right to remain in the country do to the threats they face in their country of origin. He carefully identifies the migrants that he is speaking about, which are designed as 'poor', 'well-rounded' and 'cultivated'. Further, Jean-Luc Mélenchon uses specific processes of enunciation to avoid simplistic categories and humanize migrants by emphasizing that "these are not refugees they have names" and that "these are human beings, not a plague" (Mélenchon, 2015). Further, Mélenchon declares that:

"Who are these people? You can ask yourself. They are not refugees. They are not numbers. They have names. They come from somewhere" (Mélenchon, BFM TV, 09/01/2016).

Hence, in his speeches, LFI's leader identifies migrants specifically and criticizes their categorisation as a homogenous group. Instead, he mentions their specificities, either through their names, their country of origin that he enumerates or the specific cause of their departure. These processes of enunciation humanize migrants to his audience.

However, when Jean-Luc Mélenchon does not qualify migrants but rather enunciates their arrival in France and in Europe, he uses other processes to portray them. Particularly, he uses a wide variety of liquid metaphors, qualifying them as either 'flows of refugees' inducing 'pressure' on the receiving country or as a 'migratory wave' (Mélenchon, 2015; Mélenchon, 2016; Mélenchon, 2017). Such liquid metaphors have been employed since the 19^e century to portray movements of population and they are widely used. However, they encourage to consider

movements of migrants as a dehumanized natural phenomenon that should be controlled, and hence participate in dehumanizing migrants (Bernardot, 2016).

Additionally, Mélenchon provides a lot of numbers and superlatives to qualify the “mass” of migrants arriving in Europe. They are “tens of thousands”, “immense fluxes of people” that would require “an extraordinary organisation” on the side of the European Union (Mélenchon, 2016). Hence, the processes of enunciation used by Mélenchon are in line with the ‘crisis narrative’ that provides an alarmist discourse on the arrival of migrants (Stierl et al., 2019). For instance, he states that “the pressure is going to increase, I have bad news for you. It is going to increase in ways you cannot imagine” (Mélenchon, 2016). Indeed, Mélenchon’s predication of migration is rather negative. He identifies the phenomenon as “a problem” that should be “endured”. Specifically, several processes of enunciation associate migration with disorder, and their arrival is assimilated with something that both should be contained and is uncontrollable.

Hence, from how Jean Luc Mélenchon designs migrants, it can be said that both tropes of humanization and crisis coexist. When speaking about their arrival, LFI’s leader use numbers, metaphors, and hyperboles, but when talking about them as individuals, he emphasizes their humanity and struggles against their homogenization. Thus, it can be argued that Mélenchon essentializes migration but de-essentialize migrants.

2. Textual Contexts and Argumentation

Moving on to the textual context of those processes of enunciation, we can distinguish four distinct argumentative pillars in Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s discourses: the contestation of securitization (1), a distinction between our duty to migrants that are already (2) and the problem that is caused by further arrivals (3) and, finally, the politicization of those arrivals as the responsibility of the West (4).

2.1. Challenging Securitization

Indeed, the humanization of migrants operated by Jean Luc Mélenchon extends beyond their qualification as humans having names and nationalities, and the populist leader challenges several times the bias of the journalists. For instance, he states that:

“I want to remind you that they are human beings. Stop considering them as a plague. Understand that they are human beings” (Mélenchon, Public Sénat, 20/10/2015).

Here, by using processes of enunciation such as “I want to remind you” and “Understand”, Mélenchon clearly argues that journalists are caught in a constant process of dehumanization, that actively qualifies migrants as a plague. Further, in another interview, when the interviewer says that they are switching to the topic of “migrants and security”, Mélenchon replies “well they do not have any link with one another” (Mélenchon, 2016). As underlined in the introduction, the constant equivalence between migration and security is one core trope of migration securitization and participate to essentialize migrants as existential threats to the receiving society (Buzan et al. 1998). By actively challenging this equivalence, it can be argued that the populist leader opposes migration securitization. He delves deeper in that perspective by challenging two other securitized tropes, one discursive, the other material. Indeed, speaking about Frontex, Mélenchon explicitly frames migration securitization by showing how EU policymaking on migration has shifted its approach from “Take people at sea and rescue them towards a logic of border protection” (Mélenchon, 2015). Finally, he attacks the migrant/refugee and qualifies the logic of differentiating between “the good Syrian and the bad Syrian” as “absurd” in and off itself.

2.2. On the National Ground: Agency and Inclusion

First, LFI’s leader addresses the topic of migrants already present on the territory, and by doing so, two major argumentative tropes appear: he focuses on migrants’ needs, advocating for their agency and their right to free movement, and regularization of all ‘undocumented migrants’ on the territory, that are designed as workers. When challenging the European strategy of ‘quotas’ to balance migrant populations among European countries, Mélenchon declares:

“How are you going to do it? You take them on the beach, and you put them in trains to take them in places where they do not want to go? [...] No, they will go. Besides, there are the Schengen agreements. You cannot stop people from circulating from one side of Europe to the other, so quotas do not signify anything” (Mélenchon, France 24, 12/09/2015).

Here, the analysis does not aim to target how LFI’s leader understands quota policies but rather how he centres the debate on migrant agency and challenges

dehumanization. Indeed, he argues how those policies consider migrants as a disposable lifeless mass, without desires and agency, to be distributed among EU countries. This is also observed in another interview where Mélenchon interrogates the journalist about “the reason to keep them at ours if they want to go elsewhere?” (Mélenchon, 2015). Here, two discursive elements must be underlined: Mélenchon emphasizes what migrants “want” but still qualifies them as, indeed, “them” being retained “at ours” (*Chez nous*). Migrants are humanized as active agents with wills and desires, but not as part of ‘us’, which is here a national ‘us’, and designs French people.

However, this is balanced by another declaration where the populist leader speaks about his decisions as potential future president of the French republic during the campaign. He declares he would “give papers to every undocumented worker” because “all those who work, who pay taxes, have the right to come back at theirs with their head held high” (Mélenchon, 2017). In doing so, Mélenchon challenges vividly the essentialization of the nation that migrants face upon their arrival. Indeed, their inclusion within the national community does not rely on being assessed on their acknowledgment of a set of values that every French has and every migrant lack. They are included on the basis of the contribution that they already provide to the French society, as workers and active contributors to the French social system. Hence, by qualifying migrants as agents that have agency about their movements, it can be argued that Mélenchon vitalizes migrants. He challenges the symbolic barrier they face as ‘cultural outsiders’.

Hence, by qualifying migrants as agents that have agency about their movements, it can be argued that Mélenchon humanizes migrants. Further, while he still frames a narrative centred around a national ‘us’, he also challenges an essentialist vision of the nation -state when targeting the modalities of their inclusion.

2.3. *‘The Others’: Distributive Conflicts Over Employment*

Then, Mélenchon turns to the thematic of migrants trying to get in France, and it is at this point that the populist leader starts emphasizing their arrival as ‘a problem’ to the national society. Indeed, directly after having said he would regularize undocumented migrants, he continues speaking of ‘the others’, saying that:

“I am forced to tell them that, listen, I do not know what to do. Stop saying you want to give us a hand, because we already have the people we need” and that “For now, we do not have the means to occupy everyone” (Mélenchon, France 2, 11/03/2017).

Here, Mélenchon implicitly gives credit to the argument according to which migration and unemployment would be related. In the French case, this is however widely contested. Indeed, while France enacted massive expulsion of migrants in the 1930s', it did not have effects on the job markets. Comparatively speaking in a modern context, this is also far from being solidly empirically grounded: Canada has a policy of opened borders towards economic migrants and simultaneously accounts for very few unemployed workers (Castano, 2017).

Beyond having weak empirical groundings, this assumption essentializes the supply of jobs within capitalist societies. Indeed, as exemplified above (see chapter 3 section 1) the discrepancy between demand for capital and demand for labour is an intrinsic capitalist mechanism. In this view, unemployment becomes the fact of capitalism itself, independently of migrants' arrival. He makes a direct reference to George Marchais' previous declarations (*Ibid.*) that followed the same line of argumentation when he declared that “I am not a communist, but they still had a clear view that it was going to turn bad” (Mélenchon, 2016). Hence, by making migrants' arrival a vector of unemployment, it can be argued that Mélenchon essentializes the reserve army of labour as a natural economic phenomenon and racializes it as migrants arrival's responsibility. In so doing, Mélenchon follows a protectionist vision of the economy, which negatively influences the inclusivity of his narrative.

2.4. Why Would They Leave? Challenging the Imperial 'Us'

While Mélenchon does qualify migrants' arrival as a concern, he problematizes the latter and explores what causes migrants to leave their country. He identifies three main causes: wars, fare trade, and climate change. In each case, those causes are related with structural imperialist and capitalistic dynamics of both past and present.

Indeed, when qualifying what he sees as “our first duty”, that of allowing everyone to have a dignified life wherever they are, Jean-Luc Mélenchon argues the necessity to “stop wars, economical agreements that destroy local economies, and fight climate change” (Mélenchon, 2015). Interestingly, Mélenchon does not differentiate between those three causes, which puts on equal grounds refugees, economic migrants, and climate migrants as victims of a system that needs to be challenged, tackling the

economic migrant/political refugee binary. When speaking about economic causes specifically, he argues that migrants have:

“[...] have terrible economic conditions because Europe sells ‘for’ them chickens goats, meat, and wheat that they do not eat [...] and so agriculture collapses.” (Mélénchon, BFM TV, 09/01/2016).

On the other hand, he says that “Europe never speaks about changing its economic partnership” (*ibid.*). In putting back-to-back both phenomena, Mélénchon suggests a causal relationship between free trade enacted by European countries and migration. Indeed, taking on a Marxist lens, it can be argued that the development of capitalist western societies relies on “the exploitation, oppression and subordination of labor to elite-led development” in the ‘Global South’ (Selwyn, 2015: 782). When targeting “illegal” free trade treaties imposed on certain nation-states, Mélénchon emphasizes even further the causal link between free-trade and migration, stating that “exporting at all costs, it is killing people that, there, produce” (Mélénchon, 2016). Hence, Mélénchon argues that people living in those countries face a choice between departure and death, challenging the figure of the economic migrant as a self-interested opportunity hoarder (Whitham, 2017). Further, the image of death is particularly powerful discursively, as it showcases the violence inherent to capitalistic power relations in its most extreme form, echoing the words of the post-colonial thinker Achille Mbembe and his theory of necropolitics (Mbembe, 2006).

Moreover, Mélénchon also delves further on who bears the responsibility of such actions, and does not only limit his accusations to Europe:

- (1) “We continue to augment reasons to leave and then we stop people from arriving.”
- (2) “People come due to war that we started. People come due to the economic distress that Europe has spread all over Africa”. (Mélénchon, France 24, 12/09/2015).

Mélénchon does not only qualify Europe as responsible for migrants’ departures, but also articulates an ‘us’ that has a responsibility on that matter. First, this makes Jean-Luc Mélénchon’s articulation of ‘the people’ directly concerned by the topic, not solely through moral values, but as a responsibility due to the past. In the second sentence, ‘we’ is related to wars, while ‘Europe’ is related to economic distress. It suggests that Mélénchon speaks specifically of imperialism when raising this shared blame ‘we’ bear. Hence, it is possible that the populist leader echoes specific decolonial enquiries that emanate from the French society, which politicize French imperialism and

demand recognition of its violence (Bouteldja, 2023). Overall, Mélenchon's argumentative strategy, that relates migration with structural dynamics of oppression, participates to shatter essentialisms that migrants face, both regarding the state and on themselves. Indeed, the state, or the 'us', is not unchallengeable because it articulates the community, it is subject to political criticisms and debates.

Finally, two discursive patterns are used to internationalize his discourse, which, in and off itself, is assumed as an inclusivist trope:

- (1) "I am for everyone's right to live and work. In Zambèze as in Corrèze".
- (2) "it's not just about others climate change. it will affect you too. and then maybe. you'll start to tell yourself [...] It is worth being united between human beings."
(Mélenchon, BFM TV, 09/01/2016).

To Mélenchon, rights do not stop at the national border, and the juxtaposition of a Zambian river and a French commune suggests an internationalist trope, whereby inhabitants of both spaces are put on a ground of equality in term of the rights they deserve. Further, Mélenchon challenges its public's vision of climate change, suggesting that the phenomenon is not understood as a problem concerning the 'us', the national community. However, as the populist leader rightfully argues, climate change is a global problem, that threatens us all. In this situation where a common threat is upon the globe, Mélenchon argues that it becomes a necessity to think of ourselves as one humanity, thereby suggesting a global 'us'.

3. Discussion

When trying to pinpoint the discursive processes that construct LFI's conceptualization of migration, two related dichotomizations appear, showcasing diverging patterns. First, at the level of enunciation, migrants are portrayed with a positive, humanized emphasis. However, the process of migration is deemed as a concern and characterized as troubling the national order. Hence, if Mélenchon is far from using identarian justifications to oppose migration, he frames the latter as a concern rather than an opportunity. Mélenchon's standpoint remains grounded in the nation, it is still about 'them' coming to 'us'.

When giving further attention to its argumentation, another pattern appears, distinguishing migrants already living in France and those caught in the process of

migrating. The first category is dignified, humanized and the populist leader frames a clearly inclusive discourse. However, we can see divergent tropes struggling with one another when Mélenchon speaks about migration processes. On the one hand, he articulates a potential causality between migration and unemployment, thereby reifying the demand for labor in capitalist societies. On the other, he politicizes the cause of their departure and articulates a self-criticism of an imperial 'us', that structurally threaten former colonies through the war it leads, the trade-agreements it imposes and the ecocide it participates in while feeling detached from. Above all, this materialist analysis shatters the essentialist assumptions that migrants must face, as it situates migration as a historical and political process dependent of power relations.

Hence, LFI's discourse does not shatter all the symbolic essentialisms that migrants face. Indeed, it does politicize the image of migrants and that of the nation, but still relies on an essentialized vision of the job market. In that perspective, LFI's inclusive discourse is limited. If the populist party were to challenge its own essentialized view of the job market, it would better fit the category of inclusive populism. Taken as a whole, LFI's conceptualization of migration is hard to qualify as either inclusive or exclusive. Put back-to-back with anti-immigration discourses, there is no doubt that the populist discourse showcases inclusiveness: it clearly humanizes migrants and showcases inclusivity towards those present in France.

However, it also problematizes migration as a concern with political roots. Taken in a vacuum, Mélenchon's alarmist liquid metaphors dehumanize migrants and surely showcase, to say the least, a passive re-employment of mainstreamed dehumanized discursive processes. The same way, Mélenchon's causal suggestion on migration and unemployment is, for the reasons listed above, undoubtedly exclusive to migrants. However, those patterns are inseparable from the leader's clear attempts to humanize migrants, struggle against their securitization, and politicize the West's responsibility in their arrival.

Building on this apparent impasse, the thesis suggests that the lens of inclusivity is tainted, insofar that it does not allow a clear conceptualization of migration narratives among political parties. Indeed, if parties showcasing exclusively exclusionary narratives have been evidenced in the literature (Stavrakakis, et al., 2017), the opposite is hard to envision. As it was underlined in the theoretical framework (see chapter 3 section 2), there are major theoretical tensions that parties face when speaking about migration, notably the fact that the national community necessarily implies an exterior,

and that any articulation of a people tied to a territory (eg. the French) entails an exclusionary outlook on citizenship. The concept of inclusivity is imperfect to qualify European political parties' migration narratives because, the thesis argues, parties already showcase exclusionary values at the moment they begin to articulate a national discourse. However, despite this situation, there should still be room within our conceptualization of 'inclusivity' to credit the acknowledgement of imperialism and other symbolic borders that are generally abstracted in the public sphere.

Therefore, to qualify LFI's discourse, the thesis puts forward an alternative categorization that acknowledges both exclusionary and inclusionary tropes, that of *humanized problematization*. While the term 'problematization' seems contradicting the term 'humanized', it is not a contradiction in terms. Indeed, the paper assumed that the symbolic borders migrants face could be argued as essentializations, as the reification of certain concepts that enhance symbolic processes of bordering. The problematization of migration, however, entails this opposite: it is a motion of politicization, it is about deconstructing the standpoints naturalizing migration to analyze the material, historical and structural forces at play. Hence, humanized problematization gives particular value to intellectual motions of deconstruction that relate migration with Europe's colonial past while keeping the indispensable criteria of humanization. In that perspective, the analysis of Mélenchon's discourse allows to qualify LFI's discourse as a case of humanized problematization.

CONCLUSION:

Left-wing populist parties have progressively made their way to the forefront of the European left-wing political stage, positioning them as the heirs of the political tradition of the radical left in Europe. As such, they however face specific challenges in the European context of exacerbated securitization of migration. Indeed, as potential progressive political agents, they bear the responsibility to oppose exclusionary tropes towards outgroups. To the populist literature, left-wing populist are necessarily categorized as inclusive populism. However, as the securitization of migration gets normalized in mainstream politics, all progressive political agents should challenge their own articulation of migration narratives and question how they frame inclusivity. Particularly, France is a strong case of migration securitization and the progressive rise of anti-immigration political parties in the poles incites La France Insoumise to build a strong counter-narrative on migration. Hence, the thesis followed the purpose of assessing whether La France Insoumise qualified as a case of inclusive populism or not.

In that perspective, the thesis proposed to conceptualize inclusivity as centered on the specific symbolic borders that migrants must face upon their arrival. Indeed, migrants do not control their enunciation, they are constantly talked about, but are not allowed to take an active part in the design of narratives supposed to showcase their cause. Thus, linguistic devices essentialize native job markets and cultural habits as incompatible with their arrival. Migrants are naturalized as passive victims or lifeless flaws, abstracting their humanity. The thesis assumed that solidifying or deconstructing those essentialisms was crucial to deem populist parties either inclusive or not.

In turn, the thesis aimed to analyze LFI's conceptualization of migration with regard to these symbolic frontiers, to observe the extent to which its populist discourse challenged them. In that perspective, it applied Critical Discourse Analysis to a selection of interviews given by its leader, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, between 2015 and 2017. Findings showcase that the populist leader operated two major differentiations in his conceptualization of migration, evidencing divergent exclusionary and inclusionary tropes in his discourse. Indeed, while he de-essentialized, humanized, and dignified migrants, actively struggling against their securitization, he also framed their arrival as a concern. Further, Mélenchon naturalized the French job market as a rival good between French people and migrants. However, he also de-essentialized

their will to migrate, relating it to the unjust actions of an imperial 'us'. Hence, La France Insoumise can be considered as a case of inclusive populism but is limited, insofar that one out of three symbolic barriers was kept standing in migrants' way.

The thesis finally assumed that the concept of inclusivity was limited to portray Mélenchon's discursive strategy when framing migration. It proposed the alternative categorization of humanized problematization. The concept aimed at delimiting an analytical space to give credit to Mélenchon's causal explanations about migration. Indeed, if it is essentializations that migrants face upon their arrival, then problematizing their arrival as a political outcome with political causes is, in and off itself, inclusive. When addressing the French people, Mélenchon cannot put an equality sign between migrants and french people, as it would challenge frenchness itself. However, the thesis argues, by de-essentializing the symbolic borders that migrants face, there is a space to be inclusive despite this situation.

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