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Conceptualisation of the Impact of Populism
on Public Policymaking in Parliament**

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Abstract

Democratic public policymaking in Western democracies is guaranteed institutionally by parliamentary representation. While most research reduces the impact of populism on public policy to party politics and government formation, this article tackles populism from a sociological point of view. Populism is conceived as moral pressure that influences Members of Parliament's representative behaviour in public policymaking far beyond elections and constitutional engineering. Legislators are socialised into specific representative and legislative roles over the course of their careers. These roles are ideal-typically twisted towards more intermediated 'trusteeship' for proportional democracies and more direct 'delegateship' for majoritarian democracies. Drawing on both the policymaking literature and comparative sociology, this paper theorises how populist moral pressure for less intermediated and less pluralist forms of democracy changes informal rules of policymaking in the wider context of state–society relations. Populist moral pressure pushes Members of Parliament to act more like delegates – which is a less intermediate form of representation. With the help of ideal types, we show how populist moral pressure exerts a differentiated impact on democratic practices in majoritarian than in proportional democracies. Primary difference is that it breaks with institutionalised legitimation norms in proportional democracies. The article suggests that future research on the impact of populism should focus more strongly on populism as behaviour, democratic belief systems, and the informal contexts in which it operates.

Keywords:

populism; public policy; democracy; representative roles; parliamentarism

Introduction: Public Policymaking in a Democratic Polity¹

All states enact public policies, whether democratic, autocratic, or anocratic. The specificity of public policymaking in much of Europe is that it should be substantially shaped through democratic representation (Barrilleaux et al., 2017, p. 3). Beyond elections, parliaments are the crucial institution in which democratic representation is systematically fed into the policymaking process (Urbinati, 2008), the place where society's demands are transformed through representative politics (Gaxie et al., 1990).

Populism's core claim is the renewal of representative democracy. This was already true for the American populist party in the 19th century, and it is the case today for myriad populist movements from Latin America to Eastern Europe. Populism, which can be an ideology or a strategy used by actors to pursue other political purposes (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017), has one distinctive feature (in comparison to extremism, Euroscepticism, and the like): it advocates for more unmediated practices of democracy and thus a change in form of representation (in particular, see Pitkin, 1972).

Populism belongs to one of two large families of democratic thought, or 'visions of democracy' (Powell, 2000, pp. 20–43): the family of democratic models that favour Rousseauan self-rule versus Lockean delegated rule (see also the research agenda at the end of this special issue). Populism's conceptual core is thus intimately linked to the essence of democracy itself (Laclau & Ricard, 2008) and shares familiar traits with direct democratic thought. With the latter, it shares the distrust of liberal democracy (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012; Pappas, 2019) and of the state and its elites (Held, 2009, p. 103). It rejects the pluralist tradition of liberal democracy, as does much of direct democratic thought (Müller, 2016).

To clarify populism's affiliation to one of two specific strands of thought, it is important to show how populism impacts practices of representation by Members of Parliament (MPs) and, in turn, the policymaking process and its outcomes between elections. Building on the ideal-typical distinction between the trustee and delegate representative behavioural patterns, we discuss how populist moral pressure leads MPs to behave more like delegates, which is the less intermediate form of parliamentary representation dominant in majoritarian democracies.

The article proceeds by showing how populist policymaking exerts a differentiated impact on majoritarian and proportional democracies. Democratic policymaking in the former is built on the ideas that the link between citizens and policymaking is relatively direct and that policymaking is done by the majority, even if in practice, this majority often represents a minority of vote shares (Lijphart, 2012, pp. 130–157).

Transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to guarantee a clear-cut change of majority are important in the norm system embedded in the practices of 'good' democratic policymaking in this ideal type of democracy. This is sometimes summarised in the saying that majoritarian democracies of the Westminster style allow for the 'tyranny of the majority'. Proportional democracies, conversely, are built on the underlying assumptions that democratic representation is largely intermediated and that as many citizens as possible are represented in policymaking (Lijphart, 2012; Powell, 2000). The norms underpinning democratic policymaking in proportional systems are thus confidentiality, compromise, and responsiveness to the largest possible share of citizens. In these democracies, power is more dispersed, transparency less important, and responsibilities more imbricated.

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The article shows how populism leaves legitimisation practices and institutional watchdogs in majoritarian democracies intact. In contrast, in proportional democracies, populist moral pressure jeopardises established legitimisation norms of parliamentary representation in policymaking. The article concludes by discussing links to other research and the broader evolutions of the transformation of democracy.

Populism and the Parliamentary Public Policymaking Regime

The Two Worlds of Parliamentary Policymaking: Trustees vs. Delegates

The impact of populism on MPs' behaviour and, in turn, the policymaking process is typically analysed through party politics and government formation and action (for a similar argument, see Milet in Boussaguet et al., 2019; Yoshida, 2020). The state-of-the-art pays much attention to party-political, government, and opposition dynamics in parliaments and thus neglects the day-to-day interactions comprising the most important part of policymaking (for exceptions, see Abélès, 1992; Crewe, 2015; Milet, 2010; Powell, 2000; Richardson, 2013).

Differing power configurations within parliament translate different democratic 'cultures' into institutional rules and practices (Powell, 2000) and lead in turn to varying patterns of the transformation of social demands into policymaking (Gaxie et al., 1990). MPs have a multitude of interconnections with government, society, and economic actors. How these interactions play out depends on the type of democracy and institutionalised state–society relations in which MPs evolve. Such patterns crystallise in parliamentary role-taking on the meso level and relate directly to different conceptions about the 'working of electoral and legislative institutions' (Powell, 2000, p. 5) in the process of policymaking and the underlying norms of the democratic regime (Goujon, 2015).

Here, this article starts to conceptualise the populist impact on the behaviour of MPs: we reduce the variety of empirically existing parliamentary arrays of activity to two ideal types (see Burger, 1987), which helps conceptualise the impact of populist moral discourse on parliamentary behaviour systematically without making a priori value judgements about populism being 'good' or 'bad' for democracy.

Legislative studies describe two diametrically opposed ideal types of representative and legislative behaviour in parliamentary systems: the delegate and the trustee roles (for an overview over the state-of-the-art, see Blomgren & Rozenberg, 2012; for classical studies, see Eulau & Wahlke, 1978; for a more sociological view, see Lefebvre, 2011; Searing, 1994a). Roles are 'designed to explain how individuals who occupy particular social positions behave and how they expect others to behave' (Hindin, 2007; Lefebvre, 2011; Searing, 1994b; Tournay Virginie, 2011) and can be traced empirically as patterns of behaviour, with the meaning of the instruments of parliamentarians at the heart of the representative infrastructure of policymaking. A long tradition of role analysis exists in legislative studies (Abélès, 1992, 2000; Crewe, 2005, 2015); recent political science, however, often fails to operationalise roles in a sociological or anthropological way (Blomgren & Rozenberg, 2012; see for an exception Lefebvre, 2011).

Both of these roles closely align with a specific type of democratic model and 'vision' (Powell, 2000) embedded in democratic systems. Delegate behaviour, closer to a direct democratic ideal of democracy because it is less intermediate, is dominant in majoritarian regimes of democracy. Delegates closely follow instructions and the 'mandate'. The moral guideline of this type of democratic representative behaviour is to 'act just like the represented would act' (Blomgren & Rozenberg, 2012, p. 10) and to provide accountability or deliberative legitimisation to decision-making processes (for similar arguments about legitimacy functions, see Auel & Rittberger, 2006; Patzelt, 2003). The delegate's policy orientation stems from direct interaction with voters and stakeholders in society. Delegates are more sensitive to the opinions of their constituents (Kuklinski & Elling, 1977) and have a stronger presence in constituencies (Costa & Kerrouche, 2007; Ollion, 2022) than trustees.

Delegate behaviour and role play are more important in democratic regimes in which parties are weaker in the policymaking process and more focused on electoral periods – such as the US – and in which policymaking is more consensual (Richardson, 2013).

In terms of legislative behaviour, delegates value oral activities in the chamber as more important than activities behind closed doors in working groups or meetings with the executive. The importance of specific arrays of activities is determined by their reputational value. In parliaments with more delegate behaviour, plenary debates are more open to partisan dissent (Proksch & Slapin, 2015).

In contrast, trustee behaviour is the embodiment of a more intermediated 'vision' of representative democracy. Trustees act according to their 'enlightened judgement' (Blomgren & Rozenberg, 2012, p. 10). The trustee model embodies representative democracy in perfection – voters and citizens make programmatic decisions at the polls but leave concrete policymaking decisions to 'trusted' representatives between elections. In contrast to the delegate, the trustee is 'free' (Eulau & Wahlke, 1978, p. 272) to follow their own convictions and principles (or their party's programmatic stance) rather than needing to respond to a clearly identifiable electorate (for the distinction, see also e.g., Converse and Pierce 1986; Katz 1997; Müller and Saalfeld 1997; Judge 1999; Mendez-Lago and Martinez 2002). The trustee's policy orientations are derived from the field of expertise they cover for the party, intermediated by the party's programmatic stance, with direct responsiveness to voters being less important. Citizens or businesses in the constituency can put through an issue of interest only in the rare case that their MP is responsible for the respective policy as an expert for their parliamentary party group (Schüttemeyer, 1998).

In alignment with their representative role, trustees are often expected to develop expertise for their party in a specific circumscribed policy field over the course of their careers (for the German Bundestag, see Oertzen, 2006). Rather than ideological advocates for causes, trustees are a kind of legislative expert controller in the service of their parliamentary party group. To play their roles as lawmakers, trustees spend less time in the plenary or their constituencies and more time in committees and working groups within the chamber, with their parliamentary party group, and with government civil servants. Within their area of expertise, trustees build close networks with economic and civil society actors and MPs from other parliamentary party groups. These inter-party networks can sometimes be stronger than partisan cleavages. Differences in types of input are reflected in the comparative study of the attitudes of MPs (Weßels et al., 1999).

Such representative roles are superimposed with the particular 'styles' (Richardson, 2013) of policymaking depending on country, sector, and policy. Beyond sector-specific policy styles, some authors agree national policymaking styles exist that cut across sectors. These styles, mobilised in the policymaking literature since the 1980s, range from being characterised by pro-active negotiations to counter public policies to being more consensual. Relevant characterisations have a certain familiarity, with the more institutionalist literature describing different types of interest group access to the governmental system, varying from pluralist to corporatist (Geertz, 1973; Lijphard, 2012, pp. 158–1). These styles relate to 'arrays of activity' (Lowi, 1964) which are shared by MPs in communities of practice beyond the parliamentary chamber (Schmidt, 2006). While Lowi focused on the link between public policies and politics, the link to parliamentarians also highlights how policymaking actors encounter the democratic polity on the micro and meso levels.

MPs play more of a trustee role in corporatist political systems that score low in interest group pluralism (for political transformation in Belgium and the Netherlands, see Jones, 2008; Lijphard, 2012, p. 165), at least in Western European democracies (for a contrasting view on Post-communist countries, see Fortin 2008). Schmidt classifies Germany, Sweden, and the Netherlands (and to a lesser degree Italy) as corporatist political systems (Schmidt, 2006). The lower chambers of all four countries can be categorised as governance-oriented parliaments (Neuhold et al., 2016). A proximity exists between the logic of behind-closed-doors input and negotiation with parliament for the expert

control type and the logic of tripartite negotiations in corporatist systems.

Populist strategy and rhetoric may change the representative link MPs have with the groups they represent, the style of representation of society's interests in policymaking processes, and MPs' interpretations of the ends and means of the public good a policy should contribute to.

Populism's Behavioural Push

Populist moral discourse pushes trustees to act more like delegates – or better, an extreme form of delegateship. To better understand this, one must return to the fundamental premises of the two main models of democracy and representation: representative and direct democracy (Held, 2009). 'Populist' discourse and behaviour promote a version of 'Rousseauian' democracy as self-rule, as opposed to a Lockean version of democracy as delegated rule (Caramani, 2017; Held, 2009; Urbinati, 2008). The postulation of the populism literature, which contains both an element of 'anti-elitism' and an element of 'anti-pluralism' (Müller, 2016), is actually two features of the same 'vision' of democracy to which populism adheres. In the Rousseauian model of democracy, the people are 'one and indivisible'; power is exercised directly by the people; sovereignty is indivisible; and in terms of objectives of 'good' governance, the 'equality of chances' for those who are part of the body politic is favoured over the equality of rights (Goujon, 2015). This vision of democracy based on the 'unitary, nonpluralist, unmediated' (Caramani, 2017, p. 111) interests of a community as the basis for decisions necessarily includes the idea that collective bodies – or their proxies– should make decisions instead of professional political elites.

Table 1. Populist Behavioural Push

	Parliamentary Role	
	→	
	<i>Trustee</i>	<i>Delegate</i>
Model of Democracy	Locke	Rousseau
Representative Link	Free mandate	Constituents' will
<i>Electoral system</i>	Intermediated, party based	Direct, constituency based
Basis for policy positions	Party, expertise, policymaking community	Public, constituency
Presence in constituency	Lower	High
Style of Representation	Legislative expert controller	Interest intermediary, alerter for the executive
Professionalisation	High	Low
Arrays of activity with highest value to the MP's social reputation	Legislative activities behind closed doors, e.g., committee meetings, parliamentary party working groups, coordination meetings with high civil servants	Oral activities, e.g., plenary, open committee meetings, question sessions, debates
Interaction during the policy-making process	Concertation with established sectoral networks, institutionalised connections with organised interests	Ad hoc dialogue with business and interests
Party discipline	High	Lower

Main legitimisation logic of parliamentary policymaking	Legislation, co-governance, inclusion of policymaking community and stakeholders	Deliberation, public control, transparency
Public sphere policy discourse (Schmidt 2006)	Coordinative with policymaking community, thin communicative discourse with larger public	Thick communicative with larger public
Concentration of executive power	Low, power sharing	High
Policy style	Consensual	Adversarial, ideologically cleaving
Output legitimacy	Widest possible share of voters	Voters represented by the majority

Representative Link. Populist pressure leads parliamentarians to more clearly identify the electorate or the specific groups they represent. Populist moral discourse about democracy is based on the assumption that a single and indivisible will of the represented group exists; this group, not necessarily the people as a whole (Baloge & Hubé, 2022), may be the ‘simple man’, referring to membership in a specific class, a specific ethnically homogenous group, or another group the MP represents.

Populism as moral pressure towards more un-intermediated forms of democracy leads to pressure on parliamentarians to represent groups of citizens instead of constituencies, parties, specific policy networks, advocacy coalitions, or interests. This means that populism thus pushes MPs to derive their policy positions from the direct exchanges of the groups of citizens they represent, be they fictional or an interpretation of the ‘collective will’. This explains why populist politicians usually reject internal party procedures for decision-making, instead replacing them with direct democratic platforms (Cinque Stelle), complicated systems of ‘WhatsApp’ decision-making (La République en Marche), or political processes through which a providential figure, usually the party leader, interprets the will of the people.

Style of Representation. Un-intermediated democracy is a democracy of non-professionals. In the Athenian ideal of democracy, or in a workers’ council democracy, policymaking is exercised directly by those directly affected by the policies. Populist pressure therefore leads to the strengthened uptake of ‘non’-career representatives. It can also lead to MPs changing their behaviour in a way that they perceive as less ‘elitist’ or ‘professional’, even if they are in reality career politicians (Ollion, 2022). This leads to changes in the representative role: in the policymaking process, MPs act more like they imagine a newcomer would act, less like professionals would. This may compel MPs to stage more opposition to their own party, for example, by increasingly posing public parliamentary questions to their own government.

MPs who are expected to ‘act like the represented would act’ do not develop specific expertise or professional skills linked to a parliamentary career but showcase the fact that they are, as representatives, the voice of the policy positions of their constituent group. MPs moving to the extreme form of delegateship spend less time with members of their own parliamentary party group; the intermediation of parties would be lessened by an undue distancing of the representative from their representative basis. The same is true for interactions between the governing majority and the executive. In a populist vision, MPs are more focused on their consciousness as representatives, directly linked to the *volonté générale* of the represented rather than to the government or coalition contracts. MPs develop a stronger propensity to communicate information to their constituents as

soon as possible to avoid being blamed for behind-closed-doors negotiations.

Objectives for Output Legitimacy. According to the idea that the representative should act as the represented would, the populist push leads to an increased propensity to exclusively represent the represented group's will in the policymaking processes and to reject compromise as 'compromission' and to showcase this through the much increased 'communicative discourse' (Schmidt, 2006) of parliamentarians with the wider public about policymaking objectives.

In majoritarian systems, the populist pressure to change modes of representation and legislative behaviour exerts a stronger impact on parliamentary legitimation practices and parliament as an informal institution than in proportional political systems. Practices and norms in majoritarian democracies are based on transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to the electorate. In contrast, the constituting rules of proportional democracies are confidentiality, trust, and responsiveness to the widest share of citizens.

The Differentiated Impact of Populism on Public Policy

Norm Systems for the Legitimation of Policymaking: Majoritarian vs. Proportional Democracies

Each based on specific sets of informal rules and norms to guarantee the democratic legitimacy of parliamentary policymaking, the majoritarian and proportional visions of parliamentary policymaking are clearly distinguishable.

The legitimacy norms on which parliamentary policymaking rests in majoritarian democracies are transparency, accountability, and responsiveness (for the House of Commons, see e.g., Auel & Rittberger, 2006). Parliamentary policymaking transposes the liberal interpretation of voting, or of 'elections as instruments of accountability' (Powell, 2000, p. 11). Voting permits the voter a veto and thus the rejection of candidates or officials who have not translated the voters' will and thus will not be re-elected (Riker, 1982). If elections allow the rejection of incumbents, it is central to parliamentary policymaking that responsibilities in the process can be clearly attributed (Lijphart, 2012). In majoritarian democracies, citizens must have the opportunity to vote against incumbents, and the incumbent must actually lose policymaking power – something they might not do in systems with frequent coalition governments.

Transparency. In the classical model of majoritarian democracy, citizens need not worry about the credibility of proposals and promises. This 'model... appeals to those who desire clear citizen control, yet are sceptical about the capability of the citizens to form opinion on complex policy issues' (Powell, 2000, p. 11). At first sight, this is, of course, in opposition to a vision of direct democracy in which citizens make policy decisions themselves without the intermediation of the 'professionals' of politics. A clear connection exists, however: if there is to be as little intermediation as possible in representative democracy, information about the policymaking process must be as transparent as possible. Citizens can participate in decision-making in 'real time'. Direct democracy does not sanction representatives at the ballot box every several years but sanctions representative behaviour permanently. The relationship between representative and represented in majoritarian systems is one of close control, if the representative does what the represented would have chosen in policymaking.

Accountability. The executive is elected on the basis of a detailed electoral programme, and the power in the political system is concentrated to ensure that the executive can implement the policies they were elected for. In an ideal-typical parliamentary democracy (e.g., Westminster), it is the task of the parliamentary party group of the majority to check that the government sticks to its 'campaign pledges' (Thackeray & Toye, 2020). This is similar to the permanent 'plebiscite' of direct democratic arrangements, in which policymaking is judged by its correspondence to the will of the constituent group. Majoritarian democracies usually have single-member districts, but other types of identity

groups can also comprise a clearly defined constituency. In majoritarian systems, the intervention of the representative in the legislative procedure has a higher chance of being destined to send signals to the opinion or party leaders – instead of being directed towards the orientation of the content of laws – than in proportional systems, in which MPs are less dependent on constituency opinion because their careers usually go through the party (Milet, 2010).

Within parliament, in majoritarian democracies, there is a much looser relationship between the executive and the parliamentary majority in the early phases of the policymaking process. MPs therefore exercise their control functions mainly during the passage through parliament, and they do so mainly publicly, or at least under the threat of public shaming, because they typically have much weaker formal rights. A move to ever more public activities and populist pressure thus adds ‘more of the same’ to a parliamentary representation mode already based on public deliberation, transparency, and public accountability.

Responsiveness. While in proportional systems, as many citizens from diverse factions as possible are supposed to participate in policymaking, in majoritarian systems, it is the elected majority of citizens (Powell, 2000, pp. 20–30). As such, the representative must incessantly profess their adequate allegiance towards the clearly identified group they are a member of. This may lead to a situation in which the emphasis of the representative link is more important than the policy solutions, particularly in political systems in which no forum for citizen deliberation exists that would be adequate for the level and breadth of decision-making done by a national parliament and which are based on mass publics. In the end, in mass political systems, majoritarian and direct democracy are similar: ‘citizens do not need to worry anymore about the credibility of proposals and promises’ or can at least live with a simplification of complex policy issues, as long as the identitarian link between representative and represented is ensured. In democratic practice, the degree to which the latter statement is true of course varies.

The legitimacy norms on which proportional policymaking arrangements are based differ: they are based on confidentiality and trust among policy actors, the ability to find consensus, and proportional representation for the final outcome. In proportional systems, the government must be responsive to as many people as possible, representation occurs according to a proportional vote, and responsibilities are much more dispersed. The government’s mandate is broad and negotiated. Voters have multiple party choices but only a limited capacity to vote out incumbents, who may always return through coalition negotiations. Responsibilities are dispersed, and governing is judged on the basis of the capacity to build consensus to negotiate optimal policy outputs for as many citizens as possible. To be able to negotiate optimal policy outcomes, policymakers must create relationships of trust based on confidentiality norms; they are organised into parties from which they derive their policy positions. In proportional systems, working groups in parliament and in the party are critical, more so than plenary or open committee meetings. The opposition is included more often than not in behind-closed-doors compromises. The parliamentary majority is closely intertwined with the government, and parliamentary careers are made by the party.

The Impact of Populist Policymaking on Proportional Democracies

While stronger delegate behaviour substantially impacts the informal rules of policymaking in proportional systems, it only marginally affects the social norms which ‘specify’ (Bachmann, 2009) or underpin democratic policymaking in majoritarian systems, to use Max Weber’s terms. For proportional systems in which MPs ‘co-govern’ with the executive, a move from trustee to more delegate representative role play poses crucial problems to parliamentary policymaking and democracy as a system of norms and practices in the policymaking processes.

As demonstrated above, populist behaviour may negatively affect policymaking in majoritarian systems, but it affects less the informal legitimacy channels built into majoritarian systems. With a populist push, majoritarian systems receive only more of the same politics, and the norms underpinning policymaking, e.g. transparency, remain intact. Populists ask for more transparency in procedures, which are based on the assumption that the groups they cater to should be able to follow the policymaking process in real time to counteract the impact of intermediate bodies and institutions on the policymaking process as much as possible. They also aim to minimise the assumption that professional politicians broker deals behind closed doors. Populists push for more accountability in decision-making to cater to the clearly defined identitarian groups they represent and thus ask for an increase in responsiveness to specific identified groups, be they the underprivileged classes, the 'simple man', or the 'people' in a European or international context. This populist push may increase polarisation but is less of a problem in majoritarian systems, where the populist push only increases the already strong centralisation of policymaking power.

In the majoritarian ideal type, the executive is much less fused with the parliamentary majority during the policymaking process than in proportional systems; Policies are prepared in the confidential ambit of the executive and their cabinet. Only at a late stage do parliament and MPs discover legislative proposals, when they are presented in parliament. Legislative projects sometimes leak to the public and the press, after which MPs celebrate this political emergency and relish the opportunity to speak to the media regarding their stance towards the government. MPs participate in only later stages of the policymaking, and this participation, oriented primarily towards public control, mainly ensures that the government sticks to its programmatic lines. The majority also alerts the government if issues arise that may cause difficulties for voters (for the French case, see e.g., Thomas & Tacea, 2015)2015.

The populist push therefore only strengthens the logics that underpin politics and policymaking in majoritarian systems without undermining the formal and informal watchdogs embedded in this ideal type, such as institutional segregation and strong executive isolation. MPs' interventions in the legislative process on the grounds of the particular interests of constituencies or stakeholders are not unfamiliar to majoritarian democracies. The strong centralisation of policymaking power in the executive usually also translates into committee structures. In the majoritarian ideal type, where the speakers of the parliamentary party groups of the government majority hold much power during the legislative process, committee chairs are more important than in proportional systems, where they typically have a procedural role. In this ideal type, committees serve mainly to 'bury' (Kimmel, 1991) legislative initiatives that do not conform to the government line.

In contrast, in proportional democracies, the populist push towards more transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to clearly defined groups may substantially undermine the central legitimacy norms on which parliamentary policymaking is built. These norms are confidentiality and trust among opposing factions, the executive, and the parliamentary majority; expert control; and the ability to design responsive policies for the largest possible share of citizens.

The populist push for more responsiveness to clearly defined groups is contrary to the indirect representation on which proportional democracies are based. MPs usually form their policy positions within their parties, not their constituencies (see Schüttemeyer, 1998). Populist moral pressure asking for more accountability to specific groups pushes MPs to showcase pay-offs to particular groups or constituencies and to push back on 'partitocracy' during policymaking. Such showcasing of pay-offs undermines voter trust in the capacity of policymakers to find optimal solutions for the largest share of citizens, on which the loose bond of representation in proportional systems is based.

The breach of confidentiality norms, which occurs behind closed doors and is typical of proportional and 'compound' (Schmidt, 2006) political systems in which the policy style is consensual (Richardson, 2013), hinders the 'thick coordinative discourse' (Schmidt, 2006) between MPs, decision-makers, and the wider policymaking community. Instead, more public polarisation and exchange occur about often simplistic solutions. While majoritarian systems usually have a polarised public sphere in which spin doctors find the right simplified policymaking discourses to sell the executive's policymaking decisions, proportional systems tend to have a more consensual public sphere, in which politicians and policymakers defend the compromises they have reached behind closed doors in a 'thin communicative' discourse (Schmidt, 2006).

In terms of legislative behaviour within the parliamentary chamber, the populist's alteration of the representative link challenges the policy positions in proportional parliaments, in which the MPs of the parliamentary majority are firmly associated with all stages of policymaking, in close cooperation between the sectoral speakers for parliamentary party groups, party leadership, and ministerial administration (for the German case, see e.g., Oertzen, 2006). Much of this coordination within the parliamentary party group and between coalition parties that typically occurs in proportional systems happens behind closed doors and is contrary to the populist push towards more *transparency* in the negotiations between professional politicians and elites. The norm of *confidentiality*, which exists within the parliamentary party group and the coalition, is jeopardised when populist politicians break party discipline and release confidential information to the public to show their allegiance and the fact that they are not 'professional' politicians. The same vein of compromises, previously legitimated by their optimal outcomes for the broadest possible share of citizens, is reframed as 'compromission' by elites. This undermines trust in policy outcomes and spurs increased conflict within the coalition.

In proportional systems, the opposition is often associated with compromises behind closed doors. Under a populist push, even more parliamentary theatre than usual occurs between the governing majority and opposition. The push for more transparency leads politicians to make public committee meetings which typically occur behind closed doors, with the result that much more concentration on the theatre between government and opposition in parliament also occurs. Social media renders this movement of the policy process to the public all the easier.

Due to the move towards more publicity and fractionality, party leaders keep more information to themselves out of fear that compromises and trade-offs will be discussed in public. This has crucial consequences for the central legitimacy norm of confidential expert control through backbenchers, who are typically regularly informed by both party leadership and the ministerial bureaucracy itself. Previous research has shown that mainstream parties rather centralise information in the party leadership once populist parties enter the party competition (Bedock et al., 2022). In proportional parliamentary systems, it is a key breach of the norm for democratic parliamentary control of the policymaking process if the parliamentary party groups' experts in a policy area cannot control the policy positions of the party leadership by receiving confidential information through the party group structures. Party experts usually prefer that party leadership make decisions that are politically viable but not optimal in substance, as occurred, for example, in the German Bundestag during the negotiations of the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance, during which the government excluded EU experts from critical information (Beichelt, 2015).

Conclusion: How and When Democratic Parliamentary Public Policymaking Encounters Difficulties

Like most direct democratic thinking, populism's ideal form of democracy is self-rule, which has key implications for representation in parliament. Populists promote – for strategic and/or ideological reasons – more un-intermediated forms of representation. For parliamentary policymaking, this means that populism's moral pressure leads MPs to more clearly define the groups they represent, adopt a more confrontative policymaking style in parliament, and narrow down the objectives for policymaking according to the output benefiting the groups they represent.

This impacts not only party politics and negotiations but also established practices and norms in the policymaking process between elections. The presence of populist politics thus shifts representative role-taking from the trustee to the delegate role, with crucial consequences for how MPs act in parliament and in interactions with policymakers and civil society actors outside parliament. While for the delegate role prevalent in majoritarian democracies, populist politics only adds more of the same (more transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to clearly identified groups), it changes the fundamental legitimacy logics on which the representative and legislative trustee roles are built (confidentiality, trust, and expert control through party and MP as trustee and thus the ability to produce output legitimacy for the largest possible share of citizens).

Populist pressure thus holds key consequences for the transformation of democracy (Jones, 2019) and its outputs in terms of concrete policies, even when populists are not themselves in power. The article has shown how this occurs slowly and informally beyond changes to formal institutions such as the judiciary or constitutional arrangements. The literature on democratic transition has long provided elements for understanding the dangers established democracies face when they transition away from democracy (Goujon, 2015; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2019).

Likely most crucial, however, is the distinction between the two empirical ideal types of democratic policymaking, which allows us to see that the impact of populism as a cluster of behaviours and attitudes belonging to a specific family or vision (Powell, 2000) of democracy varies substantially between the majoritarian and proportional ideal types of democracy. To date, the literature on populism has failed to consider this crucial variation.

In majoritarian democracies, populism does not jeopardise the fundamental norms on which democratic policymaking is built, and institutional watchdogs and the separation of power during the policymaking process remain in place. In contrast, in proportional democracies, the norms of democratic policymaking are fundamentally altered, as are mechanisms and informal institutions to ensure traditionally democratic legitimacy, in particular broad responsiveness.

This primarily concerns the role of parties and parliamentary party groups – traditionally strong gatekeepers in parliamentary proceedings in proportional democracies – which are discredited as trustworthy intermediaries and warrants of fair compromise in legislation and policymaking, with important consequences for traditional interaction patterns between MPs, civil society, and economic actors. This relates to findings in studies about political transformation in extreme consensus democracies in which populist movements changed the democratic game, leading to suboptimal policy outcomes (Jones, 2008).

Populism, as a political phenomenon, is difficult to grasp. It may help to keep the leadership of parties, which have developed strong cartel structures (Mair, 2013), in check, but it may also jeopardise fundamental norms of representation in policymaking.

Populism is political behaviour linked to an entire family of democratic thought. As such, populists use the same vocabulary as journalists, intellectuals, and political theorists, promoting the reform of representative democracy through more direct democratic instruments of participation. Normative approaches to democracy see representative democracy as undergoing a crisis of participation (Barber 1997; Mouffe 2013; Dryzek 1989; Habermas 1981; Offe 1972).

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