

Manifestos and Destinies

Coalitions Towards Radical Democracy

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- **The Goal: A Solidarity Society** -
People and planet thrive
- **The Path: Radical Democracy**
- **But First: Left Populism**
 - Radical projects of workers, feminists, LGBTQ+, racial justice & environmental activists - basis for unity?
- **What Manifestos, Statements Reveal about Unity**
 - Values, decision-making processes critical. Agendas less so.
 - Interest in broad coalitions? Limited
 - But coalition work critical. Commitment to transparency, inclusivity, accountability needed



Radical Democracy

Recovers & Radicalizes Institutions

- **Hegemonic change** - shared goal is profound transformation of power relations. Capitalist political power wanes greatly.
- **Retains liberal democratic principles**: universal suffrage, civil rights, separation of powers, a multi-party system, free press...
- **The political is inherently conflictual**. No equilibrium consensus, ever.
- **But debates will be with adversaries, not enemies**. Pursued agonistically, not antagonistically. [Oligarchs have prevented free debate of radical demands.] State will “manifest manifold democratic demands”.
- **Established first at national, not international, level** - Grassroots mobilization requires shared values, experience, communication.

[SOURCE Mouffe, *For a Left Populism*, 2018]

Post-capitalist goal: A solidarity society in which people & planet thrive

Follows Radical Democracy

- First, rise of **left populism**. Through mass mobilizations, progressive parties/caucuses gain enough popular support to successfully change dominant parties' agendas.
- **These radical political coalitions then change shared ideology. Become dominant in national legislative body, establishing radical democracy – as often in Sweden 1930s – 70s under Social Democrats. Example of Meidner Plan.**
- Today's political imperative, then, is the consolidation of left populism (Mouffe, Fraser, other critical theorists)
- End goal: **Solidarity society** works towards well-being of all, deep democracy, caring communities – equitable & just, regenerative agriculture and restoration, protection of natural world

Populist Path toward Radical Democracy

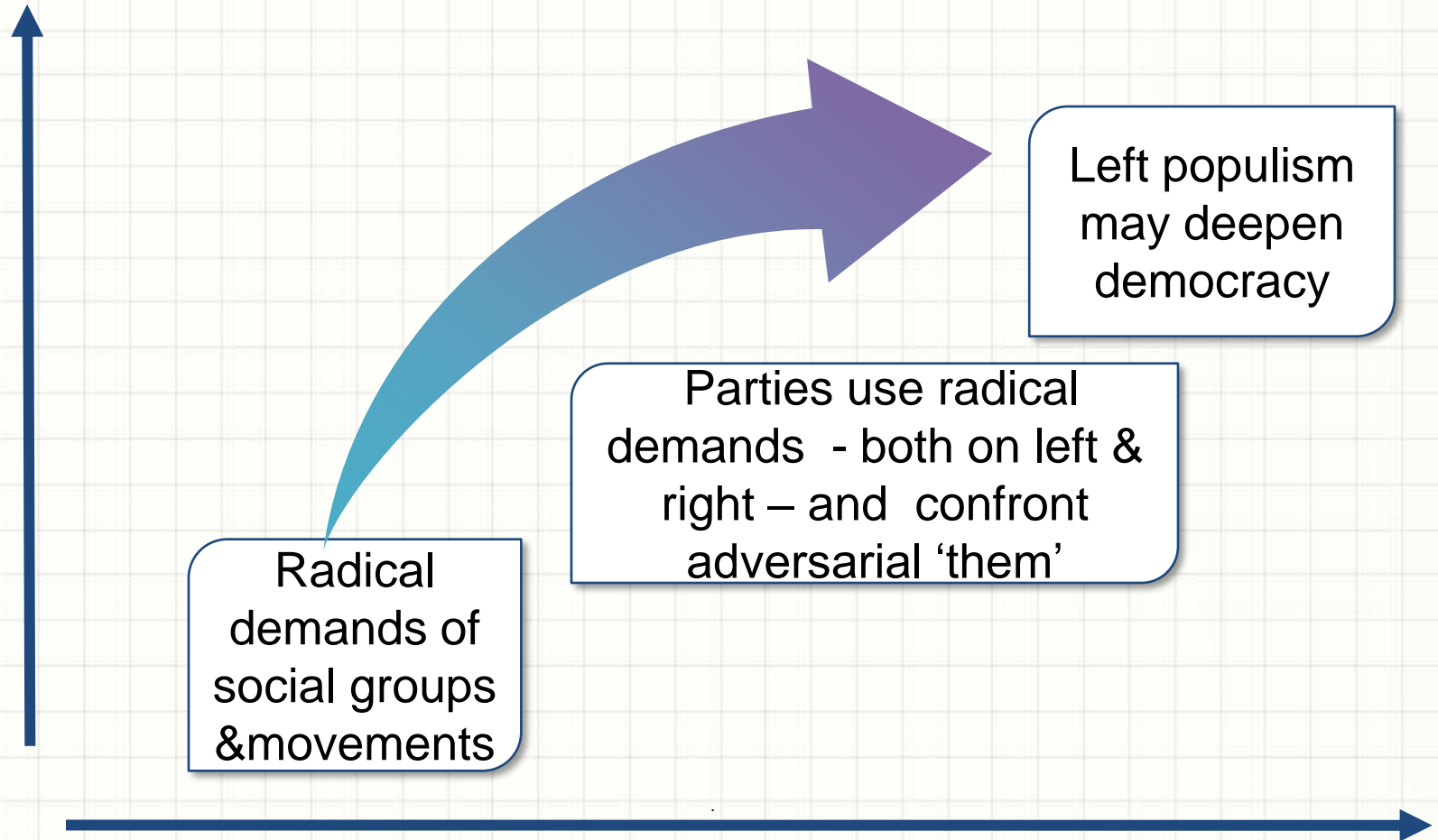
Motivation is born from thought and passion

Rationalist framework is flawed; Political requires collective identity, shared passions.

- People must recognize their situation as articulated by a group (party) to feel personal bonds that enable **a collective sense of identity, right or left.**
- **The articulation of radical demands determines** the political stance of a movement group - either right or left
- **Political parties** elaborate competing views through words, actions. This enables people to situate themselves in political sphere. **Vertical vs. horizontal** organizing of Negri, Hardt.



Radical democratic demands: potential base for a radical democratic collective 'we'



Four Radical Demands/Democratic Projects:

- **An end to global warming.** A switch to sustainability. Protection of threatened fauna and flora.
- **Economic security/ basic needs.** With shorter workweek, a living wage, universal health care, childcare, eldercare, tuition-free education, affordable housing, paid family leave and vacations. Equity in taxation.
- **Deep democracy: political, economic and social.** Transparency, accountability. Majority on business boards represent public interest.
- **Caring communities, with commitment to flourishing of all.** No **discrimination** on basis of gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, disability. Shared & fair responsibility for caregiving & less-desirable tasks. Adequate support/public benefits for the disabled, those unable to work. Adequate mental health services, rehab services. Humane treatment of prison inmates. Equity.
- **Are these equivalent** – that is, all requiring transformative change?

Growth of Left Populist Parties

- (UK) Labour Party: 198,000 early 2015
- 552,000 Dec. 2017
- 496,000 Nov. 2020
- (Spain) Podemos: 100,000 2014
- 500,000 2018
- 2019: form coalition government with Socialists
- (Greece) Syriza: 4.6% of vote 2009
- 26.5% 2014
- 36.3% 2015 & formed coalition government (came in first)
- (US) Bernie Sanders Democratic Presidential Primaries
- 43.1% 2016
- 26.6% 2020

Labour's Populist Appeal (UK)

For the Many, Not the Few (2015)

- Economy: Jobs, taxes,... but also widening ownership (10% stock to workers), stakeholder rights, sustainable energy with public control eventually. Re-nationalize mail, rail.
- Richer Lives: culture, sports, animals, environment
- Equality: addressing race, sexual orientation, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability,..
- Extending Democracy: Parliament, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, voting age
- Stand on Brexit not satisfactory: clear, fair immigration & trade policies. Supported referendum on Brexit (2016 held). Norway not EU member.

Populist Stands on Big Business

Selected Countries

- **US** -- Warren: Natl Charter. Employees of \$1 bill. firms should elect 40% of board of directors. Higher taxes. \$ out of politics.
 - Sanders: Break up big banks. Promote worker ownership (co-ops). Higher taxes. \$ out of politics.
- **Spain (Podemos):** Public control of key sectors from energy to pharmaceuticals
- **UK (Labour):** Public ownership of rail, mail and eventually energy. Coops. **Public oversight** of key sectors.
- **Greece (Syriza):** Reject austerity program. Nationalize banks and key service and utility companies. (Backed down from demands after in power.)

Building A Left Populism

1

- It is the **political**, not the economic, that is basic to exploitation. Seen in property rights.

2

- **Labor's** demands do not hold a privileged position among radical demands.

3

- Political resistance requires an **adversarial 'they'** as well as a collective 'we'.



RECENT MANIFESTOS, AGENDAS

- **Key shared value:** greater democratic voice. Anti-capitalist? Many - but all have anti-hegemonic & transformative messaging.
- Advancing one's key passion, including equity (racial, gender, sexual identity, other), sustainability, human/worker rights, can follow different processes. **Importance of PROCESS** greater than generic demands eg for equity.

International Manifestos

- Democratize, decommodify and remediate
- Feminism for the 99%
- Care Manifesto – care should be society's organizing principle
- Black Lives

National Agendas

- Netherlands' manifesto/agenda
- US Green New Deal, US Black Lives
- Certain party platforms in Greece, UK, Spain. Sanders' Our Revolution.
- Also looked at Sierra Club, NOW, AFL-CIO, NAACP, others

Movement Groups and Coalitions

Where We Are

- **Five Key Movements:** Labor, environmental, feminist, racial justice, LGBTQ+. All do not all have stated commitment to key goals of other movements. **Often not clear from website, statements if there is much interest in coalition work** beyond for bills they support
- **Reproductive rights** /Women's Health Protection Act (HR3755), **LGBTQ+ rights, net zero emissions, PRO Act, Racial justice** George Floyd Justice in Policing Act (HR1280).
 - Most websites/statements of movement groups that I looked at did not list support of all these issues.
- **Neither AFL-CIO nor Our Revolution, e.g.,** stated supporting women's right to choose on website as of 10/21. Some groups' stands on environment not easy to find.
- **Process for reaching political stance** on key issues within group often not clear, transparent and accountable. BUT this is critical in forming coalitions.
- **Presumably, each group** will support change that **deepens democracy and brings a healthy planet**
- **CAN DEMANDS FOR DEEPER DEMOCRACY AND A HEALTHY PLANET BE THE BASIS FOR UNITY?** Not yet recognized as such.

Building Unity for Left Populism

Conclusions

- **Critical juncture: Prioritize working together**
 - Each group must develop strategy for coalition work. Inform membership.
 - Shared values: democratic process, voice for disadvantaged.
- **Economic linked to political. Left populism.** Economic programs should deepen democracy [e.g. representation of stakeholder interests dominant in boards of big businesses].
- **Sources of Division:** Change brings 'winners' and 'losers'. Sustainability: a carbon tax that drives thousands into poverty will divide, not unite. Greater equity in sharing caring labor shifts workloads, identities. Required: Grassroots leadership to create a broad political community (narratives, arts, alternative businesses, common projects and shared events)
- **Grassroots organizations** accountability, transparency and inclusivity. **Unity behind green democratic transformation?**
- OK to have **pro-capitalists, anti-choice, etc in coalition??** Strategy to prevent disruption needed.

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For more info:

See forthcoming book, from Palgrave MacMillan

*Building A Solidarity Society:
Power, People and Planet.*

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