The rise of populist electoral politics 1990 - 2020:

A comparative political geography of the Economic Freedom Fighters and the Rassemblement National

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by

Simphiwe Laura Stewart

Linacre College

School of Geography and the Environment

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The rise of populist electoral politics 1990 - 2020:
A comparative political geography of the Economic Freedom Fighters and the Rassemblement National

Simphiwe Laura Stewart

DPhil in Geography and the Environment; Linacre College, University of Oxford

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Abstract

This work draws on scholarly agreement about the core features of populism, which have made populism an analytically useful term, to examine the rise of contemporary populism and populist electoral politics in neoliberal democracies of the global North and the global South. The core features of populism include claims to one leader, one people and one (popular) will. These features are used as the ontological and definitional basis of the study. Considering longstanding debate about the conditions under which populism is likely to succeed and "the people" to whom populism refers, the thesis goes beyond 'supply-side' theories of populist politics to interrogate the 'demand-side' of populist electoral politics. Whereas work on populism *per se* remains episodic and fragmentary in Geography, this thesis mobilises case studies and literatures in human and political geography, including the political geography of the state, labour geography, and military geographies to contribute to a spatialised theorisation of contemporary populist electoral politics.

The research primarily relies on a mixed methods approach. It focuses on two cases of populist electoral politics, in two established neoliberal democracies, to contrast and compare the potential factors driving contemporary populist votes. By interrogating the rise of France's *Rassemblement National* (RN) and South Africa's Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) between 1990 – 2020, the work argues that populist politics can behave and manifest similarly across

contexts which are mediated by the neoliberal democratic model. I approach the 'populist turn' from the perspective of my interlocutors; residents and employees of industry dominant regions of France and South Africa who are often politicised as 'working class', whose political identity has been mediated by neoliberal state accumulation strategies, and whose votes in favour of populist parties have given a contemporary purchase to populism. From this vantage point, I advance that the factors which potentially facilitate populism in neoliberal democracies are: state accumulation strategies, their necessary and constitutive political identities, their inherent mechanisms of order and control, and the contradictions and contestations which these accumulation strategies give rise to as the neoliberal state ultimately retreats from conventional politics.

The thesis pays attention to longstanding supply-side arguments of populism, including how populist parties leverage crises to exploit the political economy of space, the precarity of nationhood and belonging, and an unashamedly performative political culture to gain votes. However, I move beyond supply-side theories towards a demand-side and spatialised conceptualisation of populist electoral politics. Especially, how local space, its characterising norms, symbols, and values (including gender) seep into everyday practices of both society and the populist party, regulating their use of militarising moves, leadership and organisational structures, and their articulation of governance even in crisis.

The arguments advanced in the thesis are exemplified by voting patterns in favour of the RN and EFF, the party's respective political campaigns and internal structures, and the culmination of these factors in topical issues such as the Corona Virus (COVID-19) pandemic which exemplify the contradictions and contestations of neoliberal democratic models and the resulting political subjectivities facilitating populism today more than any other time in history.

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Prior to applying for the DPhil, I was advised that my choice of supervisor would determine the course (and success) of my Doctoral studies. In this respect, I have been very fortunate to have Dr Danny Dorling and Dr Patricia Daley as supervisors. Danny has been a source of immeasurable support, offering guidance on the development of my DPhil application as early as two years prior to my matriculation at Oxford. Since 2018, Danny has helped me to successfully climatise to a new country, to navigate a new (and needless to say daunting) University environment, and to understand the dynamics of the academy more broadly. I am a better academic for his example. Since becoming my second supervisor, Patricia has pushed me beyond all limit and expectation I had set for myself (and for this thesis). At every stage of my reading, research, and writing Patricia has encouraged me to think critically and articulate my arguments with conviction and clarity. I cannot express how much I have grown as a thinker under her supervision.

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The Impacts of COVID-19

On the 11th of March 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) a worldwide pandemic. At the time I was based in Oxford (United Kingdom) completing the two substantive Chapters of my thesis which required the most field research (including interviews, access to archival data, and site visits). I was also very optimistically holding onto a ticket departing London Heathrow to OR Tambo Johannesburg for a period of field research and writing. Within days, however, governments across the world (including South Africa and France) closed their borders and ushered in lockdown measures which shutdown public facilities. Regrettably, I had to cancel my field research. Closer to home, the closure of libraries and educational institutions (including University buildings and my son's day-care facility) limited alternatives for data access and severely affected my progress.

Although the pandemic forced me to cancel my field research and delayed my submission timeline, I was able to revise my field research approach and find a renewed focus for the last substantive Chapter (*Chapter 7*) of this work. In terms of method, I rescheduled in-person interviews and archive visits to online platforms (WhatsApp, Zoom, and Phone) and virtual archives (The Padraig O'Malley interviews held by the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory). I found that holding interviews online increased the number of people I could speak with and advanced the snowballing method of participant selection as my interlocutors shared the e-mail, WhatsApp, and phone numbers of additional interviewees.

Without the constraints of office work, commutes, and other prongs of daily life I found that more people were willing to respond to interview requests. While I was observing lockdown

measures in the U.K., I was able to watch (and experience) the scale of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on healthcare, employment, and social life as news of unemployment, death, and the scourge of social inequality proliferated mainstream media and infiltrated the public consciousness. From the point of view of my research, I was interested in government policy responses to the pandemic. As early as April – May 2020, I joined the COVID-19 Government Policy Response Tracker at the University of Oxford's Blavatnik School of Government. It was a small (but mighty) volunteer effort to collect and analyse publicly available data on COVID-19 measures implemented by various governments. I specifically focused my efforts on governments in Europe and Sub Saharan Africa, where I was able to contrast and compare responses to COVID-19 and think more critically and broadly about government responses through the lens of populist electoral politics. By August 2020, the Response Tracker was the largest in the world.

Together, my experiences with conducting remote research and contributing to the COVID-19 Government response tracker ultimately strengthened the scope and perspective of my research. However, I would be remiss not to mention the social and mental health impacts of completing a piece of Doctoral research, in a foreign country and alone with a small child, during one of the most challenging times in living memory. I am deeply grateful to colleagues, friends, and family (in Oxford and elsewhere) who made this period more tenable. Foremostly, I am indebted to the people who participated in this research during such a trying time. Especially, those student members of the EFF, members of South African Parliament, and colleagues in France who saw the value in my work, encouraged their comrades and peers to participate in this study, and directed my attention to new sources which enriched my thinking. This work would not have been possible without you all.

Map of South Africa



Source: Nations Online Project: https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/south_africa_map.htm

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Source: https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/france-political-map.htm

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Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
ANCYL	African National Congress Youth League
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CHESAI	Collaboration for Health Systems Analysis and Innovation
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CUREC	Central University Research Ethics Committee
DA	Democratic Alliance
EFF	Economic Freedom Fighters
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
GTC	*Confederation Générale du Travail* (The General Confederation of Labour)
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
INSEE	*Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques* (National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies)
IPSOS	Independent Polling System of Society
JSE	Johannesburg Stock Exchange
MK	*Umkhonto we Sizwe* (The Spear of the Nation)
MP	Member of Parliament
NP	National Party
NUM	National Union of Mines
NW	North West Province
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress

PCF	*Parti Communiste Francais* (Communist Party of France)
PGM	Platinum Group Metals
PS	*Parti Socialist* (Socialist Party)
RBA	Royal Bafokeng Authority
RDOs	Rock Drill Operators
RN	*Rassemblement National* (National Rally) formerly the National Front (RN)
RPR	*Rassemblement pour Republique* (Rally for the Republic)
SABC	South African Broadcasting Commission
SACP	South African Communist Party
SDUs	Self-Defence Units
SNCF	*Société nationale des chemins de fer français* (French National Railway Company)
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UDF	*Union pour la Democratie Francais* (Union for French Democracy)
UDF	United Democratic Front
UKIP	United Kingdom Independence Party
WHO	World Health Organisation
WVS	World Values Survey

Data Sources

National elections data for the period 1990 – 2019 was accessed through publicly available datasets. In France, elections data was accessed through the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

In France, elections data which were considered for the study include Presidential, Legislative, and European elections results.

In South Africa, elections data was accessed from the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC). South African elections data considered for the study were national and provincial elections results.

Elections surveys and polls are conducted by IPSOS in France and South Africa.

The surveys and polls field questions on political leaders, local government, personalities, and the president before, during and after elections. In 2018, IPSOS conducted a panel study of more than 1000 people (per country) on populism.

The IPSOS panel evaluated 'system is failing' sentiment, the efficacy of government and specific political leaders, and political discontent e.g., self-positioning on the political spectrum.

Chapter 1: Introduction

> *"A spectre is haunting the world: populism. A decade ago, when the new nations were emerging into independence, the question asked was: how many will go Communist? Today, this question, so plausible then, sounds a little out of date. In as far as the rulers of the new states embrace an ideology, it tends more to have a populist character."*
>
> *- Ghita Ionescu and Ernest Gellner (eds.),* "Populism: its meaning and national character, London 1969, 1.

In 1967, an eclectic group of political scientists, anthropologists and other philosophers gathered at the London School of Economics (LSE) for a conference titled "to define populism", whose findings situated populism as a "problem equal to communism" for contemporary democracy (Ionescu & Gellner, 1969). The summarising document of that conference opened with the foreboding line, " a spectre is haunting the world: populism" (ibid, 1969,1). More than half a century following the LSE conference, and within 10 years between 2008 - 2018, the number of populists in power across democracies of the global North and the global South had risen fivefold from four to twenty (Kyle & Gultchin, 2018).

In 2019, populist leaders were in power (or gaining considerable electoral support) in the world's most established democracies. This trend includes the 2016 election of U.S President Donald Trump (Taub, 2016); Jair Bolsonaro's 'sweeping victory' in Brazil's Presidential election (BBC, 2018); the formation of a Populist government in Italy (Horowitz, 2018) and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's victorious re-election campaign in India (Griffiths, 2019). The spectacular rise

of populist electoral politics has fuelled the conclusion that we are "in an age of Populism" (Krastev, 2007, 5).

The "age of populism" cogently described by Krastev has been compounded by several crisis including socio-political uprisings, the economic fallout of the 2008-2009 global recession, and the unprecedented global health pandemic caused by Covid-19. These seminal events have had some counter-intuitive effects including an upward spiral in support for those populists who took them seriously. In places such as France, where Marine Le Pen and the right wing populist party Rassemblement National (which was the National Front prior to its rebranding in 2018) garnered historic highs in the 2022 presidential election, populist electoral politics have been described as "the end of the EU as we know it" (Politico, 2022). In this context, it is easy to imagine how further economic fallout, including from Covid-19, can facilitate greater opportunities for populists and populist electoral politics in advanced democracies well into the future.

Despite longstanding scholarly and public interest with the populist phenomenon, contemporary populism theory remains unclear about the conditions under which populism is likely to succeed, the "people" to whom populism refers, and the future of populism under the prevailing neoliberal democratic order. These issues are not uncomplicated by a growing orthodoxy in contemporary populism theory which dismisses populism as a "pathology, style, syndrome, doctrine . . . a thin ideology . . .of limited analytical use" (Stanley, 2008, 95) and the epistemic and ontological challenges associated with studying populism such as what (and where) we consider populism to be (Schroeder, 2020). For example, in 2019 mainstream media joined prevailing approaches in the contemporary populism literature which orientalises populism in Africa and Latin America in relation to populism in the West. A sweeping headline published by the

Guardian went so far as to claim that Brazil and South Africa are the "world's most populist countries" (The Guardian, 2019).

What remains amidst this flurry of debate and discourse surrounding populism is an unprecedented and still growing support for populist parties which is disrupting the politics of a vast number of societies across the world. In mainland Europe and parts of Latin America, populist parties are doubling (and many times tripling) their average share of the vote (Inglehart & Norris, 2016; ibid, 2019). Between 1960 – 2016, the populist share in European Parliamentary elections grew from 5.1% to 13.2% while their share of seats increased threefold from 3.8% to 12.8% in the same era (ibid, 2019). Similarly, as early as 2010, populist strategies became the primary campaign style and strategy of leaders in several African democracies including Kenya, South Africa, and Zambia. In Sub Saharan Africa, leaders such as Michael Sata, Raila Odinga, and Jacob Zuma have pursued populist campaign strategies including "targeting a constituency base firmly oriented around the urban poor, mobilizing constituents with a mixture of charisma and an anti-elitist message aimed at issues of social inclusion, and fostering the image of a personalistic benefactor who understands the plight of the 'common man"'(Resnick, 2010, 2). By many accounts, populism has become firmly embedded in contemporary politics and public discourse (Maher et al, 2022; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017).

Against neoliberal democratic narratives of nationhood buttressed by images of unity and indivisibility which have captured the public imagination, populism brings to the fore a politics of unmet expectation, a lack of social reconciliation, and an electoral striving for new political realities through the vote. In places as far apart as France and South Africa, the populist Rassemblement National (RN) in France and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) in South Africa are gaining considerable electoral success. In distinct regions of France and South Africa,

the populist discourses of the RN and EFF against elite and establishmentarian politics have taken hold. While empirical evidence indicates that populist parties have benefited from electoral support across income, education, and race including Trump's 2016 election and support for UKIP and 'Brexit' "*Reframing the 'Left Behind' Race and Class*" in mainland Europe, this work will focus on electoral data from the two field sites, developing an understanding of the spatial and territorial distribution of contemporary populist electoral politics in France and South Africa (Tyson & Maniam, 2016; Rhodes et al, 2019, 1).

The RN (formerly *Ordre Nouveau* / Front National) which was established in 1972, has enjoyed renewed support since its rebranding by Marine Le Pen in 2017. Julius Malema's EFF, launched in 2013, has also grown from a fledgling movement to more than twenty-five representatives in South Africa's National Assembly. Following the 2017 Legislative Elections in France, the RN garnered an average 11% of the popular vote, securing 8 seats in the legislature (Ministry of the Interior, 2017). In 2022, mainstream media reported "Parliamentary elections shock France's political order to its core", as the RN secured a remarkable 18% of the popular vote and an unprecedented 89 seats in the legislature (Bernard, 2022; Ministry of the Interior, 2022). For her own part, Marine Le Pen has become a serious contender in the French Presidential election, increasing her voter share from 33.9% in 2017 to 41.4% in the 2022 cycle (ibid, 2022). South Africa's EFF also amassed a significant following within one election cycle. During the 2019 General Election, the EFF won 10.8% of the popular vote and secured 44 seats in the National Assembly: an increase of nearly 5% of the popular vote and an additional 19 seats in Parliament since 2014 (IEC, 2022).

While Geography offers a rich intellectual tradition to examine the rise of populism across geographical areas, populism has received little empirical attention in the discipline to date,

especially (of course) the most recent wave of populist claims (Lizotte, 2018). The discipline lacks a distinctive contribution to a spatialized theorization of contemporary populism due to convoluted and normative-laden assumptions about comparative studies, which tend to 'orientalise' one society in relation to the other.

The objective of this research is therefore to contribute to the theoretical and empirical study of contemporary populism from a geographical lens. It goes beyond the pathological view of populism to substantively interrogate its policy and ideological proposals, the places, and people where populism finds full expression, and its potential implications under neoliberal democracy. Using the most recent quantitative data on populist voting patterns, the research identifies the spatial distribution of populism and its contemporary geographical behaviour. It uses qualitative research - including semi structures interviews, discourse analysis and archival data – to understand the demographics of populist voters, what factors account for their electoral calculus and what these trends in politics and voter behaviour mean for established, parliamentary democracy more broadly. The rigor and generalisability of this study is rooted in its use of a comparative case study of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) in South Africa and the Rassemblement National (formerly Front National) in France from 1990 – 2020. The limitations of this approach are discussed in greater detail in *Chapter 3: Methodology*.

Research Questions and Study Design

This study sets out to answer three principal questions. First, *what is the spatial distribution of populist electoral politics in France and South Africa and what factors can account for the rise of populism in these areas?* Through this question, I explore how the rise of populism maps onto a dense and complex

political history of the neoliberal state's accumulation strategy in "single sector dominant regions"[1] and the contingent effects of this strategy on the populist electoral calculus among the working class – whom much of the populist rhetoric and discourse is directed. At the core of this analysis is a consideration of the combined and contingent outcomes of interactions between the structural, material, and social space(s) produced by a state's accumulation strategy and the political realities which they give rise to in terms of populism (Berlant, 1996; Massey, 1995; Massey, 2013; Yarrow 1990, 1991). Here, the material relates to infrastructure and the built environment while political realities are socio-politically subjective perceptions of material space. The findings and central argument of this work are presented in *Chapter 5* of the thesis.

Second, *how are the neoliberal state's multiscalar methods of control and order reproduced at the intimate levels of party politics and voter behaviour? How do the discursive constructions of populist parties reflect these methods and what is their impact on the electoral calculus in French and South African elections between 2014 – 2019?* Through this question I explore whether and how the state's discursive repertoires have been reproduced in populist campaigns and how these dynamics find full expression in the populist's relationship to the working class and the working class vote. I consider the role of militarism and militarising moves in contemporary populism and how these systems of representation such as the party's self-styling as revolutionary and working class reproduces the state's methods of control and order at the intimate level (Woon, 2019; Pain, 2015; Chassany, 2017; Woodward, 2019). The findings and central argument of this analysis are presented in *Chapter 6* of the thesis.

[1] Following from the work of Massey (1993) on Spatial Divisions of Labour, a "single industry dominant region" in this context is one where a single economic activity/sector is dominant. See: Massey, D., 1995. Spatial divisions of labour: social structures and the geography of production. Macmillan International Higher Education.

Third, *what does the rise of the RN and EFF signify for the futurity of parliamentary democracy in France and South Africa? What lessons can the rise of COVID-19 tell us about the condition of neoliberal democratic models in relation to populism and populists in power?* This analysis is concerned with the significance of a contemporary rise in populist electoral politics and the futurity of populism as a feature of parliamentary democracy. Through the lens of COVID-19, particularly within geographic locations where populists are in government, I interrogate the implications of populism for neoliberal democratic models. The findings and central argument of this work are presented in *Chapter 7* of the thesis.

Contributions

The research presents a political geography of populism by examining populism as a distinctly geographical phenomenon. In its broadest sense, it aims to mobilise case studies to contribute to contemporary critical geographies and their ambition to challenge the discipline's approach to comparative research. Specifically, it highlights the epistemological and ontological limitations of existing literature on contemporary populism and populist electoral politics and the utility of Geography, its tools, and analytical approaches for addressing this gap in the literature. This contribution is achieved in two ways. First, by bringing France and South Africa into the same analytical space and demonstrating that they are not 'dissimilar' in the context of neoliberal democracies and the contemporary populist turn. Second, by applying the geographies of the state literature, labour and military geography to examine contemporary populism across the global North and the global South. Through a sustained focus on the rise of populist electoral politics in South Africa and references to works on the topic which are produced by academe in Sub Saharan Africa, the work also contributes to African social science and political science scholarship.

The contemporary rise of populism is a sign of changing attitudes towards democratic government in the context of an increasingly neoliberal state framework. Here, contemporary populism is a call to substantively assess the claims which populists make and the electoral calculus which it perpetuates. If populist actors continue in their upward trajectory, whether left or right of centre, then the rise of populist parties is a more alarming comment about the condition of institutions of representation in a neoliberal democratic context. Therefore, geographers are positioned and challenged to analyse the contemporary purchase of populism and the reflexive demands that it makes on politics, people, and space today and in the future.

Case Studies

In the last 3 decades, case studies have benefited from a somewhat newfound analytical purpose for "the cumulative building of social science theory. . . including the generation of new hypotheses as well as the testing of existing ones" (George & Bennett, 2005, 5). What makes case studies analytically useful and particularly prominent in human geography is not necessarily the Hartshonian examination of a phenomenon as it changes or remains similar between contexts but the constitutive effect of place. Throughout this thesis, two case studies are juxtaposed to systematically produce examples of more general processes in contemporary populism and to illustrate the particular institutions and structures interacting with populism which can be theorized across democracies of the global North and the global South (McConnell et al, 2012; Flyvbjerg, 2006). Together, the case of France and South Africa illustrate the comparability and similarity of the potential factors which facilitate contemporary populism in these geographies. Yet, they also indicate that context matters and is created out of multiscale relations which do

not emerge sui generis (on their own) but interact with local norms, values, and other processes which make the French and South African case(s) distinct (Castree, 2005, 541).

The examples and illustrations advanced through the use of case studies in this work also signal the potential for generalisability of the arguments which are advanced in the thesis. However, my choice to use case studies presents remarkable limitations for this study as well as comparative research in political geography more broadly. Case studies cannot be "wholly collapsed" into a singular narrative and the French and South African cases are somewhat limited to and by the discreet questions and factors which are interrogated in this thesis as well as factors which are mediated by contextual nuances e.g., local conceptions of race, class, political identity and culture which are often different across countries (McConnell et al, 2012, 811). Another limitation is the extent t which case studies tend to be "intuitive", evidenced in part by my choice of France and South Africa as field research locations. Here, aspects of language and translation, the types of questions which could be asked and honestly answered (given my positionality and the underlying politics of race and immigration in each country) as well as the local purchase of concepts and terms such as "working class" which are widely used but carry with them distinct genealogies which are attached to national history, socio-economics, and politics.

Ultimately, the use of case studies in this work does not purport to be universal or unobjectionable. Rather, it focuses on two distinct geographies, two distinct populist parties, and a discreet set of research question (elaborated in *Chapter 1: Research Questions and Study Design*) to contribute to critical inquiry and more substantive attention to contemporary populism both within the discipline of geography and public discourse.

Electoral Outcomes in France and South Africa

A preliminary analysis of elections data in France and South Africa indicates that votes there for populist parties have increased substantially since the 2008 financial crisis. The votes seem to be concentrated in local authorities along the northern border of both France and South Africa where de-industrialized towns experiencing strictures to local government funding alongside high migration patterns, contribute the majority of votes in favour of the country's populist party; the National Rally (formally the *Front National*) or the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). This territorial arrangement of populist electoral support provides fertile ground to examine the relationship between new politics, and embedded liberalism in the voting calculus. I have chosen these two countries because I know them reasonably well, can speak French, and because the USA and UK are so often the subject of study that I believe these two examples are now needed to add more usefully to what is already known (see: *Chapter 2 Literature*).

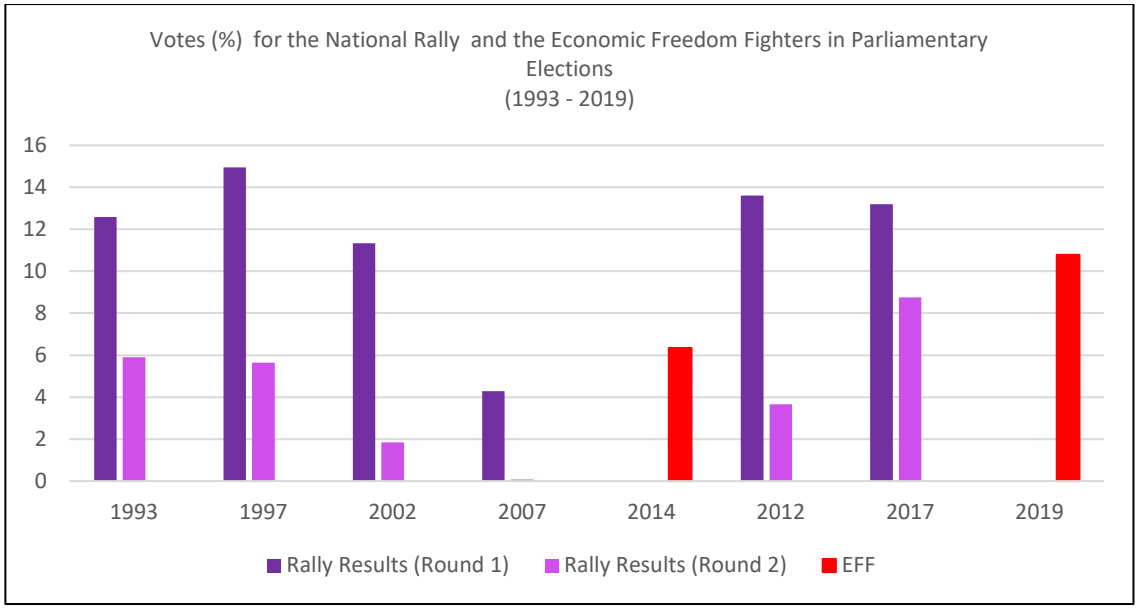
During a preliminary field research trip to Hauts de France, I travelled through Lille, Amiens, and Calais. These areas (described in more detail below) show the highest proportion of votes for the National Rally. I spoke to residents, non-profit and civil society groups as well as the regional spokespeople for the National Rally. While each location is 1 – 2 hours outside of Paris and within 1-2 hours of each other; it became clear to me that the issues and interests driving voter behaviour in these areas were drastically different and very 'local'. Some people worried about employment, others about healthcare, taxes, high cost of housing and others worried about the unreliable transportation system. Surprisingly, many lamented the energy efficient

buses, changes to infrastructure and not one mentioned migration[2]. The spokesperson for the Rally agreed – "France is split in two. . . and locally even more pieces"[3], she said. If French voters are so different and each place so dynamic, what is it that makes certain parts more inclined to vote for the National Rally? And how different is the French example to my own region in South Africa?

The following graphs offer a temporal analysis of the rise of Populist electoral politics in France and South Africa. Graph 1 compares votes for French Populist Party, the National Rally, in French parliamentary elections from 1993 – 2017 and those for South African Populists, the Economic Freedom Fighters, in General elections from 2014 – 2017. Graph 2 compares each party's respective outcomes in Presidential and Parliamentary elections from 1993 – 2019.

[2] Perhaps the latter omission (on migration) was due to my own positionality in France as a black woman and foreigner. However, migration was similarly under expressed in South Africa. I discuss positionality in depth in Chapter 3 (Method) of the thesis.
[3] Interview. Patricia Chagnon. RN Regional Counsellor. Amiens. August 2019

Graph 1. Comparative illustration of Votes (%) for the National Rally and the Economic Freedom Fighters during parliamentary elections in France and South Africa (1990 – 2019). Raw Data Source: The European Elections Database and the Independent Electoral Commission. Author's own illustration.



The data[4] from France shows that the popularist National Rally tends to secure its highest proportion of votes in the first round of Parliamentary elections – peaking in 1997, at 14.94%. However, this is changing. While votes in round 2 were as low as zero in 2007, once they then rise, they triple in the period 2007 – 2012 and then later more than double in the period 2012 – 2017. By 2017, the National Rally secured 8.75% of the vote in French Parliamentary elections. Similarly, in South Africa, the popularist Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) nearly doubled their vote share within two election cycles from 6.35% in 2014 to 10.79% in 2019. While the 2017 – 2019 results were not enough for a Parliamentary majority; they are the highest share of the votes

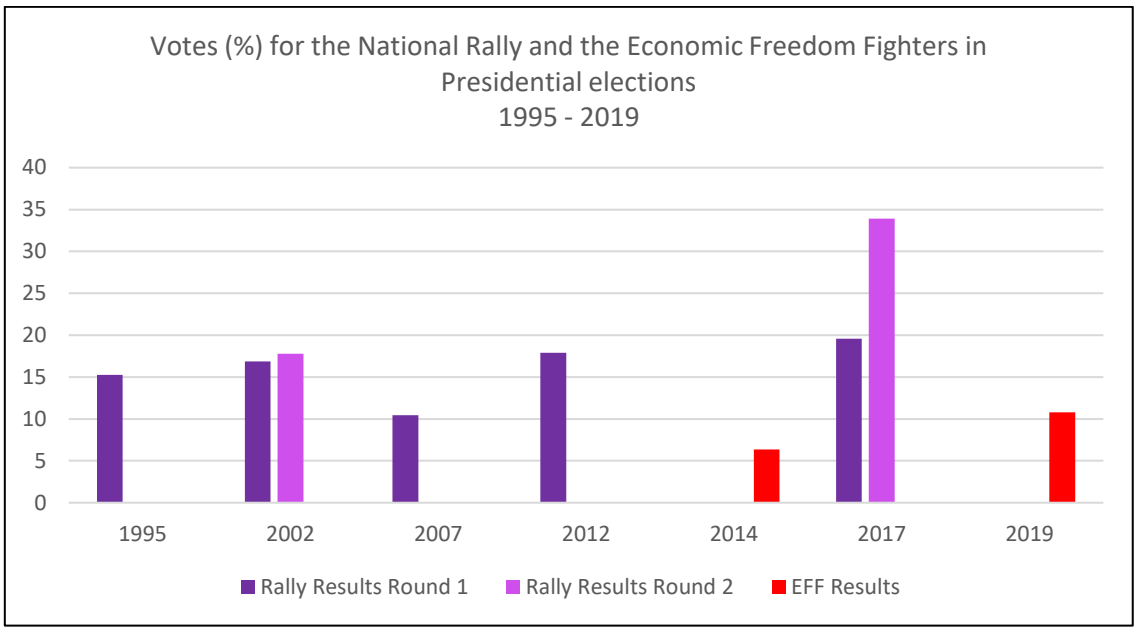
[4] Parliamentary elections including the Rally were held 6 times in France (during the study period). These dates are 1993, 1997, 2002, 2007, 2012 and 2017. South Africa has also held 6 general elections during the study period including 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014 and 2019. However, the EFF did not feature in these elections until 2014.

which the National Rally and the EFF have accrued in the second and final round of Parliamentary elections.

The results depicted in Graph 1 debunk the theory of populist electoral politics as a matter of emerging democracies and situates it as a phenomenon spanning consolidated democracies in both in Western and 'Global South' countries, occurring at the very same time. Further, they give some empirical clues about the nature of Populist electoral politics as a mobilization of grievances; votes for the Rally (called, in English, the National Front until June 2018) tend to be highest in the first round of elections and then decrease sharply in the second, suggesting that voters are initially mobilized to vote for the party and then upon release of round 1 results, place their vote in an alternative party. The votes for the National Rally and the EFF also increase most rapidly in elections subsequent to the 2009 financial crisis.

Graph 2 illustrates the National Rally's proportion of votes in French presidential elections, compared to the EFF's votes to Parliament in South Africa (where the President of the majority party holds the Presidency of the country) from 1995 - 2019:

Graph 2. Votes (%) for the National Rally and the Economic Freedom Fighters in Presidential Elections (1995-2017). Raw Data Source: The European Elections Database and the Independent Electoral Commission. Author's own illustration.



In the period 1995 – 2017, votes in support of the National Rally's candidate for President increased from 15.27% in round 1 of the 1995 Presidential campaign to nearly 20% in 2017. Paying attention to round 2, when a leader is selected to govern the Republic, votes for the Rally's candidate nearly double from 17.79% in 2002 to as much as 33% in 2017. Results in South Africa seem to follow the same progression; nearly doubling within two elections cycles from 6.35% in 2014 to 10.79% in 2019. This remains despite the EFF's consolidation in 2013 – just one year preceding the general election.

While these results show a marked increase in Populist electoral support, we do not have a cogent explanation for the rise of the National Rally or the EFF in contemporary electoral politics.

On one hand, early research on the National Rally (then National Front) by British historian Peter Davies, proposes that its success is underpinned by 'closed nationalism': a political creed which, according to the party, has made it "highly sensitive to foreign elements and their accompanying threat to the French nation" (Davies, 2012, 3). On the other hand, recent work by political geographers attempts to position the National Rally as a fascist new right machine threatening Atlanticism (a Western-centric orientation driven by organizations such as NATO) and its geopolitical supremacy (Ingram, 2016, 91) and a discreet yet inherently contradictory brand of 'femonationalism', rallying anti-Islamic fear under the guise of feminism (Hancock and Mobillion, 2019, 8).

Similarly, in South Africa, while Hart (2014) proposes that the country is "a far from exceptional embodiment of forces at play in many regions of the world" (Hart, 2014, 6), commentators "of diametrically opposed ideological tastes" jointly concur that the EFF can be broadly categorised as a uniquely South African, 'fascist' (or 'fascistic' in character) grouping which is "intolerant of all views differing from its own and ready to resort to violence, on which it thrives; it is especially hostile to the ideals of the left, equality and the brotherhood of humanity, to the point where it becomes racist" (Fogel, 2013; Wheland, 2014).

The main traits which these explanations share is that they support Müller's notion of populism as metaphysically eclectic (2014, 485) in as far as populism is unclear about the 'enemies of the people'; they position both the National Rally and the EFF as peculiar and they make the normative mistake of presenting these parties as inherently disagreeable (illiberal) political movements (Müller, 2014, 111). For example, although Hart's work aims to situate populist electoral politics in South Africa alongside that of rising populism elsewhere, her observation that it is a function of a "massive concentration of wealth alongside the mushrooming of 'wage

less life' or 'populations with no productive function"' (Hart, 2014, 5) cannot be applied in places like Britain where the Brexit vote came at a time when unemployment rates were at their lowest since 1970 (although UK economic inequality including inequality in wages received was at its highest since 1974). Additionally, France has relatively low rates of inequality especially compared to the UK and South Africa (one of the most unequal societies in the world[5]). In fact, whether for the date of its publication or its focus only on South Africa's liberation party, the African National Congress (ANC), Hart's theory does not seem to answer the rise of populist electoral politics as recently as the 2019 South African general election.

In 2019, the EFF became the official opposition in 3 of South Africa's 9 provinces including the Johannesburg district which includes South Africa's largest city where, according to the Brookings Institute, the GDP sits well over US$ seventy-six billion (Vorster, 2015). Hart's theory on the 'deeply racialized' undertones of South Africa's populist element (Hart, 2014, 5) further excludes and others South Africa from the global system where a Populist like Viktor Orban of Hungary governs in a majority homogenous society, Donald Trump received votes from 1 in 3 Latino men, and Brexit garnered the support of 1 in 3 non-white voters (Silver, 2016; Valdes, 2017).

More recent theoretical contributions on Populist electoral politics aim to better situate the French and South African experience in the global "pattern of populism in electoral politics" (Mbete, 2015, 35).

[5] World Bank, 2022, New World Bank Report Assesses Sources of Inequality in Five Countries in southern Africa. https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/03/09/new-world-bank-report-assesses-sources-of-inequality-in-five-countries-in-southern-africa#:~:text=South%20Africa%2C%20the%20largest%20country,World%20Bank's%20global%20poverty%20database.

Swedish sociologist Jens Rydgren proposes that the success of the National Rally "one of the most successful of all populist parties in Western Europe" can be attributed to the party's accusations against elites who "put internationalism ahead of the nation, prioritize their own narrow self-interests, and various 'special interests' over those of the people" (Rydgren, 2004, 18). This version mirrors South African political scientist Sithembile Mbete's theory on the rise of the EFF. By focusing on the performative elements of the EFF's political style, Mbete attributes the party's success to its critique of the relevance of South Africa's democratic institutions (Mbete, 2015, 38). Aligned with Hart (2014) and Rossi's (2018) ground-breaking work on the power of local constituencies mobilized by calls to reintegrate into the body politic through demands on the state for resources; these theories begin to paint a more cogent picture.

Territorial distributions of populist electoral support in France and South Africa

The following tables provide a review of the top 10 French departments supporting the National Rally's candidate during presidential elections in 2002 and 2017 and the top 10 provinces in South Africa supporting the EFF in their bid for seats in South Africa's parliament in 2014 and 2019. These are specifically selected as they are the only presidential elections during the study period when the National Rally's candidate passes through round 1 of the *ballotage*, to the 'run-offs' and the only Parliamentary elections which the EFF has participated in since its consolidation.

Table 1. Top 10 French Departments supporting the National Rally's candidate for president - Votes (%) – in 2002 and 2017. Raw Data Source: French Ministry of the Interior. Author' s own illustration.

2002 Round 2	Votes (%)	2017 Round 2	Votes
Vaucluse	29.64	Aisne	52.91
Var	28.69	Pas-de-Calais	52.06
Alpes-Maritimes	28.68	Haute-Marne	49.52
Bouches-du-Rôhne	27.46	Corse-du-Sud	49.41
Gard	26.66	Ardennes	49.27
Pyrénées-Orientales	25.13	Var	49.15
Oise	25.08	Meuse	48.38
Aisne	24.57	Haute-Saône	48.29
Hérault	24.47	Haute-Corse	47.72
Haute-Saône	24.22	Nouvelle-Caledonie	47.43

Table 1 above suggests that votes for Populist leaders in mainland departments including Var, Aisne and Haute-Saône have nearly doubled from 2002 to 2017. In departments including Aisne and Pas de Calais, the Rally accounts for a majority of the popular vote in the most recent election.

These departments, where support for the National Rally is not only recurrent but increasing dramatically over time, are situated along the north-eastern regions of France, on the border with Germany and Belgium (marked with a blue star below in Figure 1) and in the south-eastern regions of France, on the border with the Mediterranean Sea (marked with a yellow star below in Figure 1). They are also outside of the country's seat of government in Paris (the French capital and the headquarters of French government, marked with a red star below in Figure 1).

Table 2. Top 10 Provinces supporting the EFF during the South African general elections - Votes (%) – in 2014 and 2019. Raw Data Source: Independent Electoral Commission. Author's own illustration.

Province 2014	**Vote (%)**	**Province 2019**	**Vote (%)**
	2014		2019
North West	13.21	North West	18.64
Limpopo	10.74	Limpopo	14.43
Gauteng	10.3	Gauteng	14.69
Free State	8.15	Free State	12.58
Mpumalanga	6.26	Mpumalanga	12.79
Northern Cape	4.96	Northern Cape	9.71
Eastern Cape	3.48	Eastern Cape	7.84
Western Cape	2.11	Western Cape	4.04
KwaZulu Natal	1.85	KwaZulu Natal	9.71

Table 2 above shows that voting in favour of the EFF including in Limpopo (blue star), Gauteng (red star) and the Northwest (yellow star) increased as much as five per cent within one election cycle. Much like France, these provinces where Populist politics are gaining the most votes are located in the north-eastern region of the country. That is, in districts on the border with Botswana and Zimbabwe which are outside and away from the nation's seats of government in Pretoria (administrative capital), Cape Town (legislative capital) and Bloemfontein (Judicial capital).

Figures 1 and 2 are adapted from *Geocurrents* and *Show Me South Africa*. They depict the territoriality of the top departments and provinces voting in favour of the National Rally and the EFF respectively:

Figure 1. Top 3 departments in France voting in favour of the National Rally's candidate for president (2002 and 2017 presidential election). Source: GeoCurrents

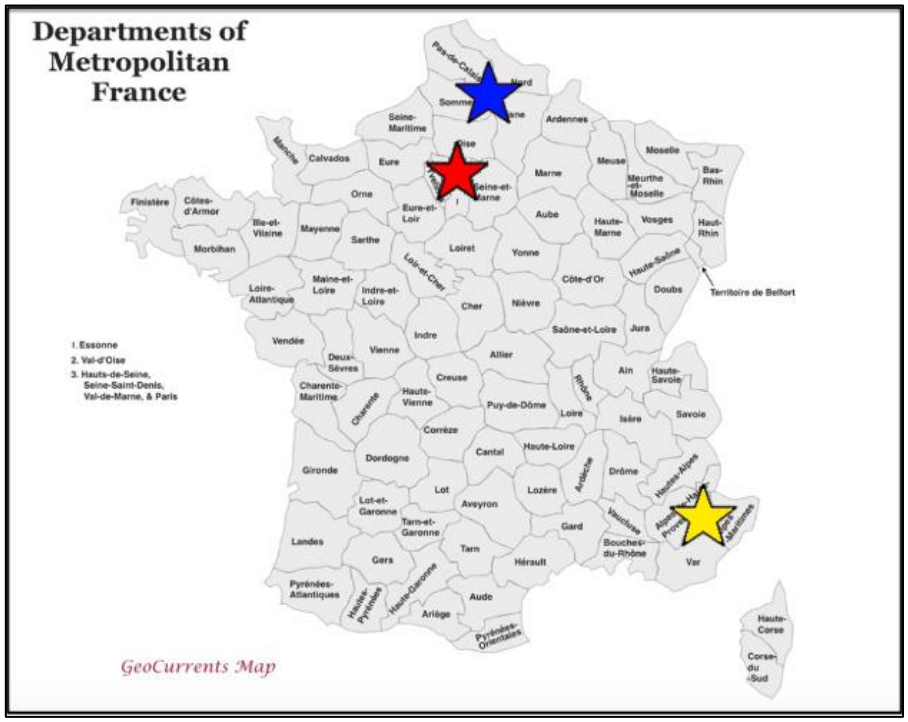
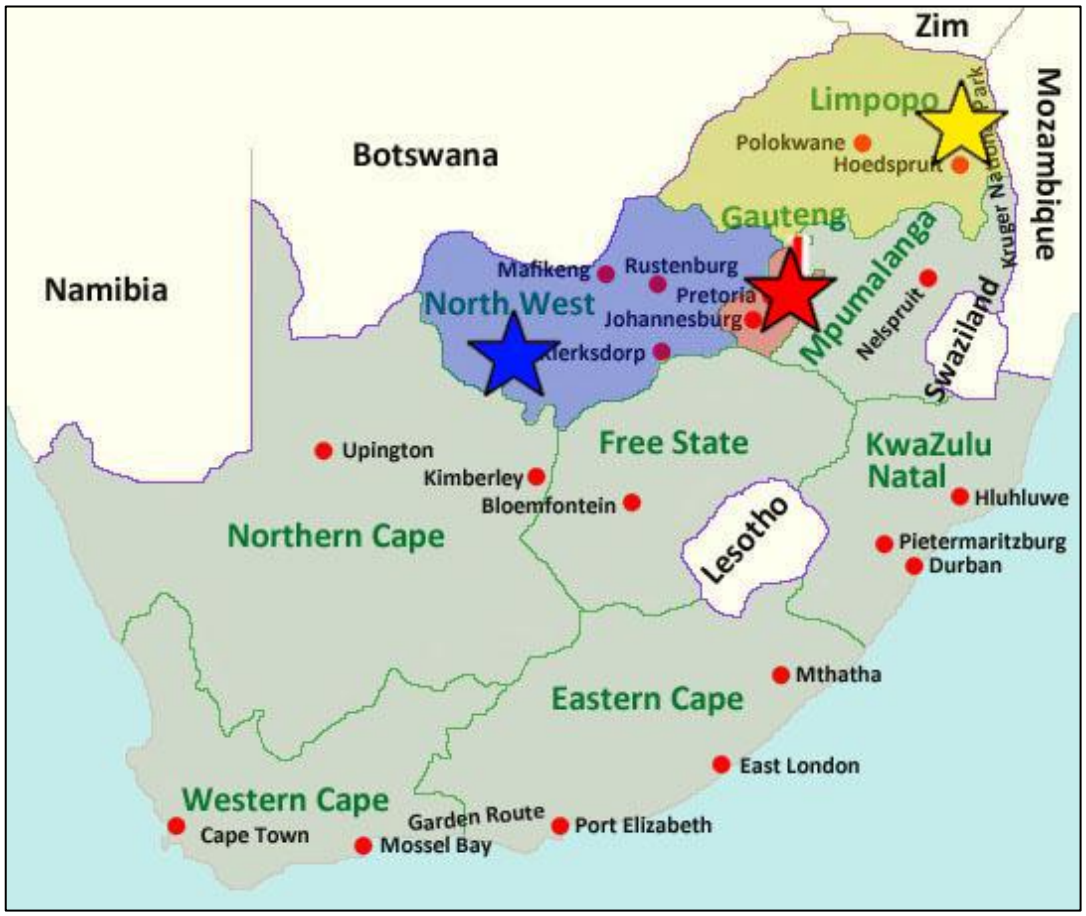


Figure 2. Top 3 districts voting in support of the EFF in South Africa's general election (2014 and 2019). Source: Show Me South Africa.



Chapter 2: Literature

This thesis is situated in the field of Human Geography, within the sub-discipline of political geography. It has two broad aims. First, it seeks to challenge ontological distinctions between the rise of populism(s) in neoliberal democracies of Europe and Africa. Second, it draws on geographical thinking to contribute a spatialised conceptualisation of "the people" to whom populism refers, the conditions under which it is likely to succeed, and the futurity of populist electoral politics under the neoliberal democratic model more broadly. Through a sustained analysis of populism, drawing on geographical thinking, the thesis also contributes to disciplinary scholarship on populism which has, until recently, been fundamentally fragmented and episodic.

Recent studies of populism in neoliberal democracies aim to define populism (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017; Müller, 2017), its representational structure (Moffitt, 2016) and discourses (Wodak, 2015). However, these studies tend to focus on the supply-side conditions under which populism is likely to succeed in a small set of democracies in the global North including mainland Europe, North America, and parts of Latin America. As such, they under theorise the demand-side aspect of populism and overwhelmingly exclude (or orientalise) the contemporary rise of populism in established democracies of Africa especially those in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa (Kenya, South Africa, and Zambia) in particular. Similarly, while there is a robust and longstanding body of literature within human geography and the sub-discipline of political geography which deals with issues that intersect with populism, populism per se remains under studied. Disciplinary work intersecting with populism includes notable studies on nationalism (Koch, 2020; Koch and Paasi, 2016), authoritarianism (Grossman, 2022) and bordering (Zaki and Chichoran, 2022; Rosière and Jones, 2012). However, scholarship with a sustained focus on populism *per se* remains episodic and fragmented across the discipline. The thesis contends that a

comparative political geography of populism offers significant inroads to tackling both of these gaps in the literature. In this context, the thesis uses case studies to broaden parochial approaches to comparative research within contemporary populism studies and contributes to addressing a gap in studies of populism within the geographical literature.

This Chapter thus comprises two parts. The first part reviews recent studies of populism and sets the theoretical framework of the thesis. The second part reviews geographical thinking (on neoliberalism, regional and labour geographies, and militarism) on topics within the disciplinary field which informed the empirical work contained in the thesis.

Part I: Theoretical Framework – Contemporary Populism Theory

A fundamentally supply-side approach to populism

Supply side approaches to populism theory tend to dominate much of the literature as this early work was concerned with the epistemic and ontological task of defining 'populism'. I draw on this longstanding work, including scholarly agreement about a typology of populism to define what is considered evidence of populism within this research. Here, I operationalise a definition of populism as those parties making claims to 'one leader', 'one people', and 'one general will'. In the discussion which follows (*Part I*), I trace the genealogy of populism theory to demonstrate how the field arrived at this scholarly agreement and the extent to which it has fundamentally contributed to the analytical utility of 'populism' and the extent to which it provides a springboard for contemporary populism studies. *In Chapter 4: A Contemporary Populist Turn*, I present my argument for the extent to which the RN and EFF can be considered 'populist'

based on this definition and consequently the extent to which they are comparable as populist parties.

The Supply side approaches to populism tend to focus on the evolution of populist parties, how they are sustained, and "the things populist parties do to increase their electoral appeal" (Mols & Jetten, 2020, 557; Berman, 2021). The fundamentally supply-side approach to populism is evident in historical and contemporary populism literature. On one hand, historical studies of populism made major contributions to the field through the development of an 'ideal type' of populism. On the other hand, contemporary theory has moved the field towards a universal definition of populism, through scholarly consensus on the 'core tenets' of populism, which has made the term more analytically useful. While these developments have increased the analytical utility of the term 'populism', they have also given rise to a fundamentally supply-sided approach to populism theory. Empirical studies drawing from this work have consequently been underpinned by a focus on the supply-side conditions under which populism is likely to succeed. Conversely, demand side factors remain under theorised. Demand-side factors are the "reasons why voters become attracted to populist parties" which must necessarily engage (foremostly) with the basic question of what "the people" are to whom populism refers (Mols & Jetten, 2020, 557).

Early populism theory laid the epistemic foundations of populism as inherently oppositional or antithetical to neoliberalism. Authoritative historical studies of populism, which are contained in a series of essays and papers presented at a conference *On Populism* at the London School of Economics between 19 – 21 May 1967[6], produced an 'ideal type' of populism. Cogently

[6] "To Define Populism" was the title of a conference held at the London School of Economics and

described by Ionescu and Gellner in *'Populism: its meanings and national characteristics'* , the ideal type which emerged from the conference includes agrarian, economic, and political populism (Mudde, 2000; Ionescu and Gellner, 1969). Herein, agrarian populism was traced to the American farmers' protest movement and Russia's *Narodniki* (populists) at the end of the nineteenth century; socio-economic populism with origins in the 1960-1970 style of charismatic and inclusionary politics espoused by figures such as Argentinian military general and politician, Juan Domingo Peron's government in Latin America and finally; a vein of political populism observed in the "xenophobic and radical right wing Populism" of Europe from the early 20th century (De Kadt, 1970, 138). While this work highlighted the fact that populism is epistemologically and metaphysically eclectic; it facilitated a scholarly tradition in populism theory which approaches populism as an oppositional force to the systems and processes of early neoliberalism, equating populism to "a problem which supersedes Communism in contemporary politics" (Ionescu and Gellner 1969, 1).

Contemporary theory has sought to resolve the epistemological and metaphysical challenges associated with populism primarily by proposing the core tenets of populism, which make it an analytically useful term. These tenets are: the people, the elite, and the general will (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017, 9-11; Agnew and Shin, 2017, 915). In the chapters which follow, I rely on this scholarly agreement about the core tenets of populism as the primary ontological and definitional approach to populism in the study. While I discuss other definitions of populism emerging from disciplines within the social sciences, this work focuses on political parties. Consequently, I consider evidence of populism to be political parties which espouse a fundamentally populist

Political Science (LSE) in London on May 20–21, 1967, with the participation of several theorists including Richard Hofstaedter, Ernest Gellner, and Isaiah Berlin, who are considered to be preeminent populism scholars. See: Halmai, G. 2019. Populism, authoritarianism, and constitutionalism. German Law Journal (2019), 20, pp. 296–313 doi:10.1017/glj.2019.23

discourse characterised by claims of one people, against a common elite enemy, whose will can be articulated by one leader. In pursuing critical analysis and reflexivity, I consider the extent to which the latter claim, about the existence of an "unmediated and cohesive volonté générall" (will of the people), can 'ostracize' populism from neoliberal democratic frameworks and reinforce perceptions of populism as a problem similar to communism in contemporary politics. In this context, populist politics are often seen as directly oppositional to the mechanisms and ideals of established neoliberal democracy including state bureaucracies, traditional political parties, professional politicians, and technocratic expertise which are structured to represent a range of popular interests or 'the will of all' (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017,16; Moffitt and Tormey, 2014, 391). This antagonism between populism and neoliberal democratic models gives rise to the underlying questions of the study which are explained in *Chapter 1*: *Introduction*.

Supply-side approaches are primarily concerned with the things populist parties do in order to gain votes and which frequently 'pit' populism against neoliberal democratic models. These supply-side approaches tend to fall under two umbrellas. One widely-held view is the economic insecurity perspective emphasising the rise of populist parties as a consequence of global trends and changes which have transformed the workforce and society more broadly in post-industrial economies (Inglehart and Norris, 2016; Resnick, 2010). Studies within this school of thought focus on the intrinsic nature of party competition combined with trends and changes such as rapid urbanization, informalization of the labour force, and how these have provided a throughway for populists to mobilise a growing urban poor (ibid, 2016). A Second equally pervasive perspective is characterised the cultural backlash thesis which argues that populist parties are the result of a reaction of "once predominant sectors of the population to progressive value change" (Inglehart and Norris, 2016, 1).

The research branching from these approaches includes observations of populism as a style of discourse (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985), an organizational form (Weyland, 2001), an 'emotive politics' (Mbete, 2015) and finally a 'dynamic process, unfolding in stages over time' (Müller, 2017). While these studies advance our understanding of the various *types* of populist parties leveraging social and cultural conditions within neoliberal democracies, they continue to neglect demand-side factors by reinforcing a "dangerous dismissal of populism as a 'thin ideology'" and the orthodox conclusion that populism "does not possess 'the same level of intellectual refinement and consistency' as for example socialism or liberalism" (Schroeder, 2020, 13; Mudde, 2004, 544).

Insofar as supply-side approaches analyse the things populist parties do to increase their support, they consider populism as a 'thin' ideology when compared to the 'thick ideologies' (such as conservatism and liberalism) constituting neoliberal democracy. In this equation the basic question of what "the people" are to whom populism refers remains under theorised (Agnew and Shin, 2017, 913). Instead of grappling with demand-side factors (such as why democratic institutions have become less responsive to citizens and less able to deal with societies' problems over time and hence susceptible to the type of populist backlash threatening them today) an overwhelming majority of contemporary populism literature is concerned with upholding the supremacy of the neoliberal democratic model against the 'populist spectre'. Studies of populism in Africa in particular position populist electoral politics as a passive revolution (Hart, 2014), a political style (Mbete, 2015) and a subversionary tactic (Mahali, 2016). This normative-laden approach gives rise to a further ontological challenge which is comparing the rise of populism in the western world with the populist politics emerging in the global south.

Much of the populism literature "focuses primarily on Europe but also casts an occasional glance at the U.S. and the Tea Party" (Abromeit, 2017, 178; Baykal, 2018). It relies on analysis of the 2016 election of U.S President Donald Trump (Taub, 2016); the formation of a Populist government in Italy (Horowitz, 2018) and Brexit in the United Kingdom (Browning, 2019). Although this euro-centric slant deals with the "causes of populism in the western world" it concludes that we are "in an age of populism" globally (Krastev, 2007, 5). The notion of 'populism', though widely adopted in the study of mainland Europe and part of Latin America, is hardly encountered in the African politics literature. This is despite several early post-independence parties mobilising essentially populist strategies including in 1990s Ivory Coast and Zaire, Thomas Sankara's Burkina Faso, Jerry Rawlings' Ghana, the exploitation of 'ethnic' or 'ethnonational' feelings by Idi Amin or Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Army/Movement in Uganda (Carbone 2005; Kasfir, 1976 ; Rothchild & Boady, 1989).

The lack of substantive engagement with populist electoral politics in Africa (and other parts of the developing world) is exemplified in the opening lines of Guiso et al's seminal *Demand and Supply of Populism* :

> *"*On both sides of the Atlantic, the western world is facing an unprecedented wave of populist politics and populist rhetoric. . ." *(Guiso et al, 2017, 2).*

The 66 page working paper goes on to evaluate the conditions facilitating a populist turn in the contemporary period. A search for "Africa" returns no matches. It is precisely due to the epistemic and ontological challenges associated with a critical (and decolonised) theorisation of the populist turn that this omission exists.

In order to fully conceptualise "the people" to whom populism refers and engage with other demand-side questions, populism theory would have to call attention to the potential failures of established neoliberal democracy and bring into the same epistemological space established democracies across parts of mainland Europe, the Americas, and Sub-Saharan Africa where state bureaucracies, traditional political parties, professional politicians, and technocratic expertise of liberal democracy alike seem to be losing their appeal against the populist electoral calculus (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017,16; Moffitt and Tormey, 2014, 391). A critical (and decolonised) comparative approach to populism theory requires bringing the spaces and places where populism has emerged into conversation with the rising populist electoral calculus under neoliberalism. It needs to surmount the "disjuncture between the challenges countries faced and the strength of their political institutions" (Huntington, 1968, 5) to generate and test some precise implications for voters' support (the demand side), for the timing and location of appearance of populist parties beyond the "causes of populism in the west", and locate the main cause of populism in the decline of responsiveness and effectiveness of neoliberal political institutions (Berman, 2021, 78; Guiso et al, 2017).

In the second section of the Chapter which follows, I review the geographical thinking (on neoliberalism, the state, and its relationships with the electorate) on topics within the disciplinary field which informed the empirical work contained in the thesis. The following section demonstrates the extent to which geography has the tools to advance contemporary populism theory from predominantly supply-side questions towards a critical (and decolonised) comparative study of the demand-side factors potentially influencing the global 'age of populism'.

Part II: Conceptual Framework and Empirical Research

Towards a demand-side approach to populism

Having decided that supply-side approaches to contemporary populism theory limit the possibilities for critical and comparative study, the next question is how human geography can elaborate on supply-side analysis of the populist turn. These supply-side factors centre on "people's support for populist platforms" (Guiso et al, 2017, 2). The sub discipline of political geography and its attendant conceptualisation(s) of neoliberalism, the state, and the neoliberal state's relationship(s) with the electorate offer an inroad to examining supply-side factors.

Political geography has the theoretical and analytical tools to advance a critical investigation of supply-side populism. The field departs from the notion that the traditional subjects of geography (people, nature, space, and place) cannot be separated from politics. From this vantage point, it calls for a fuller understanding of society "through analysing the strands which link spatial structures, political processes, and economic systems" (Short, 2002, 1) and underlines the imperative to "find concepts and methods which cast light on the real world instead of codifying it into the obsolete categories of the academic establishment" (Castells, 1980, 127). Within this framework geographers have already made meaningful contributions to literatures on contemporary populism.

Political geographers are yet to imagine "how populist electoral politics should be theorised in relation to other long-standing discussions in our discipline" (Lizotte, 2018, 139). Additionally, the discipline is yet to overcome the ontological orthodoxy which others studies of populism in Europe from the populist surge in Africa. However, several prominent studies within the

discipline point to the utility of political geography, including its theoretical and analytical tools, in answering these questions. For instance, Gordon's "less reductionist geography of the populist surge" makes a vital departure from early supply-side theories embedded in populism literature (2018, 95). It goes beyond explanations of populist electoral politics as the result of rapid economic and cultural changes stimulated by globalization to assert the importance of examining "potential commonalities in the contexts from which a populist impulse emerges, and what sorts of geographies are relevant to this" (ibid, 2018, 95). In a similar vein, Rossi challenges the 'urban vs rural' function of globalization to assert the political and constituent power of metropolitan environments in creating democratic alternatives to a declining national sovereignty (Rossi, 2018).

The prominent studies described above focus almost exclusively on mainland Europe while other studies within the discipline, including commentary on the Brexit referendum in the U.K. and Donald Trump's election in the U.S., also fail to engage with Europe and Africa in the same empirical space (Bachmann and Sidaway, 2016; Agnew and Shin, 2017).

Studies within the discipline which do engage with the global South and represent early efforts to orient populism within political geography, are dated. In the South African context, they tend to evaluate a period before the rise of the EFF. Gillian Hart's monograph, *Rethinking the South African Crisis: Nationalism, Populism, Hegemony*, is perhaps the most substantive engagement with southern African populism in the discipline. Although it does not deal with the rise of the EFF explicitly, its engagement with the intersections between hegemony, nationalism, and populism provides a strong launching pad for assessing demand-side populism post 2013. Particularly, how populist electoral politics can arise from struggles in the arenas of everyday life which feed

into and are shaped by simultaneous processes brought on by the changing nature of the state (Hart, 2014).

Given these disciplinary contributions, and the theoretical and analytical tools which follow, what remains is how we can, as political geographers, consolidate the existing scholarship to create a robust geographies of populism literature. This research draws on the field's approach to question of neoliberalism, the state, and its relationships with the electorate, as well as the neoliberal state's constituent mechanisms of control and order to contribute to the political geography of the state literature, the geographies of labour, and ultimately a more robust geographies of populism literature. This task necessarily includes work touching on ontological issues of how we conceptualize populism as a spatial phenomenon as well as empirical issues of what counts as evidence of populist politics.

Political geography of the state

In this section, I discuss how the state is theorized and in particular how it is theorised in relation to the populist 'worker identity' that it constitutes. For a long time, 'the state' has been the taken-for-granted territorial unit of society and a presumably self-evident object of analysis structuring research questions, observations, and results in academic geography. However, in *Changing geographies of the state: themes, challenges and futures,* Moisio, Jonas, Koch, and Lizotte (2020) rightly argue that "this is the era of the state" (2020, 1). In this era, we see efforts across the social sciences to interrogate the territorial idea and ideal of the state including sociologists who analyse societies within states, political scientists concerned with political systems, and the efforts of international relations and jurisprudence to examine interstate relations, administrative systems,

and laws as "manifestations of the historically contingent 'wills' of the state" (Moisio et al, 2020, 1). Traditional approaches to the state, its constitutive systems and processes brings two important considerations to the fore. First, that all states which are organised across terrestrial space have differences in terms of territory, population size, politics, and economics. Second and vitally, that the primary commonality of all states is their shared spatial and conceptual prerogative to "master space. . . an effort to territorialize political power around a 'state-society' and to establish clear boundaries between the inside and outside of a state" (Moisio et al, 2020,1).

The latter observation about states' underlying prerogative to "master space", is the impetus which has for a long time been the purview of geographers and Geography in mapping both the physical and cultural features of a given state (ibid, 2020,1). Since the 1980s this impetus has given rise to several fundamental questions for researchers of the geography of the state. They include how bureaucracy (Kuus, 2015), capitalism (Mann, 2010), and transnational movements of capital, talent, and ideas have interacted with or reproduced the territorial state (Hannah, 2016; Shi & Liu, 2019; Wu & Zhang, 2022). I draw on this thinking to consider the neoliberal state and populism and the populist 'worker identity' which has arguably emerged as a result of this dynamic.

The neoliberal state and populism

The contemporary rise of populism across states of the global North and the global South presents opportunities for further inquiries into the geographies of the state such as interrogating the relationship between the state, elites, and capitalism, the various types of political identities (e.g., workers or elites) which the state constitutes and which are entangled with the state (as

discussed in *Chapter 5*), how capitalism and neoliberal economic models have transformed the state in recent decades, how state power manifests itself spatially (e.g., through state orchestrated projects and accumulation strategies as argued in *Chapter 5 and Chapter 6*) and what ideological manifestations have consequently come to characterize contemporary neoliberal states (as argued in *Chapter 7*).

Refracted through the lens of the geographies of the state literature, contemporary populism ultimately lends an opportunity to question how techniques of state-orchestrated governance have changed over time and potentially facilitated new democratic and governance models such as populism to emerge in particular as the state is increasingly "rescaling"[7] and receding from governing people towards a "spatial enterprise" primarily mediated by markets and economics (Moisio et al, 2020,1; Moisio et al, 2020, 11). My own argument about the mediating influence of neoliberalism over state governance policies, practices, and processes is presented in the final substantive chapter of the thesis (*Chapter 7*).

Throughout the work, I operationalise a definition of the state drawn from the geographies of the state literature which conceptualises the state as a territorial unit. Not as a "sort of passive physical background or side-product to more fundamental societal developments", but a territorial unit spatialised by fundamental dimensions of social, cultural, political-economic, and geopolitical processes (Moisio et al, 2020, 4; Moisio, 2019). This vantage point is not intended to reify the state as an 'ideal' political community per se, but to examine it as a historically contingent spatial expression of political power. Herein, state accumulation strategies for

[7] The changing geography of the state in terms of "rescaling" can also be traced through geographers' research on the concept of a "city state" e.g., in the case of Singapore and Beijing. See: Yeung, Y.M., 1998. Book Review: Singapore: a developmental city state. Progress in Human Geography, 22(3), pp.468-469 and Wu, F. and Zhang, F., 2022. Rethinking China's urban governance: The role of the state in neighbourhoods, cities, and regions. Progress in Human Geography, 46(3), pp.775-797.

example necessitate particular identities such as 'worker' and 'capitalist' (Harvey, 2005; Harvey, 2006; Das, 2017). This approach also supports my own critical analysis of the state as a geographical phenomenon and the extent to which it has exerted an influence on the political geography of populism through its territorialization of "ways of being and relating" among and between people, as well as aspects of political power and state apparatus (Ince and Barrera de la Torre 2016, 13).

The rest of the chapter discusses the disciplinary and sub disciplinary literatures informing my theoretical framework including the geographies of the state literature and broader disciplinary and sub disciplinary theories about the neoliberal state, its inherent claims, mechanisms of control and order, and the political identities which are produced as the neoliberal state engineers and reengineers its efforts to "master space" (Moisio et al, 2020, 1). I begin with the disciplinary perspective of the neoliberal state and go on to interrogate its constitutive claims and antagonistic political identities arising from subjective popular perceptions of these claims especially within subsets of the population.

The state as a geographical phenomenon is constituted by a population, territory, and state apparatus (Agnew, 2005; Moisio et al, 2020). Neoliberalism is one of those apparatus, a "form of governing, premised on particular ideational elements and ways of reasoning", which the state deploys in its bid to master space (Foucault, 2007, 78). Yet, like most concepts neoliberalism is an essentially contested term. Geographers have attempted to disentangle the concept from a broad critique of social ills towards a contextualised definition including broader recognition of "neoliberalism's hybridized and mutated forms as it travels around our world" (ibid, 2010, 1025). In particular, how the spread of neoliberalism across geographies and as a "logic of governmentality" necessarily encourages work beyond methodological, epistemological, and ontological divides to better understand neoliberalism's formations and their centrality to how

social justice is conceived and how it might be practiced across geographies (Springer, 2010; Bryan, 2012). Beyond prevailing approaches to neoliberalism as a process and a set of overlapping arguments and premises "united by their tendency to support market imperatives and unequal economic power" (Grewal, 2014, 9); political geography calls on us to examine the "situations in which neoliberal claims are prominent, and pragmatically. . . what those claims accomplish" (Grewal and Purdy, 2014, 1). From this vantage point, I examine the contemporary populist electoral calculus and argue that it is as a by-product of the political identities and popular contestations produced by neoliberal state governance models in recent times. The political subjectivities facilitated by neoliberal claims are important in contemporary populism theory and the geographies of the state literature as they reflect the situational and pragmatic outcomes of neoliberal state governance models including those factors relating to material worlds (i.e., infrastructure) and political subjectivities which are discussed in greater detail in *Chapter 5* (Hays, 2009).

The compact between the state (as a geographical phenom) and its citizens is one of the foremost arenas wherein liberal claims were most prominent (Taylor-Gooby, 2004). These claims coalesced around a set of agreements and commitments from the state to provide certain resources, a citizenry or constituent group with the right(s) to claim these entitlements, and the institutions responsible for administering these processes (Castree, Kitchin, and Rogers, 2013). Political geographers conceptualise these arrangements within the liberal state as a "dynamic and unfolding process" ultimately enabling "a high level of collective provision through the state. . . co-existing with a market economy (and administered by) "that part of the state concerned with the collective provision of state benefits" (Springer, 2010, 1025; Castree, Kitchin and Rogers, 2013). The underlying compact which liberal state claims gave rise to are arranged such that the state would 'protect' its citizens from the negative impacts of internationalisation (including

through infrastructure and social provision such as social welfare) and in return, citizens continue to support the state's agenda (free trade, globalization and neoliberalization).

Yet, in recent times, the liberal state has been increasingly transformed by capitalism, yielding greater control over decisions and mediating influences to the market and economics and fragmenting socio-political identities (including 'the worker' identity), notions of citizenship and longstanding politics of expectation once associated with the liberal state. Nowhere is this relationship clearer than the neoliberal state's relationship to those citizens directly engaged with and reliant on the state's productive sectors (e.g., mining and industry which are central arguments in *Chapter 5* of this work) (Dorlach, 2016; Gusterson, 2017). On one hand, state-led projects and their attendant accumulation strategies both created and mediated the pragmatic risks faced by citizens including "stagnant incomes, increased income inequality, and declining life chances for many" (Agnew and Shin, 2017, 916). On the other, the neoliberalising impulses of the state have created a 'glitch' in these conditions which has come to inform and facilitated political subjectivities and cultures and bringing into question the 'compact' between state and citizen in an increasingly individualised and post-industrial capitalist state (Dorling, 2016; Taylor-Gooby, 2004). The result of this dynamic is a three-fold crisis of differentiated citizenship (coverage, legitimacy, and participation) which this work illustrates through the experiences communities living and working in industry dominant regions (often politicised as 'working class') and their electoral choices.

As the compact between the electorate and the liberal state is eroded and replaced by an individualised and post-industrial capitalism (i.e., neoliberalism), voters across democracies who were once neatly arranged according to the territorialising impulses of the state (e.g., as labour in the broader state apparatus) search for new possibilities and policies addressing the new risks and challenges arising from this change (Dorling and Tomlinson, 2019; Betz, 1993, 665). At this

juncture, the salience of political identity and political subjectivities in the state's once productive and labour intensive regions comes to the fore. Bringing the geographies of labour and the geography of the state in conversation with the contemporary rise of populism in industry dominant regions (as argued in *Chapter 5* of this thesis).

The first concept to consider is that of differentiated citizenship which has contributed to a growing literature on normative subgroups in society and their relationship to the state including through elections. These patterns and interactions are seen in empirical studies across Canada (Kymlicka, 1996), Japan (Kibe, 2006), Israel (Jamal, 2002), and Indonesia (Chaplin, 2018). Questions of citizenship also inspired studies of "populism in the new South Africa" including the work of Halisi (1998). While Halisi in particular calls attention to citizenship and populism in "racially stratified societies", this early work also highlights the need for a contemporary and comparative populism theory dealing with the evolution of citizenship and political identity in tandem with the neoliberalising impulses of the state and the political mobilisation of populist parties in recent times i.e. since 1998 (ibid, 1998, 423). The second concept to consider is that of a unique 'worker identity'. The problem is that contemporary populism literature has not sufficiently dealt with two of the three constitutive parts described above through its supply side approach to populist electoral politics. This gap in populism theory creates many opportunities for contemporary populism studies including through the potential insights advanced by an engagement with the populist identities such as the 'worker identity', which are interrogated below and more substantively in *Chapter 5* of this research.

The 'worker identity'

Supply-side theory tends to deal exclusively with the agreements and institutional arrangements of the state. However, this supply-side approach severely constrains the possibilities for assessing

aspects of statehood including citizenship and its differentiated expressions, popular subjectivities, and political identities within the framework of the state and its constituent political actors. This research thus focuses on demand-side factors including notions of citizenship and political identity within the neoliberal democratic state's body politic which might facilitate a populist electoral calculus, and which seems to "thrive in a context where economic crisis and social dislocation undermine traditional representative institutions" (Roberts, 1995, 82). In his influential work on the welfare state, Taylor-Gooby proposes that a combination of sluggish growth and the governments' neoliberal consolidation agenda threaten to reduce the proportion of national budgets which are channelled towards social spending (Taylor-Gooby, 2004, 4). This 'convergence of welfare regimes', decreases the peculiarity of welfare state financing and regulation, 'shrinking corridors' of the welfare state and the junctures at which citizens can claim entitlements from the state (Rothgang, Obinger and Leibfried, 2006, 250). While this is arguably the most important pattern of neoliberal state change over the last 30 years, contemporary populism theory is yet to cogently articulate the extent to which these changes inform electoral support for support for populist parties.

In response to the "shrinking corridors" of the neoliberal state, citizens are progressively alienated from the state (Gooby, Dean, Munro, and Parker, 1999, 177). Those politicised as 'workers', especially those living in and employed the state's productive sectors, are the main focus of this work. Political geographers have considered the ways in which spatial distributions of labour can create distinct pattern of employment and political 'reality' (Massey, 195; Berlant, 2016). In the context of shrinking corridors, 'workers' can reclaim these shrinking corridors along the lines of their agreements and expectations from the state. One of the foremost mechanisms of reclamation is expressed through 'acts of belonging' including spatial socialization (Ferdoush, 2018), responsibility (Häkli, 2018), and indigeneity (Rye and Kurniawan, 2017).

This dynamic set of relationships is seen across contexts including the politics of the 'working class' in mainland Europe for example the United Kingdom and France where 'worker' becomes more than "simple stereotypes. . . of marginal farmers, small shopkeepers. . . under-paid civil servants" but also a matter of identity in relation to the state producer state, its "industries. . . government subsidies and tariffs. . .and industrial workers" (Mosse, 1972; 185). It is also seen in "spatial relations" of labour including the rise and spread of trade unions, "labour organizing and struggles" in response to and despite fragmentations in 'class' which are both created and reinforced by the state and its accumulation strategies (Featherstone & Griffin, 2016, 375; ibid, 1972; Willis, 2017). In *Spatial relations, histories from below and the makings of agency: Reflections on The Making of the English Working Class at 50,* Featherstone & Griffin (2016) argue that the spatial relations of labour call attention to the need for:

> "work for asserting a spatial politics of labour and . . . for attention to the diverse agentic spatial practices shaped through labour organizing and struggles" (Featherstone & Griffin, 2016).

In South Africa, the 'worker identity' has been politicised and culturally tied more towards race, income, and education. As early as the 1970s, the 'worker identity' became fixed along these lines in the popular imaginary when "post-war economic growth grind to a halt, resulting in spiking living costs and unemployment" primarily affecting the "politicised black workforce and. . . disenfranchised African population hit hardest" and driving "enduring discontent about race-based exploitation and subjugation . . large-scale industrial action . . . and popular revolt" (Money & Van Zyl-Hermann, 2020; Van Zyl-Hermann, 2021).

These spatial relations, which are coloured by a politics of race and dispossession are frequently mobilised by the EFF, with claims of being a "party of the working class" (EFF, 2022). While in

France, 'worker' is relatively inclusive connoting to nationalist undertones, notions of 'the true people', and even members of the upper income groups who are increasingly marginalised by capitalism. These observations are advanced and substantively addressed in *Chapter 4, Chapter 5, and Chapter 8* of the thesis.

Everyday acts of (social) belonging among 'workers' also include voting, and demands on the state for resources (1996, 737 - 762). In this context, the demand-side factors influencing populist voting patterns can be approached as a bid to reintegrate into the neoliberal state body politic and the potential result of the politicising influence of populist parties who leverage the 'worker identity' in their campaigns and discourses (as argued in *Chapter 6*). Demand-side acts of belonging are however complicated by contradictions especially those existing at the intersection of socio-economic rights and their recognition by the state or institutions acting on behalf of the state (Holston, 2008,7; Chigudu, 2017). A demand-side analysis of populism must necessarily disentangle this arrangement by focusing on the understudied viewpoint of the electorate and the state's relationship with the electorate.

While elections (and voting) are the electorate's primary way of negotiating their relationship with the neoliberal state, empirical studies of populism pay more attention to the conditions than the 'people' facilitating electoral outcomes (Agnew and Shin, 2017; Lizotte, 2018). Geographers have several tools to disentangle this relationship, including spatial patterns of voting in multi-party elections and what insights can be gained from that spatial analysis (Rogers, Castree, and Kitchin, 2013). Despite an implicit agreement within the discipline that elections are organized geographically, the constitution of the electorate, and the electorate's relationship to the neoliberal state within these geographies can be different.

Agnew (2003) and Nicholls (2009) propose that internal differentiations (by interest and identity) mediate the political geography of electoral outcomes. The responsiveness of the neoliberal state to these differing interests and identities is shown to be a major part of the voting calculus (Mughan and Paxton, 2006). Yet, empirical studies have yet to provide a sustained focus on the discreet interests and identities comprising the populist electoral base. Those studies which do engage with the electorate and the populist electoral calculus tend to be based in socio-political analysis, offering little substantive engagement with the literatures in geography. Although there is evidence that local distributions of populist electoral support are concentrated in areas which are 'left behind' by the post-industrial, neoliberal welfare agenda (Goodwin and Heath, 2016, 323); the 'people' facilitating this distribution are under theorised. Drawing from these premises, this work focuses on the 'worker identity', bringing workers in conversation with contemporary populism, the political geography of the state, labour, and military geographies.

The 'worker identity' is a significant electoral unit of analysis for this research not only because workers have a distinct identity (and interests) in relation to the neoliberal state but also because:

> *"*workers are spatial as well as historical social agents . . . they seek to shape the landscape in ways that facilitate their political and economic goals*" (Herod, 2003, 112).*

As a spatial and historical agent, workers (and experiences politicised as 'working class') shed light on the evolving relationship between the neoliberal state and 'the people' over time. The discrete identities and interests of workers also offer a basis for comparative thinking across contexts as the electoral mobilisation of communities politicised as 'working class' is increasingly shared, albeit culturally and politically nuanced, across geographies within the neoliberal state and

leveraged by populist parties in their campaigns and discourse. The literature on labour geographies has been put into practice in this thesis and empowered me to think spatially, historically, and comparatively about this demand-side aspect of populist electoral politics.

Geographies of labour

Since 2007 and as recently as 2012 the sub-field of labour geography has begun to grapple more substantively with questions of labour precarity (Strauss, 2020) and geographical work on developments in labour market restructuring touching on migration (Nurol and Unal, 2018), mobilities, and social difference (Worth, 2018; Zampoukos, 2018). While recent research has been fundamental to the "fourth phase" of labour geography's evolution and highlighting the "constellation of research" emerging within the sub discipline, much of the contemporary labour geography literature has been underpinned by an ambition to better theorise "shifting worker identities", worker agency, and the role of the state in these processes (Strauss, 2018, 622-623; Coe and Jordhus-Lier, 2011; Peck, 2001).

On one hand, substantive work on the concept of precarity has allowed a deepening, albeit recent, engagement with right wing populism, neofascism and authoritarianism as well as their mediating influence on logics of racism (Featherstone and Karaliotas, 2018), misogyny (Ince, 2019), imperialism and colonialism (Thomas and Tufts, 2016; Strauss, 2020). On the other, it has been limited by how white (Faira et al, 2019) and Anglo-centric (Ferretti, 2019) debates on labour precarity have been despite a scholarly consensus that worker identities, worker agency, and the role of the state are "generated from particular neoliberal labour market conditions" that must necessarily behave in dynamic ways across space (Waite, 2009: 413).

This thesis brings contemporary populism theory in conversation with emerging debates on geographies of labour in the sub-discipline and uses the French and South African cases to contribute to bourgeoning scholarship within the sub discipline by contrasting and comparing the relationship between the 'worker identity' and agency, the neoliberal state, and populist electoral politics across democracies of the global North and South.

The conversation between contemporary geographies of labour and populism theory is discussed in the first substantive chapter of the thesis (*Chapter 5*). The discussion necessarily begins with early work in the geography of labour literature. Specifically, research on the spatial structures of production, divisions of labour, and the social relations which they enable which have been a longstanding feature of literatures in labour and political geography (Berlant, 1996; Massey, 1995; Massey, 2013; Yarrow 1990, 1991). Focusing on workers, this study was particularly interested in the impact of the neoliberal (producer) state on social relations (Rygiel, 2012). Several studies in labour geography pay attention to the ways in which the social relations enabled by the neoliberal (producer) state and its attendant industries can generate discreet political subjectivities across similar regions (ibid, 2012; Rygiel 2012; Hanafi and Long 2010; Sigona 2014). While these studies shed light on the producer state's role in shaping the political arena, as well as questions of participation and citizenship within this arena, they do not deal with populism *per se*.

Throughout the work, I argue that the populist electoral calculus is one way in which workers vigorously contest and make meaning of the political arena created by the neoliberal state and the reengineering of longstanding notions of citizenship and political identities (such as he "worker identity"). I contend that the neoliberal state has not only facilitated the emergence of populist worker identities separate from more conventional class based worker identities but equally that workers simultaneously leverage elections as a tool for enacting and renegotiating their 'belonging' in the body politic. Here, the set of contestations and contradictions created by

a disjuncture between the producer state and workers enables new discourses (such as populism) to be forged against mainstream ideas about globalization, state restructuring and competition (Prytherch, 2009; Jonas, 2012).

Militarism

The literature on labour geography offers a lens for analysing how workers contest the growing disjuncture between the producer state and the working class. For example, how the working class vote can give rise to spatialised (regional) political discourses in response to this 'shrinking corridor' (Prytherch, 2009). However, while "workers make their own geographies. . . they clearly do not have free range to do so" (Herod, 2003, 112). The neoliberal (producer) state, its actors, and inherent practices equally engage levers of control and order, such as militarism, which mediate power across space. As the state retreats from politics, these practices and discourses are appropriated by political actors including populist parties as argued in *Chapter 6* (Ralph & Stoove, 2021).

A longstanding definition of military geography has seen it described as applying "the tools and techniques of the discipline of geography to the solution of military problems" (Palka and Galgano, 2000). This definition, however, is narrow for critical research. It sits uneasily with recent developments in the study of military geography, which are also shaped by "wider intellectual contexts" including the social sciences, geohumanities, and more critical approaches such as Marxist and feminist theory (Woodward, 2019, 2). Military geography can thus be viewed as emerging from a 'marriage' between the spatial (geographies of military phenomenon) and "the experiential and embodied dynamics of human experiences" (ibid, 2019, 2). It can provide significant insights into the questions of political identity, social power, as well as the mediating influence of the state which this thesis grapples with. In this context, I apply the literature on

militarism to examine the dynamic relationship between the electoral calculus of the working class, the neoliberal state's methods of control and order, and its implications for populist politics.

The direct implication that military geography offers to the thesis is that militarism can (and should be) considered at a range of scales. Traditionally, this would be related to questions of "state and empire" associated with the military and defence institutions (Woodward, 2005, 721). However, bourgeoning scholarship in military geography invites study from the international, to the regional, national, and distinctively local and individual dimensions "that mediate the 'playing out' of military activities in everyday, mundane spaces" including those spaces structured by "gender, race, class, nation, and citizenship" (Woon, 2019, 115; Pain, 2015,64).

Attentiveness to the multiscalar 'playing out' of military activities underlies the key research question in *Chapter 6*, which is the causal power of neoliberal discourses of peace, social (working class) conflict, and militarised party culture in populist electoral politics. By foregrounding how these ideas and processes are "embodied, performed, and reacted to by a range of actors", militarism expand the contemporary populism literature and so far, limited efforts to deconstruct demand-side populism (Woon, 2019, 116).

Conclusion

This Chapter has provided the core literature and hence the theoretical framework that this thesis has been based on and has reviewed the literature that has informed the direction for the research of this thesis. The Chapter has put the thinking behind this thesis in conversation with

contemporary populism theory, political and labour geography, and its analytical tools and concepts including neoliberalism and militarism.

The theoretical framework of this thesis, and the motivation behind writing the Chapters which follow, has been informed by the critical scholarship of political and labour geography. This body of work seeks to challenge epistemic and ontological distinctions between the global North and the global South while locating people (in particular the working class) in their spatial and historical agency in relation to the state, political actors, and processes. Whereas contemporary populism theory has under studied, and frequently dismissed, the "every day and mundane spaces" of the electorate, geography has yet to advance a robust geographies of populism literature. Yet, contemporary populism calls attention to a growing disjuncture between the neoliberal (producer) state and its citizens (including the questions of identity, citizenship, social justice, and power which this gives rise to) which geography has the tools to interrogate.

In this Chapter, I have suggested that epistemic and ontological limitations of contemporary populism theory can be addressed through the scholarship and analytical lens of political geography and labour geography. Primarily through a critical and vigorous analysis of "the people" to whom populism refers. I argue that the working class, as a spatial and historical agent, offer an illuminating vantage point into the electoral impulse(s) influencing populist politics at various scales including the international, national, regional, and individual (working class) dimensions. I propose that this is especially relevant in two ways. First, when we seek to first overturn (and contest) the innate coloniality of supply-side theories of populism which not only pit a pathologized voter against the neoliberal state but also 'other' the politics of Africa from the politics of 'established' democracies of the West. Second, to put forward a demand-side analysis of contemporary populism which foregrounds the experiential and embodied dynamics of

human experiences especially those of the working class who have been, in many ways, neglected by the neoliberal state, its policies, practices, and actors.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This Chapter elaborates the path towards a research design which serves the aim of the thesis (a comparative political geography of contemporary populism). It discusses the mixed methods approach underpinning the research as well as the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the study design. Finally, it discusses the ethical implications and considerations of the work.

Mixed Method Approach Rationale

I employed a mixed methods approach, relying on a variety of different sources, to conduct a comparative analysis of the rise of populist electoral politics in two established democracies of the global North (France) and the global South (South Africa). Of central importance was balancing the spatial and experiential aspects of this research, bringing the tools, concepts, and approaches of political geography in conversation with the findings of my field research. In order to examine the spatial distribution of votes for populist parties in France and South Africa, I employed a quantitative analysis of secondary data. Administrative data on national elections, elections surveys and polls were used to map the territorial location(s) of populist electoral support in France and South Africa. In order to foreground 'experiences on the ground' and the voting calculus behind this spatial distribution, I relied on field research and the formal interviews, semi-structured interviews and focus groups, archival material, and a range of textual data from media, the French and South Africa government, and political parties which came to light in the field.

While spatial science (in the positivist tradition) certainly has its analytical value, it tends to decouple space from time and matter yielding a 'spatial fetishism' (Sack, 1997, 58). In the context

of this research, where social and political processes and their mediating influence on the electoral calculus are central, a positivist approach would have limited the scope of analysis and the potential for new relationships to arise between the observable administrative data and actualities 'on the ground' (Harvey, 1973, 128). In order to combine the analytic value of the administrative data consulted in the study and the 'everyday' experiences of voters, I leveraged field research as a "vital check against the unguarded surety of theoretical abstraction" (Veeck, 2001, 34).

A study of this nature, including navigating the field and engaging meaningfully with the narratives and political subjectivities of my interlocutors, would have been impractical without a level of cultural and linguistic fluency (Veeck, 2001). These practical considerations informed, in part, the selection of case studies for the thesis. One practical aspect of the study was my linguistic and cultural fluency in French. French is my first additional language and I have studied the language, French literature, and culture, at postgraduate level. I have also spent considerable time in France and conducted pilot projects in partnership with French speaking professionals and civil society groups in the country. A second practical aspect was having the linguistic fluency and experience to conduct research in South Africa. Siswati and isiZulu, two of the country's official languages, are also my first (home) language. I lived and worked in South Africa for over 8 years. However, in the few cases where local dialect and the local geography inhibited field research, I relied on an interpreter and local 'guide' to negotiate the field.

While cultural and linguistic fluency were practical considerations in selecting case studies, I believe they are secondary to the academic insights and contributions to the literatures in Geography which are offered by this comparative research. Notably, the variations and unifying factors which comparative research brings to the fore, and which often expose the need to modify theory (Ragin and Amoroso, 2011; Berg-Schlosser and De Meur, 2009).

Bringing democracies of the global north and the global south into the same analytical space brought insight to the lines of argument in the thesis. These include the pervasiveness of narratives and discourses underpinning neoliberal democratic models, the combined and contingent outcomes of these narratives for workers (and working class people), and the dynamic yet analogous contestation of these conditions by the working class under a populist electoral calculus.

Beyond the practical and academic considerations of the research design, this Chapter also discusses the ethics associated with the project, including conducting of interviews and hiring of a translator. This research achieved ethical clearance from the University of Oxford Research Ethics Committee (reference SOGE 1A-19-172) in September 2019.

Quantitative Research Methods

The quantitative aspects of the research relied on publicly available administrative data sets such as national elections outcomes in France and South Africa, elections surveys conducted by IPSOS, and GIS mapping.

National Elections

National elections data for the period 1990 – 2019 was accessed through publicly available datasets. In France, elections data was accessed through the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In France, elections data which were considered for the study include Presidential, Legislative, and European elections results. In South Africa, elections data was accessed from the Electoral

Commission of South Africa (IEC). South African elections data considered for the study were national and provincial elections results.

Elections data were accessed through the French Ministry of the Interior (Ministère de L'intérieur) and the Independent Electoral Commission of South Africa. They are the latest and highest resolution data for elections in both countries. They are also the most authoritative source of elections data in each country. In France, the data was analysed at the department and commune level. In departments of Hauts-de-France (Somme, Pas-de-Calais, and Nord), commune level data was used in order to include the 80 communes of Somme, 62 communes of Pas-de-Calais and 59 communes of Nord (Ministère de L'intérieur, 2020b). In South Africa, the data for national elections was analysed at the national, provincial, and voting district level. In the North West, elections data at the voting district level was primarily used. According to the IEC, voting districts are delimited with the assistance of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in order to minimise fraud, maximise access to voting stations, and account for population density in rural versus urban districts (IEC, 2020b).

Since elections data were primarily used to identify the study location and serve a more descriptive purpose, the sources listed above were selected for their reliability and completeness. For both countries, these datasets represent the most accurate and authoritative data, including all registered voters, at the resolution required for the study.

Elections Surveys

Elections surveys and polls are conducted by IPSOS in France and South Africa. The surveys and polls field questions on political leaders, local government, personalities, and the president before, during and after elections. In 2018, IPSOS conducted a panel study of more than 1000

people (per country) on populism. The panel evaluated 'system is failing' sentiment, the efficacy of government and specific political leaders, and political discontent e.g., self-positioning on the political spectrum.

Mapping

Maps play a fundamental role in the descriptive aspects of this project by facilitating the aggregation of spatial and temporal elections data and supporting the analysis of meaningful patterns in electoral outcomes. In a purely functionalist sense, maps are a 'conventionalised picture of the Earth's pattern as seen from above' (Raisz, 1948, xi). However, they are more than representations. Semiotic readings of maps highlight their utility as a discursive tool. On one hand, nationalist political discourses can leverage maps to operationalise nationalism by providing evidence of the eternal existence of 'the nation' or as a signifier of constant anxiety about territorial loss (Batuman, 2010, 220). On the other hand, 'counter-mapping' deploys maps as "a radical reunification of seemingly politically disparate efforts such as shared opposition to the state" (Bryan, 2011, 236). From these examples, we see how maps can be used as both a tool for government and a means for people who want to change the way we think about the world – to contemplate possible future scenarios (Dodge, 2015, 289; Dorling 1998, 287).

In the context of this thesis, maps take on a metaphysical function – at once exposing the boundaries of the neoliberal state (in many ways defined by the accumulation strategy of the state) and the reality of emergent working class contestations of these arrangements. Prior to my field research, I developed GIS maps of populist voting outcomes in France and South Africa. In order to populate my maps, I used a GIS mapping platform (ArcGIS by Esri) in conjunction

with publicly available national elections data from administrative datasets in France and South Africa. While GIS maps revealed spatial patterns of voting in France and South Africa, these depictions and their attendant relationships 'occur' in a virtual environment devoid of sensory engagement with the 'real world' and limited to only to what is available in the database and the user's brain (Goodchild, 2015, 320). Consequently, the patterns emerging in my GIS maps were used as a basis for identifying target areas and a population sub group (workers) who became central to my analysis.

Qualitative Research Methods

The quantitative aspects of the study, which produced a spatial depiction of voting outcomes, only offer a partial picture of populist electoral politics. The qualitative aspects of the research thus follow from an acknowledgment of the potential for a "fetishized, master concept of scale" and bearing in mind that scale is not self - evident but socially constructed (Marston et al, 2005, 116 -117; Leitner and Miller, 2006; Nijman 2007; Sack, 1997).

In order to overcome the spatial issues inherent to this study, and to geographical research more broadly, I leveraged complementary qualitative methods as a 'vital check against the unguarded surety of theoretical abstraction' (Marston et al, 2005). My observations and the resultant (substantive) arguments of the thesis are thus grounded in field research including the structured and semi-structured interviews with my interlocutors, focus groups, archival data, and discourse analysis of publications by media and populist parties in France and South Africa. These methods account for questions of experience, meaning, and perspective underpinning demand-side populist politics (Creswell, 2013).

Field Research

The field research for the study was undertaken in France and South Africa. Recent years have seen more calls for critical and 'primary fieldwork' informed research in Political Geography. The basis of these exhortations, and the thrust of my own time in the field, come from a belief that there is an over reliance on secondary data sources in political geography which limits analysis of the ways in which "political processes and dynamics play out on the ground" (Woon, 2012, 31). Through my time interacting with various field sites across France and South Africa, including virtual and in-person research, I was able to generate distinct case studies. The case studies arising from my field research exemplify the potential for generalisability while paying attention to limitations and distinctiveness created by local experiences of processes and structures (such as race, class, and elections) which I examined in relation to contemporary populist electoral politics (Flyvbjerg, 2006, 219).

Field research was especially suited to the research design not only for analysing populism as it changes or remains similar between contexts but also for interrogating the causal power and constitutive effect of place. Ultimately, my field research, and case studies, underpin the central tenet of the study: context matters and is created out of and fashioned by multiscale relations which do not emerge *sui generis* (on their own) (Castree, 2005, 541).

France

GIS mapping revealed the spatial distribution of populist electoral politics in France and supported the identification of target areas and population sub groups (workers) for the study. Based on the mapping exercise my fieldwork was conducted in the north-eastern Region of France (Hauts-de-France), in Departments along the border with Belgium and Germany,

including Lille, Aisne, Nord, Oise, Pas de Calais, and Somme. The North of France is the site of a mix of geographically pertinent topics such as fascism, bordering, migration and refugee studies as well as globalization which are described in the following sections.

Apart from its population size (being the third most populous region in the country) Hauts de France is the site of a rich political, social, and economic history. Historically, parts of Nord and Pas de Calais were attached to Nazi military administration during the German occupation. Contemporary Hauts-de-France was created by territorial reform in 2014 when the National Assembly opted to combine France's 22 regions into 15, amidst public expenditure cuts (French Republic, 2014). Pas de Calais gained international attention amidst the establishment and forced eviction of the country's largest refugee and migrant encampment, the 'Calais Jungle'. The area continues to be the site of various informal settlements where 'anybody you talk to will have at least one account of being physically assaulted by the (French) police' (Dutton, 2018).

In the Somme Department, is a formerly industrial town named Amiens. Amiens is also a location of heightened political activity; it is the birth place of French President Emmanuel Macron and was hotly contested by the REM and National Rally during both the Presidential and European Parliament elections in 2017 and 2019 respectively. In terms of the mediating power of globalisation, Hauts de France has seen its share of deindustrialisation and out migration of once bustling factories and industry. Amid growing unemployment rates exacerbated by factory closures such as the Whirlpool tumble-dryer factory, voters in Amiens have become increasingly "disillusioned . . .tempted by protest votes and (feeling that they) have been abandoned" (Rose, 2019).

South Africa

Field research in South Africa was conducted in the north-eastern region of the country. The North Eat region of South Africa shares much in common with my field research area in the North of France. For example, the provinces of Limpopo and the North West Province, which are along the border(s) with Botswana, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique, are also the site of significant social, political, and economic 'moments' in South African history. Much like the North of France, Limpopo province is the site of extensive ranching and mining operations including copper, gold and platinum metals owned by Anglo American Platinum. The province is also the home of EFF leader, Julius Malema.

The North West province also boasts several large mining and industrial operations. In 2012, South African security forces shot and killed dozens of independent, striking miners at Marikana Mines in the North Western Province. This event is described as the "single most lethal use of force by South African security forces against civilians since 1960" (Bureau of Investigative Journalism, 2019). I will also conduct interviews in Johannesburg district (Gauteng province) which is landlocked by Limpopo and the North West Province. The Johannesburg district had one of the highest rates of votes in favour of the EFF in the 2019 Parliamentary elections.

Structured (Elite) Interviews

I conducted a total of 35 structured interviews with elite participants. 15 of the structured interviews were conducted in France and 20 were conducted in South Africa. These structured interviews included Members of Parliament in South Africa, leaders of the RN and EFF in the regions of Hauts de France, the North West, Limpopo, and Gauteng Province as well as

opposition parties, trade union representatives, academics, political commentators, and journalists in both countries. A full list of interview participants is included in the reference section of this work. I endeavoured to ask the same questions in France and South Africa, in order to interrogate the comparability of each context and to allow for a fluid comparison of the RN in France and the EFF in South Africa. I interpreted the data according to the principles of 'grounded theory' – using systematic, inductive procedures to generate insights grounded in the views expressed by the study participants (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The coding of these interviews was manual.

Despite the methodological issues associated with interviewing elites (such as access, positionality, and power) conducting interviews with political leaders, journalists, and other public officials was a necessary part of the work. Indeed postgraduate, and postdoctoral researchers have increasingly turned their attention to conducting interviews with despite the limitations associated with this method (Berry, 2002, 679). Following from Harvey (2010), I developed and conducted my structured interviews in consideration of flexibility in research design and implementation, transparent communication, and etiquette (2010, 193).

The mediating influences of access and power in elite interviews found full expression during my field research. On one hand, I contended with the "messy reality" of accessing elite interviews including through networks, chance, or connections via snowballing method (McDowell, 1998). On the other hand, I leveraged my own positionality, through my affiliation to the University, to "both open and close doors to elite interviews" (ibid, 1998, 2136).

In terms of etiquette, briefing elite interviewees on who I am, the nature of my research, timing and funding of the project was communicated in writing prior to the interview and through the participant information sheet. AT the onset, safety was an embedded issue in conducting interviews. However, the rise of COVID-19 in 2020, shortly before my field research in South Africa, and the subsequent sweeping lockdowns across the globe changed the nature of these considerations as in-person interviews were rescheduled to online (WhatsApp, Zoom, phone) forums. Instead of negotiating the dynamics of visits to professional spaces (including interviewee homes and offices), my concern about safety shifted to secure online platforms, times, and arrangements when my interviewees were unlikely to be interrupted by colleagues or be less willing to share sensitive information for fear of being overheard by staff (Dexter, 2006, 48).

Another consideration in my interviews, particularly those with elites, was timing. I conducted elite interviews once the preliminary (semi structured interviews) and pilot field research were close to completion. This allowed for initial data analysis and the identification of more cogent themes in the research as a way to maximise the respondent's time by ensuring there are no gaps in knowledge which may 'sour' the interview (Richards, 1996).

Throughout all 35 elite interviews, in France and in South Africa, I had to remain aware of the oft overlooked issues related to dissemination. Oglesby (2009, 23) offers a vital reflection on this aspect from her own experience in post-war Guatemala, interviewing the 'oligarchs' in that country's sugar industry. She notes that while research can be intended for the public good and the benefit of communities who are involved in its production, conducting interviews with elites, and ultimately sharing results with them may in fact "serve to sharpen the very mechanisms of control we supposedly intend to critique" (Olgesby, 2009, 25). To the extent that results can be

used by elite interviewees to further their own interests or on the other hand, be used by community based respondents / key informants to dismiss or denigrate elite interests. On this basis, I ensured that the research was intrinsically objective, that the names and information from other interviews remained private, and that the elite interviewees had the option of anonymity.

A final reflection which Oglesby encourages is related to translation. In her own work, the use of a Spanish word 'desalojo' (eviction) carried with it political connotations for elites which caused considerable scrutiny (2009). As my own work traverses two countries with different languages, a phenomenological \Foucauldian approach to concepts and terms used in the interviews, not the least of which is 'populism', will be critical.

Semi Structured Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

Valentine (2005) highlights an often-overlooked aspect of the qualitative, semi-structured interview which is that it is not intended to be representative. While the descriptive part of this project is mixed methods, my analysis and interpretation are predominantly qualitative. My semi structured interviews and focus groups were not based on a representative sample of all voters in Hauts de France, the North West Province, Limpopo, or Gauteng. Instead, the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions allowed me to examine the very discreet experiences and political subjectivities of my interlocutors. These findings were ultimately efficient insofar as they were contextual and lent a richness to the study which quantitative data alone would not have achieved (Valentine, 2005, 111; Hay, 2016, 5). Through the duration of the study including a pilot field research visit to France in August – October 2019 and field research in South Africa from March 2020 – December 2021, I conducted a total of 41 semi-structured interviews and 3 focus group discussions including with members of the RN in France, the EFF in South Africa,

youth campaigners, factory and mineworkers in both countries, domestic workers, volunteers, and activists in France and South Africa. Focus group discussions were held in France, supported by a translator, with *Les Jeunes Insoumis, L'auberge Des Migrants, and Les Gillets Jaunes* (the Yellow Vest Movement). A full list of interview participants, including focus group discussants, is included in the references section of this work.

Semi-structured interviews were primarily held with working class members of the RN and EFF including those who were of voting age prior to 1990 and those who have joined the movement in the contemporary dispensation from 1990 – 2019. The scope of age members in the regions was important for the spatio-historical considerations of the study and interviewees were selected based on their residence in the study area for this reason. The interview element of my field research relied on snowballing. Questions were open-ended relying heavily on the respondent's narrative about their own social and political experiences. This method supported my own endeavour to open the conceptual space of the study, to make the analysis iterative and to avoid a static and ahistorical representation of regional identities (Jones and MacLeod, 2004; Paasi, 2009).

True to the flexibility of my semi-structured interviews, the participant scope changed after following a pilot research study in the North of France. By March 2020, my scope was characterised by semi-structured interviews with French and South African nationals living in areas where the RN and EFF have increased their support most dramatically since 2012. These included youth campaigners, activists, and workers who were not necessarily affiliated to the RN and EFF. However, my interviewees all share one commonality which is their direct participation in the legislative and presidential elections in France and the General Election in South Africa between 2012 – 2019.

Following a redefinition of my participant pool, I aimed to give equal treatment to the views of my interlocutors, contemporary populism theory, and my own qualitative analysis of government and other public documents. As a result, my interlocutors were not a homogenous group and their demographics varied in both countries. In terms of geographic location, I spoke to 41 respondents in urban, rural, and de-industrialised parts of Hauts de France, Paris, Limpopo, Gauteng, and the North West Province. In terms of age, I spoke with people across generations from students who experienced the elections from the vantage point of university campuses to a grandparent in (rural Limpopo) who voted in South Africa's first democratic election in 1994. In terms of political party affiliation, I conducted semi-structured interviews and focus groups with 25 respondents living, working, and voting in areas where the RN and EFF have increased their support but who were not aligned to the parties – including student and other leaders attached to the incumbent ruling party/leadership.

Semi structured interviews offer a unique opportunity for interchange within the research process. While they are arranged around a set of (somewhat) predetermined questions (which are set by the researcher), their conversational nature allows participants to explore issues which they feel are important. In this way, the semi structured interviews enlightened salient issues which initially seemed tangential in the initial research plan.

In terms of interview questions, my initial questions were based on verifying whether potential participants fit the sample and establishing consent for an interview. Semi-structured interview questions then included: "What does being a citizen of (France / South Africa) mean to you", "Do you feel that (France / South Africa) has changed in the past 5 years, if so how", "Do you

feel that (Hauts de France / Limpopo/ NW Province / Johannesburg district) has changed in the past 5 years, if so how", "Is there a difference between political parties in (France/ South Africa) if so, what?" and "what is the main issue affecting people in (Hauts de France/Limpopo/ NW Province/ Johannesburg district) and how is this different to (Paris/Johannesburg/Cape Town) for example".

Participants for semi-structured interviews were accessed through known channels, community-based organizations, and civil society groups in France and South Africa as well as direct outreach to political party offices and their representatives. Having left room for on-site recruitment and snowballing (chain sampling): I was able to recruit additional research participants both through approaching potential participants in the field and through asking for referrals from existing key informants (Krueger, 1988, 94).

Discourse Analysis

The discourse analysis employed in this study follows the Foucauldian approach to critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992). Having identified a breadth of publications by media and populist parties in France and South Africa, I wanted to evaluate populist electoral politics with critical consideration of how both language, images, and practice yield social consequences such as power and identity creation. I was able to identify patterns of statements and practices across these media and political party publications including a persistently militarised discourse which produced the findings in *Chapter 6* of this work.

Following from Foucault, I examined how meaning is communicated by media and populist parties through representation (text) as well as behaviour (as populist parties enact power)

(Aitken and Craine, 2009). I pushed this analysis further, bringing systems of representation in the real world in conversation with the literatures in geography and contemporary populism theory, to interrogate how particular knowledge of the world (such as the populist ideology) can becomes common sense or dominant, while silencing other interpretations (ibid, 2009).

Source materials for this analysis will be the elections manifestos of the National Rally and the EFF and the unit of analysis will be paragraphs as they are objectively traceable distinctions between arguments (Rooduijn and Pauwels, 2011, 1272). This selection seems to belie the question of audience within discourse analysis as many voters don't necessarily read elections manifestos and may not be aware of their content. However, manifestos are important and most practical in this study for three reasons. First, they are authoritative documents which give a strong overview of the ideas of parties. In practice, politicians are bound to the policy promises in their election manifesto (Laver and Garry, 2000: 620). Second, they can be reasonably compared between countries and over time. Third, along the lines of previous studies, the analysis of manifestos seems to 'catch' populism as far as they can be coded and scored for populist policies by operationalizing the core tenets of populism (people, elite and general will).

Manual coding was followed by an iterative analysis of the conditions under which the document was produced: the context, practices, attitudes and experiences about the people, elites, and the popular will i.e., Populism which it deploys. This second step was an important interpretive part of the analysis, involving closer semantic scrutiny of the rhetoric and turns of phrase used in the manifestos to uncover the narrative structures, issue framings, and storylines deployed by populist parties to normalize (and certainly mobilize) certain lines of thought and action (Fischer and Forester, 1993, 21 – 22).

Archival Research

Archival data was vital for accessing visual images and interviews. These were used for the spatio-historical aspects of the study as well as comparing historical findings with the contemporary populist scopic regime[8]. I accessed the archival data (videos, photographs, interviews) for this research through online archives and museums.

Archives on South African history were accessed through the African Activist Archive at Michigan State University, South African History Online, and archives held by the Nelson Mandela Foundation including reports produced by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and interviews with first hand witnesses of the violence of the 1980s and early 1990s conducted by Padraig O'Malley.

At Tate Modern, in London, I was able to access a collection of images of Black South African workers taken in 1965 – 1975 by David Goldblatt (Goldblatt, 1975) and Ernest Cole – South Africa's first Black freelance photographer (Cole, 1965). Archival documents on the military and industrial history of northern France were accessed through the *Musée Somme 1916* in Albert, France. I also consulted over 2,000 video sources coded as "Front National", "Rassemblement National", "Le Pen" , "EFF" or "Malema" from various independent news broadcasters in Europe and ENCA – a 24 hour news channel headquartered in and reporting on South Africa – which is the most watched News channel in the country.

[8] A scopic regime, or visual culture, refers to the post-modern visual order which operates on pre-conceived discourses, processes of signification and representation which determine the dominant protocols of seeing, being and knowing in a particular discursive community. See: Rose, G., 2014. On the relation between 'visual research methods' and contemporary visual culture. *The sociological review*, *62*(1), pp.24-46.

Ethics and Safety

For a detailed review of the ethical considerations and safety mechanisms applied to this project please see the CUREC /1A Checklist (*appendices*). The study has ethical clearance through the Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) reference SOGE 1A-19-172.

Since the nature of the project is inherently political and touches on sensitive issues this was the major ethical consideration. To depoliticise the project (which is for academic purpose not political ends) I made the objectives of the project abundantly clear to my interlocutors. Including making it clear that I have no political affiliations in either country as well as being upfront about the funding for the project. To both protect all respondents as well as specifically to build a rapport with elite interviewees, the project information sheet, anonymization and establishing informed consent were critical. Participants were explicitly informed of their right to terminate the interview at any time and prohibit use of any information they had provided for the project. This included the right to withdraw after the interview and not have any data published.

All data collected during field research stored on a password protected device with online backup – this procedure was conceived in collaboration with the School of Geography and the Environment (SoGE) Department's protocol and the CUREC guidelines. As an additional step, in consideration of the snowballing recruitment method, I did not share personal information about or between participants in the study.

Data Protection

All interviews were recorded and stored in a secure online server (detailed in full within the CUREC Checklist submitted for the ethical clearance of this study). The laptop where interviews were transcribed or recorded was password protected and encrypted. However, a contingency was set in place to mediate hardware loss, damage, or compromise. I used a secured online storage platform for this purpose as well as keeping my own reflections in a separate field research notebook.

Positionality

It is impossible to claim true objectivity in social science research because social science research is invariably coloured by the subjective experiences, personal beliefs, and life circumstances of the researcher and imbued with the interpretation(s) of the researcher. I must therefore turn to questions of bias, objectivity, and positionality.

In conducting and writing this research, I have developed a political geography of populism across two countries relying significantly on the stories, narratives, and political subjectivities of my interlocutors. However, it would be inaccurate to suggest that the 'story' coming out of these interactions tells itself. I have had to interpret, analyse, and retell this 'story' in the context of my own academic training and experiences and through the lens of my own conversations with the literature. I therefore aim to be transparent throughout the work about the questions, methods, and interpretations of my findings. This was especially relevant in the selection of my case studies (France and South Africa) where my personal interest, experience, and connections to both countries made this Doctoral work appealing. I discuss these connections in the Introduction (see: Case Studies) of the work.

Despite my relationship to France and South Africa, I have allowed myself to be reflexive (twice changing the scope of my participant pool and twice reframing the central question of my research) in response to the views emerging from conversation in the field and engagement with broader literature. Most profoundly, in beginning this work my approach to populism was defined by the "prevailing orthodoxy in contemporary populism scholarship to dismiss populism as 'hype over substance'" (which I now critique at length in the introduction and literature Chapters of this thesis). I was especially dismissive of populism as a robust ideology from my undergraduate training in political science and my personal memory watching the rise of Julius Malema's often 'disruptive' and radical left politics as a high school student in a private (and predominantly white) school in South Africa. In contending with these biases and subjectivities, I have been prepared to accept the views of others (most often by reading their work) and adjusting my own research in response.

Translator(s)

In France, I hired a translator in the community in order to gain access to certain areas or to ensure that my interpretation of the language was accurate, as many of my interlocutors spoke no English. This relationship was formalised through a contract establishing hours, remuneration and termination of the relationship which were all discussed and signed prior to beginning the work. Hiring a translator will require ensuring that the recruit can help with negotiating access to the community (especially in South African townships) and translation without reinforcing gatekeeping. Ultimately, being honest about the purpose of my research and open about the objectives of the study (as an academic not political exercise) was key to all my interactions in the field.

Dissemination

Dissemination of the thesis will be implemented in line with the audience. I plan to either share access to the full thesis and any associated publications with my interlocutors or offer summaries of how participant data was used, especially where literacy levels are low.

Chapter 4: A Contemporary Populist Turn

Situating the EFF and the RN as Populist Parties

> *all discourse is aimed at the production of certain effects in its recipients and is launched from some tendentious 'subject position'. we might conclude with the Greek sophists that everything we say is really a matter of rhetorical performance with which questions of truth or cognition are subordinates. If this is so then all (discourse) language is ideological.*
>
> *Eagleton, T., 1983. Power and the Knowledge in 'The Lifted Veil'. Literature and History, 9(1), p.53*

Introduction

In *Chapter 2: Literature*, I discuss the genealogy of populism theory interrogating the contributions of early populism studies while arguing that it has left several gaps including in a theorisation of demand side factors of populism. In particular, I call attention to the major contributions of early populism studies towards a typology (one people, one elite, one will) and ontological approach to populism which has created a strong foundation for contemporary research and which is operationalised in this work. Following from scholarly agreement about the core tenets of populism (one people, one elite, one will), this Chapter aims to situate the Rassemblement National (RN) and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) as populist parties in contemporary politics whose success relies on and is situated within the local space in which the RN and EFF operate. The chapter considers the RN and EFF's construction of one 'elite' to be struggled against, one 'people' whose interests they attempt to represent in the democratic-electoral space,

and the party's conceptualisation of an unmediated 'general will' as evidence for arguing that the RN and EFF espouse a distinctly populist politics.

Throughout the Chapter, I call attention to the gaps in the academic literature surrounding populism which is due in no small part to a growing orthodoxy which dismisses populist politics as insubstantial, and which consequently undermines the electoral impulses giving rise to populist politics globally. Along these lines, the Chapter considers the RN and EFF's mobilisation of protest as a discursive tool, to demonstrate the extent to which populism has developed and evolved towards a 'thick' ideology - comparable to liberalism and conservatism – in response to the experiences of 'ordinary people' (Freeden, 1996; Schroeder, 2020).

Populism is best understood in terms of three core conceptions: the people, the elite as a separate caste, and the general will. First, the 'people', although generally a flexible construction, tends to refer to 'common people'. Second, populists promote the idea that elites are fundamentally corrupt and that they disregard the needs of the so-called "pure people" (Mudde, 2004, 543). The 'elite' connotes a moral claim. It refers to some mix or heterogeneous grouping of 'corrupt elite' including the political establishment, the economic and cultural elite (ibid). Populists make a further moral distinction insofar as they pit the 'pure people' against a corrupt elite. This is done in order to reinforce the populist coup de grace: the idea that a general will exists. Third, the 'general will' alludes to the work of famed philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) on *volonté general* (general will) versus *volonté de tous* (will of all). The former refers to one, unmediated articulation of common interests while the latter refers to a range of interests expressed at a given time. Under the Populist lens, the general will can be articulated without the mediation of established mechanisms of liberal democracy (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017,16). As such, the populist reinforcement of an unmediated and general will is a blistering criticism of

traditional political parties, state bureaucracies, professional politicians and technocratic expertise structured to represent the will of all i.e., a range of popular interests (Moffitt and Tormey, 2014, 391). This latter aspect has contributed to a pattern of dismissing populist politics and the consequential under theorisation of populist electoral politics across disciplines, including geography.

Despite the under theorisation of populist geographies, there is a seemingly incalculable diversity of parties, policies, and actors which can now be described as 'populist' across the globe. Several scholars have advanced definitions of populism and what constitute evidence of including political style, electoral strategy, and organisational form. Moffitt and Tormey (2014, 386) introduce the perspective of populism as a political style, focusing on the performative elements of populist politics and how these create political relationships. Mudde (2007, 543) identifies a clientelist populism which influences the electoral calculus through 'quickly pleasing' voters. Inspired by Sartori's guidelines for concept analysis, Weyland (2001, 13) approaches populism as an organisational form where the populist ruler is 'effectively an organization'. Similarly, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) and Panizza (2005, 3) approach populism as an anti-status quo discourse that "simplifies the political space by symbolically dividing the people against its other". However, this research focuses on political parties which can be considered as populist due to their articulation of a distinctly populist discourse i.e., claims to 'one people', 'one will', and 'one leader'. My definition of populism along these lines, and in relation to early populism theory is discussed in detail in *Chapter 2* of the thesis. In *Chapter 4*, I draw on this typology to argue that the RN and EFF can be considered and compared as populist parties.

Although early populism theory flourished in mainland Europe and the Americas, these approaches depart from a theoretical and empirical tradition which is hamstrung first by an

underlying notion that populism is a set of politics we disagree with and second by an empirical over reliance on populism in Europe and the Americas. This is a tradition which persists in mainstream early populism theory despite the rise of populist electoral politics in democracies across Western Europe, Asia, and Africa. It is a persisting 'separateness' which the case studies mobilised in this work aim to overcome.

Several studies in political geography have attempted to contribute to defining populism by arguing for additional instances of observable populism including the clientelist politics of Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party (Hsu, 2009, 296) and the material produced by Belgium's Vlams Blok (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007, 319). However, these empirical studies only add to an exhaustive list of characteristics which we can identify as populist politics – compounding the definitional issues associated with the term 'populism' – such as the example of Peter Wiles' 24 criteria for "a genuine populist movement" (Berlin et al, 1968, 144). Together, these observations lack a conceptual core within which to centre an otherwise heterogenous group of characteristics. This work focuses instead on the rise of populism across geographies which suggests that populism has a contextually transcendental quality making it attractive to and applicable in various political spaces. The foremost question is who the people are to whom populism refers and how the politicization of place either reinforces their belonging within the 'demos' or situates them outside of democratic normativity.

The dawn of the RN and the birth of the EFF

The *Rassemblement National (RN)* and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) were founded in 1972 France and 2013 South Africa respectively. Despite the time and space which separates

their formation, the RN and EFF demonstrate a populist politics which is not dissimilar in terms of its conception of the people, the elite, and 'the will of all' and the ways in which these populist claims are leveraged and mobilised to create 'the people' and a discreet enemy against which 'the people' must rally. Through the launch of the RN and EFF and the discourse which has underpinned the parties' establishment, one can trace a similar conceptualisation of 'the people' and a common enemy i.e., the 'elite other'. Both of which are a political construct at once created by the neoliberal state, symbolically constituted through the "relations of antagonism" once referenced by Panizza in his preeminent *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy* (2005, 5), and agitated by populist parties across the global North and the global South.

During the Rally's early years, a focal point of its politics was the preservation of French identity. The RN achieved this by presenting itself as an ostracised party "excluded from the corridors of French power" by the established "band of four" in French politics (Davies, 2012, 4-10). The Rally's discourse has evolved along these lines, focusing foremost on the plight of "ordinary French people" (ibid, 2012, 4-10). According to the RN, the *Rassamblement pour Republique* (RPR), *Union pour la Democratie Francais* (UDF), *Parti Socialist* (PS) and *Parti Communiste Francais* (PCF) represent a "corrupt oligarchy of parties at the centre of French politics" (ibid). Consequently, the RN focused on what it saw as injustices in the day to day lives of French citizens – a victimised class with whom the party empathised (Birenbaum, 1991).

In South Africa the rise of the EFF, fully 20 years after the RN solidified its place in French politics, followed an analogous set of discursive claims to preserving identity and rallying against establishmentarian politics and their antagonisms in the lives of 'ordinary people'. The Economic Freedom Fighters were established by ousted senior officials of South Africa's ruling party (the African National Congress), Julius Malema and Floyd Shivambu. The EFF immediately (if not

circumstantially) positioned itself as an anti-establishment party, calling the ruling ANC "a corrupt Kingdom ruled by (then President of the ANC) Zuma" (Ngcobo, 2013). The party quickly gained national media attention bemoaning the "elite pact" which they credit with the socio-political failings of South Africa's post-apartheid democracy (ibid, 2013). In line with the victimised class of Frenchmen (and women) who the RN claimed to represent, the EFF mobilised the domestic and mineworker sartorial tropes as a key imaginary in their politics. At its first sitting in the South African National Assembly, EFF party representatives wore uniforms associated with domestic workers saying:

> We are trying to tell people that we are from the Economic Freedom Fighters, we are here for the workers and the poor. We are sending a message to say that the Parliament for the people is not a Parliament for the elite. So, the workers at home, when they see us dressed like this, they will know they are represented." (Manikana and Underhill, 2014)

Although neither the RN nor the EFF has necessarily pronounced themselves to be "populist", the populist typology which is a consistent thread in both party's discourse (in relation to the people, the elite, and the general will) leaves little question about this claim.

In a 2017 interview with NPR, Marine Le Pen is quoted as saying:

> "what is populism? If it's someone who wants to defend the government for the people, of the people, by the people, then yes, I'm a populist" [9]

[9] NPR. 2017. France's Marine Le Pen contends populism is the future.

By styling themselves as protest parties - apart from the reigning political system – in both their discourse and their attire, the RN and EFF's political messaging is undoubtedly populist.

For its own part, the Rally has asserted itself as 'the second political force' in France and the 'only authentic opposition movement'. Its communication material promotes an agenda which is markedly "against the fifth republic as a political regime and the political parties that operate within it" (Davies, 2012). According to Davies "the feeling is that many French voters are attracted to the RN precisely because it is new, different, and not a 'traditional' political party and in this sense, it has succeeded the PCF as the main receptacle of the protest vote" (ibid, 2012). Similarly, the commander in chief of the EFF, Julius Malema, contends that the party is a foil to the South African political elite whom he accuses of treating the Economic Freedom Fighters as poorly as they treat their domestic workers at home (Pillay, 2014).

By the late 1990s and early 2000s the Rally had become the third largest political force in France, after the Socialists and the Gaullists (DeClair, 1999, 6) and the EFF rose to chief opposition party in mainstays of the ruling ANC in parts of Limpopo and the Northwestern Province, within two national elections. This brief exposition supports Oscar Reyes and Worsley's observations that the 'people' are a deterministic notion whose communal identity is determined by a nominal process of either embracing or weaning from "existing attachments" in the political space (Reyes, 2005, 99; Worsely, 1969. 212). Yet, extent to which this observation is operationalised by populist political parties remains understudied in great part due to a persistent dismissal of populist regimes as legitimate political organisations on one hand and of populism as a substantive political ideology on the other.

Whether the work of preeminent western political theorists or South African political scientists, the recent development of literatures surrounding the contemporary populist turn leave a challenge for new populism research to overcome, as this work aims to do, in offering a sustained treatment of the populist phenomenon in its own right. This challenge includes resolving the question of whether populism can only ever be studied beyond the terms of its attachment to more consolidated ideological frameworks such as conservatism or liberalism. This challenge is evident in recent literatures surrounding the RN and EFF.

One can hardly study the ideological tenets of populism without referencing the work of famed US-based Dutch academic, Cas Mudde whose ground-breaking account of the Populist Zeitgeist (2004) has become widely recognised as a launching pad for the study of populism particularly in the political science literature. Mudde asserts that populism is a "thin centred ideology. . .a body of normative ideas about the nature of man and society. . . a view of how the world is and should be . . . which necessarily appears attached to other ideological elements which are crucial for the promotion of political projects that are appealing to a broader public" (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017, 4). Although Mudde does not dismiss populism as lacking an ideology (a world view), this writing suggests that the populist ideology only addresses parts of the political agenda and so it relies on a 'host ideology' championed by the incumbent political grouping e.g., France's conservative right and socialist left or South Africa's post democratic, liberal left.

Monzat's publication, *Enquêtes sur la Droite Extreme* further proves how early academic work was certainly built around this scaffolding. Loosely translated, he claims the RN represents "a subversive right: devoid of real doctrinal coherency and ready to exploit any signs of social cultural or political malaise in France" (1992). Indeed, the EFF's ability to transform seemingly inconsequential disputes over appropriate parliamentary attire into broader debates about the

political establishment and decoloniality in South Africa also seems to draw its inspiration from this approach. In 2014, Malema successfully argued that his party representatives were barred from wearing their chosen domestic worker uniform to meetings of the legislature because the ruling party treating them like domestic staff (Pillay, 2014). According to Malema, in contrast to the ANC, his party were "defying colonialist decorum" (ibid, 2014). However, a conceptualisation of populism structured along these lines must overcome the unavoidable extent to which such a theorisation limits our scope for a sustained examination of populism. As Müller notes, this theorization buttresses the pathological view of populism as 'politics we don't agree with' (Müller, 2017, 7).

The impact of a bomb in (French) politics

It can be argued that substantive studies of populist, and populist electoral politics, take an antagonistic thrust insofar as they seem to be pursued only when populism threatens or intersects directly with the hegemony of "thick" neoliberal ideology. Along these lines, a minimal amount of literature exists on the early years of the Rally as a political force (in the 1980's). Instead, much of the literature focuses on gendered and personality-focused analysis of the Rally's leader, Jean Marie Le Pen, and other senior leaders of the party including in Les Hommes de l'extreme Droite by Alain Rollat (1984), Le Cas Le Pen by Eric Roussel (1985) and Au Front by Anne Tristan (Tristan, 1987). While Le Pen certainly played a major role in the Rally's evolution into a political force within French politics in the late 70s, the organization only started to gain attention as a political contender during the Dreux municipal elections of 1983. Owing to an alliance with more established right wing and conservative parties, the Rally for the Republic and the Union for French democracy, the RN's foray into the field "had the impact of a bomb in French politics" (DeClair, 1999, 3).

It is only after the RN branched out, forming coalition with other established parties, in 1995 that "for the first time in its history it was a serious contender in a number of important towns and cities" (Marcus, 1996, 308). This pattern is evidenced by the seemingly incalculable number of publications relating to the party and the markedly new direction of these observations (beyond personality) in that time. For example, it was in 1996 that Nonna Mayer and Pascal Perrineau first reviewed the party's position along the French political spectrum and analysed whether the Rally's rhetoric was revolutionary in French politics (Taguieff, 1996, 173-194).

A meteoric debut in South African politics

Similar to early studies of the RN, emerging research on the EFF does not present a sustained focus on the substance of the party's politics or a robust interrogation of the conditions and electoral calculus 'on the ground' that have allowed its success until as much as three years after the EFF first launched. Nearly three years after the EFF made its 'meteoric' debut in South African politics, a publication in the Journal of African Elections by South African political scientist, Sithembile Mbete, offered the most substantive study of the EFF as a political organization. However, insofar as Mbete applies Moffit and Tormey's (2014) concept of 'political style' to argue that the EFF I "performative" and driven by "rhetoric", it falls short of spearheading a major turn towards understanding the EFF as an ideological contender in the South African political landscape.

The populist electoral calculus

In *Our need of an enlightened electorate,* James E Russel writes:

> *"*herein lies the problem peculiar to democracy . . . in other forms of government leaders are set apart by birth or divine right . . . the new democratic ideal (is) to lift the whole mass to make them fit to rule and be ruled by leaders of their own choosing. The safety of a democratic state therefore rests in its final analysis upon an enlightened boy of citizens*"* [10]

A view of populist electoral support which is conceived along the lines of an enlightened voting public, that is one which does not undermine the integrity of voters by dismissing the voting calculus entirely, should be concerned with understanding both the supply *and* demand side of populism.

Electoral preferences, as evidenced by polling and survey data during elections in France and South Africa, indicate an enlightened voting public and a populist electoral calculus increasing in number and scope in response to the Rally and the EFF's ideology. First, survey data from the 1995 French Presidential election underline the sense of crisis and the pessimism of Le Pen's voters (Marcus, 1996, 308). Second, a poll during the same election suggested that 75 percent of his supporters classed themselves as underprivileged (Shields, 2018, 543). More unemployed voters opted for Le Pen than any other candidate. Third, policy issues related to immigration figured prominently among the concerns of Le Pen's voters as did unemployment and insecurity

[10] Russell, J.E., 1922. Our Need of an Enlightened Electorate. Journal of Education, 96(5), pp.119-121.

(ibid). Similarly, in South Africa, elections polls suggest that voters in that country are also making sophisticated calculations based on party campaigns and policies. It is worth noting how this process of weighing preferences in South Africa shows up in vote splitting between parties at the national and local level. For example, in the highly contested 2014 national election, the incumbent ANC secured 54.92% of the vote in a national poll compared to 53.59% in the provincial poll. While the opposition accrued 30.78% in the local election in contrast to its 28.52% of the national vote (Mbete, 2015, 45). In this light, glazing over populist regimes and dismissing any substantive analysis of populism not only reinforces gaps in the literature but it also downplays the integrity of the French and South African voter.

Certainly, a more worthwhile endeavour is to critically examine the populist ideology and how it interacts both with prevailing regimes and voter behaviour. An immediate hurdle here is how rapidly and circumstantially the populist doctrine seems to evolve. Jagers and Walgrave (2007, 323) assert that populism "has no political colour" (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007, 323) while South African Political Scientist, Ebrahim Fakir, maintains that populism is "a hodgepodge of different ideological and political strains" (Fakir, 2014, 5). The policies of the RN and the EFF can be said to support these notions.

For its own part, the RN's policies have ostensibly swung between right of centre and somewhat liberal inclinations from the late 1980s to the most recent French elections. Under Le Pen senior, the former National Front, lauded the European integration project for its benefits to security and the promotion of French nationhood as (white) and European (Davies, 2012, 47). For example, having secured 43% of the vote of the first round municipal elections in Vitrolles, a senior RN deputy, Mégret, was interviewed by Le Monde and said that if he won he would apply the party's policy of national preference to give French nationals housing and social welfare but

not immigrants so as to "incite foreign families who do not live in Vitrolles not to want to come here and to incite those who do live here to leave" (Simmons, 2018, 3). Openly acknowledging that the policy would be "illegal", the Rally's second in command explicitly promised to disobey the law upon election in order to give French citizens preference for housing and social welfare (ibid, 2018). Today, following a passing of the baton from Le Pen Senior to his daughter Marine Le Pen and a renaming of the party, the *Rassemblement National* is against the E.U. Party goes as far as to admonish "the France of Maastricht" which it accuses of "accepting and organising the elimination of its (French) fishermen" (Simmons, 2018).

The socio-economic backdrop of the Rally's policies has also undergone a remarkable about face. Progressing from fiscally conservative policy proposals of the late 1980s – early 1990s, to a policy programme which seemingly advocates for a welfare state by 2017 (Shields, 2018, 547). The party's 2017 election manifesto contains a barrage of "social-justice-oriented proposals" including but not limited to an abolition 2016 labour law which would see French workers retaining a 35 hour work week and offer the lowest earners a cost of living allowance, income tax cuts, increased disability and pension allowances as well as lowering the retirement age to 60 for reinvestment in public services (ibid, 2018). The Rally's somewhat strategic turn towards a left-leaning economic policy agenda with increased economic protectionism, state intervention and social welfarism is a bold reversal of its traditional policies.

In the case of the EFF, a further example of populist ideological opportunism could be argued. The EFF's founding manifesto drew from the race neutral language underpinning the Freedom Charter (EFF, 2013). Within this charterist framework, the EFF advocated along the lines of a South Africa which 'belongs to all who live in it'. The Manifesto, like the Freedom Charter, did not ascribe to a racialised narrative. It certainly did not delineate its nativist stance in the way that

the French Rally has historically done. Conversely, the EFF touted broad messaging including that the national wealth of South Africa (minerals, banking, and industry) "shall be restored to her people". It is only when the EFF formed an unlikely coalition with South African politician and now former EFF cadre, Andile Mngxitama, who wrote the party's subsequent election manifesto, that the EFF became more explicit in its focus on black South Africans and the urgent need for their repossession of the country's natural resources as well as their economic empowerment and ultimately "emancipation" (EFF, 2013).

Despite the extent to which these contributions seem to support prevailing critiques of populism, one can argue that instead of being a "hodgepodge", populist electoral politics have in fact succeeded in evolving in concert with the changing concerns of everyday people (Fakir, 2014,5). French elections data suggest that voters are more worried about impending financial and political crisis today more than ever (Marcus, 1996, 308). Demographic data and elections polls suggest that a majority of Le Pen voters see themselves as underprivileged while unemployment rates and decreasing social welfare nets impact this pool at an alarming rate (Shields, 2018, 543). In fact, more unemployed voters opted for Le Pen than any other candidate in the 2017 elections. As recently as 2018, the World Bank declared South Africa the "most unequal country in the world" (World Bank, 2020).

In a new report on poverty and inequality in South Africa, published by the World Bank, a lead author notes that "there is no country that we have data about where the inequality is higher than South Africa" (Beaubien, 2018). The former head of the African Union, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma maintains that the country faces the "triple challenge of poverty, unemployment and inequality". The World Bank data indicates that South Africa's 1 percent own 70.9 percent of the nation's wealth and the bottom 60 percent of South Africans collectively control only 7

percent of the country's asset (World Bank, 2020). However, data collected by the School of Economic and Business Science proved the data is starkly divided along racial lines as the median income of white South African households is more than triple that of blacks at R16581 and R5445 respectively (Businesses, 2016).

With these outcomes in mind, an alternative explanation of populism as a politics evolving in line with the electoral calculus, is more convincing when one considers populism and populist parties more generally as legitimate participants in the electoral playing field whose discourse varies according to and in line with how the 'people' define both their grievances and their antagonistic relationship with the 'other'. Here, the antagonism can be political, economic, ethnic, religious or any combination of 'elite' interests signifying the distance between the 'people' and achieving plenitude.

Protest as discourse

According to RN expert Harvey Simmons, the RN is especially successful at "inserting their language and terms into the political debate" (Simmons, 2018, 4). However, there is a further point to be made which is that while this content has played a pivotal role in each organization's *initial* entry into the political arena, it is their strategic deployment of populist discourse which has rooted them there and which stands to irreversibly change the political playing field. The concept of discourse features most prominently in the contemporary literature on critical geopolitics (Ó Tuathail, 2004: 82). It was introduced to the field through Dalby's inquiry into contemporary social theory, its preoccupation with language and discourse and how this could be applied to the field of geopolitics. In *Creating the Second World War: The Discourse of Politics* (1990), Dalby evaluates the use of language for political ends (power, hegemony, and ideology).

Most notably, Dalby examines the perennial themes of dualism and dichotomies in western political philosophy and the extent to which they are "linked into how discourses construct their objects of knowledge as other" (ibid, 1990).

Using the 'other' as a starting point, western metaphysics constructs its political conceptions and ideological structures. For example, security is conceptualised in terms of the exclusion of the 'other'. On this basis, we can examine how populists construct the contest between the true and sovereign people and the elite other. On one hand they successfully pit the 'true people' against the elite and on the other hand they employ a conspicuous performance of closeness to ordinary people often presented through the use of colloquial language. This "vocabulary battle" aptly described by Mégret, a senior ranking Deputy in the RN, is a primary throughway for populists to expound their doctrine and policies on a national and regional level (Sarakinsky, 2001, Davies, 2012, 16). The RN and EFF have constructed "the other" primarily through their nativist conception of France and South Africa.

According to the Rally, France is a millenary civilisation i.e., a territorially rooted community brought together by a common history, culture and, less explicitly, a shared ethnic lineage (Davies, 2012, 19). In their youth paper *Volontaire*, the party propagates nativist and nationalist imagery through their use of language such as "sons and daughters of France", "Born in Brittany, Provence, Alsace or the North, we are the inheritors of our people" and "we are attached to this earth by the centuries of labour, suffering and sacrifices of our fathers who, generation after generation, have passed life onto us and who have entrusted us with the national patrimony" (ibid, 2012).

The EFF's rejection of a 'rainbow nation' in post-apartheid South Africa follows a similar and equally racialised, nativist account. For the EFF, the origin of "other" in South Africa is traceable to the arrival of Dutch navigator Jan Van Riebeek, the infamous colonial administrator who established the Dutch Cape Colony in South Africa, on behalf of the Dutch East India Company. The party connotes Van Riebeek's arrival with the ensuing oppression and subjugation of South Africa's true "sons and daughters", who the party accept as non-white "poor, marginalised masses of South Africa" (Mbete, 2015: 38).

Both the RN and the EFF demonstrate their closeness to the sovereign people, at the outset, through their use of langue and metaphor. There are few examples as prudent as Le Pen's 2017 Presidential election campaign speech in Amiens, the hometown of her then opponent and current French President, Macron. Standing outside the Whirlpool factory, where hundreds of French workers were laid off in preceding weeks, Le Pen remarked:

> "When I heard that Emmanuel Macron was coming here and that he didn't plan to meet the workers, that he didn't plan to come to the picket line, but that he was going to shelter in some room at the chamber of commerce to meet two or three handpicked people, I considered that it was such a sign of contempt for what the Whirlpool workers are going through that I decided to leave my strategic council and come see you," (Breeden, 2017).

The speech reinforced the Rally's about face on worker protections and Labour Law reforms is the 2017 election as well as humanising Le Pen outside of the Rally's traditional voter base. The success of this tactic was evidenced by Macron's subsequent visit to the same site later that day

where he railed against Le Pen's presumed closeness to the people, calling her "an heiress. . . born in a château" who "claims to be from the people" (Marlowe, 2017).

In his 2014 electoral campaign, Malema deployed the same tactic as Le Pen when at a demonstration against the violent murder of miners in South Africa's North Western Province, he said:

> "I was told by EFF officials in the North West that you would be marching. They said the officers here are used to killing people and we have come to join you so that they may kill us also" (Maromo, 2014).

Even the deployment of a 'thin populism', as described by Mudde, successfully performs closeness to the people simply by referring to them. Through these explicit, albeit unassuming, turns of phrase, the EN and EFF's populist communication style stresses the sovereignty of people and the *volonté general*.

In France and South Africa, the historical and contemporary political discourse is marked by a distinct style of protest politics. As such, the RN and the EFF thrive on their deliberate exclusion from mainstream political life and their position as organisations apart from the reigning political system. On one hand, this makes them ardent populists and on the other hand, it makes them uniquely adept to prevailing political conditions in France and South Africa. In France, mass demonstrations and processions have always been a traditional means of expressing support or protest, prompting Hoffmann to conclude that "protest was a way of life" (1974).

It comes as no surprise that the Rally deploys protest as a distinct strategy and discursive practice given the party's relationship to protest. In a 1991 publication titled, *Le Front National en Politique*, French political scientist and journalist Guy Birenbaum, accurately predicted that protest would be the "vocabulary" of the Rally, "implanted on the conscience of the French political world" (Birenbaum, 1991, xxi). Indeed, from Le Pen senior to Marine Le Pen, we see the Rally use the legacy and symbolism of Joan of Arc, for example, to rally support for their core message on nationalism and identity (Davies, 1993, 10; News Wires, 2012) during demonstrations and protests. The party has marched to the statue of the 'maid of Orleans', an adopted symbol of French nationalism, since the 1980s for their May Day celebrations. Le Pen junior deployed Joan of Arc as a symbol of her own capacity as a female leader at a May Day parade, featuring a backdrop of a woman dressed in a suit of armour (Fraser, 2014). During the parade, people shouted, "Le Pen le President" (ibid, 2014). While some media outlets criticised Le Pen and the Rally for their "deployment of protesters throwing bottles and flares", the heavy police presence, and a "dark audience with an angrier" undercurrent, senior RN deputy Sophie Montel remarked that turnout at the demonstration made the party "very optimistic" for the upcoming Presidential and European Parliamentary elections (ibid, 2014; Branford, 2017).

Protest also stands out as one of the EFF's more distinct, albeit unconventional, campaign methods. During the 2014 election, the party launched both its campaign and election manifestos in Bekkersdal, Gauteng, a small township which frequents national news media due to longstanding service delivery protests and clashes with police (Mathebula, 2014). In this small township of Westonaria, the EFF also organised a march to the offices of the national Broadcaster, which the entity banned for "inciting violence", because it called for the physical destruction of controversial e-toll gantries on Gauteng's highways (ibid, 2014). The EFF turned

the South African Broadcasting Commission (SABC) ban on its head, "using the ban itself as a campaign tool and linking it to the grievances and methods of struggle of ordinary people" (Mitchely 2014). According to subsequent reports, upwards of 300 Bekkersdal residents joined the EFF march (ibid).

Turnout in support of the Rally and the EFF in subsequent elections following the rise of protest as a discursive and electoral campaigning tool by both parties proved protest to be an effective vehicle for mobilisation. The Rally enjoyed unprecedented success in the French local elections, taking control of 11 key constituencies, and up to 1,200 municipal seats (most of the new Rally mayors were on the front row of the parade, wearing a sash in the colours of the French flag) while the EFF performed better in those areas in Bekkersdal directly affected by protests than in those that were not (Fraser, 2014, Mathebula, 2014).

By studying the Rally and the Front's electoral successes beyond the linguistic elements of their discourse, we make room for more critical geopolitics with a progressive ontology and wider epistemology. We make room for a full analysis which advances the literature beyond performativity (Butler, 1993; Mbete, 2015, 42), texts (Gregson and Rose, 2000) and images (Dodds, 2007, 157) to a grounded and non-representational model centering both the materiality of human life and political subjectivities or lived experience. This perspective is especially relevant to understand how the Rally and the EFF have used protest as a tool for advancing their geopolitical discourse.

Evidence of vote splitting between national and local council / municipal elections in France and South Africa suggest that voters are making sophisticated calculations about who they want to

govern them. In this context and so for the Rally and the EFF, local place matters (Barbier, 2015, 540; Mbete, 2015, 45). At the most localised level of the commune during the regional elections of December 2015, the Rally's performance was imposing. It was first in some 19,000 communes across France—a fact mostly overlooked in the larger lens analyses of those elections at the regional level (Barbier, 2015, 540; Shields, 2018). This outcome was replicated by party's leader during her Presidential bid in 2017. Le Pen topped the first round in more than 19,038 of France's 35,500 (mostly rural) communes while Macron secured the majority in 7135 and Fillon in 5753 of these constituencies (Ministry of the Interior, 2022). In the South African general election of 2019, the EFF's second bid at a national election, the party won enough votes (10.74% in Limpopo and 13.21% in North West) to become the official opposition in the provincial legislatures of Limpopo and the North West province (IEC, 2019).

The success of the Rally and the EFF in local areas, where both conventional and non-conventional campaign strategies covered a broad spectrum from written and spoken materials to protest and demonstrations, abstract analysis of the party's discourse are inept. That is, without an attendant ethnography, the analysis of discourse becomes devoid of reality which is unfolding in RN and EFF bases. A study such as this, which moves beyond the field's mesmerisation by texts and images, allows for an expansion towards an "everyday making of geography" (Thrift, 2000, 381). To draw from Paasi (2000; 2006), when we eschew the tradition of "geopolitical remote sensing" i.e., the tendency to observe and deconstruct discourses from a distance and out of context, we can broaden the meta geopolitical narrative to include compelling local-social and spatial practices such as those employed by the RN and the EFF.

Organisational limitations

In the *French National Front: The Extremist Challenge to Democracy*, Harvey Simmons criticises Rally leadership as appearing only "weakly committed to democratic values" (2018). Certainly, the party has a long history of anti -parliamentary behaviour. A 1987 report recalls RN deputies storming the French National Assembly in a "violent rampage" and a 1988 television interview shows Le Pen senior speaking in support of voter suppression in South Africa, stating that the right to vote does not define democracy and that in this case suppression was a justifiable exchange for the "the level of security, of employment, and the social level" in that country (Simmons, 2018, 3). While Le Pen senior frequently referred to himself as a "Churchillian statesman" (ibid) the anti-democratic slant of the party's rhetoric was a prominent feature of his leadership which proliferated the movement.

Several instances highlight the organisational limitations of both the RN and EFF as populist parties. In one instance, Bruno Mégret, senior RN leader, on observing that French democracy was threatened, suggested that 'victory' can't come progressively as in a 'normal democratic regime' but quickly as happens when totalitarian regimes take over when the "destiny of civilisation is at stake" (Simmons, 2018, 3). However, the federal-style structure of the Rally may prove to be a moderating influence. When the Rally won the Mayoral race in Orange, the party's representative there immediately sought to quiet concern about the Rally using Orange as an outpost to take on the French state. The Mayor of Orange said that no matter what "Jean-Marie Le Pen may say, his town will not simply become a laboratory for National Front ideas" (Marcus, 1996, 316).

The Rally's consistent growth in local elections and recently its unprecedented success in European Parliamentary elections will ultimately test its effectiveness as an urban administrator. Although its district spokesmen initially touted the idea of 'national preference', the centralising tendency of the French political system would leave very limited room for manoeuvre. Contrastingly, the party's gains in urban and E.U. government force them to reckon with their long-standing condemnation of the "pork-barrel politics" pursued by the French political establishment.

In relation to the Rally, the EFF is arguably still in its infancy. Yet, it has had to contend with similar struggles with governance and factions. Remarkably, these have come from within the party. In 2014, former EFF officials have gone on record to accuse the EFF of electing party leaders in an undemocratic and closed process, outside of the regular elective conference. However, Malema attaches these claims to "ANC-planted moles" who he accuses of infiltrating the EFF in order to disrupt it. By October 2014, these allegations had led to several senior officials resigning from the EFF suggesting that the party had "turned into a pseudo-revolutionary religious cult" with Malema at its helm. According to District leaders in the Free State, Malema has "alienated many in the party, and with criminal and corruption charges looming, he is on shaky ground" (Lediga, 2019). The EFF's District coordinator accused senior party leadership of being "liars and hypocrites who stole the votes of the poor masses" (Lediga, 2019). The use of protest as a vehicle for discourse may prove to be too radical for the regular ebb and flow of France and South Africa's political sphere.

During the 1995 election in France, Le Pen senior's annual march to the statue of Joan of Arc turned fatal when a group of white nationalists broke away from the procession and murdered a young Moroccan immigrant by throwing him into the river Seine (Marcus, 1996, 310). On the

heels of this incident, French-German writer and political scientist, Alfred Grosser, would describe France as "nothing but opposition" (1996). Yet, the political fallout and subsequent media coverage proved catastrophic for the Rally and remains a stain on their electoral campaigns (Rose, 2017). While Le Pen did not call for violence, the party had attempted to broaden its electoral appeal too far, attracting a spectrum of voters which they failed to contain. The EFF faced a similar rhetorical crisis when, having won 6% of the vote during the 2014 general election, the party's commander in chief threatened to "remove the government through the barrel of a gun" (Aljazeera, 2016). The political fallout and legal ramifications of the RN and EFF's opposition is one example of the limitations of their discourse and the ultimate necessity to play by the rules of the system if they are to have any real chance at governance.

It is often overlooked that the Rally is a federation of local Chapters which do not always reflect the national structure. In Marseille for example the neighbourhood sections are often in conflict with each other and their respective department headquarters over membership, money, prestige, and piston (influence). As such, local and national offices tend to reflect each other only imperfectly (Ireland, 1989, 68; Fakir, 2014, 121).

While the organization of the RN has worked well for local mobilisation, it has affected the overall structure of the party which serves as a critical comment on their ability to build a sustainable governing body. The Rally has historically demonstrated its inability to mediate deep divides within party leadership. In the 1995 election, Le Pen Senior failed to negotiate the demands of his deputies whose sympathies were with both the far right and conservative establishment. As RN deputies like Bruno Mégret supported a long-term coalition with the mainstream right, others sought a partnership with the incumbent, Jospin, for short term campaign wins. Le Pen, who initially sought to play the role of "kingmaker" in the 1995 election,

buckled under this pressure and in a televised announcement stated that he would cast a blank vote in the election (Marcus, 1996, 310). These changes have seen numerous deputies resign amidst a reorientation of the party's policy focus and its affiliation with France's mainstream right.

In 2017, Le Pen was notably deprived of an uncontested claim to probity when she faced popular criticism relation to alleged misuse of European Parliament funds. The allegations also made it strategically impossible for the Rally to openly denounce the "political elite" as corrupt and so capitalise on the well-known allegations of financial impropriety against her opponent, Fillon (Shields, 2018, 540-541). To the extent that the party had led its first round campaign on the proclamation of 'la France apaisée' ('France at ease with itself'), Le Pen's inability to stand on that rhetoric is yet another example of the party's failure to negotiate its internal politics for its own good. Although Le Pen went into the debate having secured 40% of voting intentions, her ratings decreased, and she went on to secure 33.9% in the runoff (IPSOS, 2017b).

After several statements accusing the South African Revenue Service of being complicit in undertaking the demands of the ruling political establishment, Julius Malema faced similar crisis in 2014. Malema reached a widely reported agreement with SARS, to settle his own tax debt which was in excess of R160million (Jadhoo and Lange, 2014). The public about face did not make a quantifiable impact on public opinion polls. However, it demonstrated the lengths to which the party would have to go in order to assume legitimacy with its supporter base and any real political power in South Africa. The RN and the EFF have been criticised for espousing a politics that is aligned with and reminiscent of past far-right regimes in France and South Africa. In Politics on the Fringe, De Clair offers that the Rally is a: "continuation of an omnipresent political tradition in French politics characterised by the belief of a natural order, the defence of

traditional values and a suspicion of democracy – at least in its parliamentary form – xenophobia and antisemitism. This is a political legacy which has dominated the French far right movements for generations" (1999, 13).

Gillian Hart's (2014) monograph, *Rethinking the South African Crisis: Nationalism, Populism, Hegemony,* is the most prominent work by a geographer which contains a sustained engagement with Populism. Hart draws on the theories of the *philosopher and liberation activist Franz Fanon*, who is also the EFF's ideological father, to examine the 'emergence and proliferation of expressions of popular anger and discontent" which has emerged in a post democratic South Africa and which, She argues, exceeds that of earlier social movements *(Hart, 2014, 5).* Hart convincingly argues that although the processes and challenges which South Africa is dealing with are widespread and an "embodiment of forces at play in many regions of the world" the crisis in South Africa is "deeply racialised" and inseparable from the concentrations of minority owned capital alongside a "mushrooming of wageless life" (ibid, 2014,5). This underlies the need to look more critically at whether the RN and EFF offer legitimate policy proposals which reflect the immediate needs of 'the people'.

Conclusion

The *Rassemblement National* and the Economic Freedom Fighters offer a unique opportunity to examine populist electoral politics in France and South Africa. Having positioned themselves as parties outside of the political establishment, the RN and EFF have embedded the notion of an appeal to the sovereign people and an attendant moral claim to advance their prerogatives (despite the elite other) in the political landscape. More importantly, prevailing elections

outcomes, surveys and polls indicate that the parties have successfully embedded this populist ideology in the electoral framework. Yet, many studies will contend that populism is a 'thin' ideology, without the veracity and substance of more established ideological traditions such as conservatism or liberalism. This notion has limited the scope for studying populism as a legitimate political and geographic development and as such, critically examining the electoral supply and demand underpinning its success.

What remains unquestionable is that populism has quickly become the political phenomenon of our times – reminiscent of the 'spectre' of communism in the early 90s - and that it is here to stay. Beyond propagating a burgeoning populist ideological base in France and South Africa, the RN and EFF have proved that populism has spread and evolved over time. Today, the distinct populist regimes which are succeeding at the polls in democracies such as France and South Africa, deploy a distinct brand of populist discourse, leveraging politics and geography, to find full expression at the local level. Although the RN's rise to European Parliament suggests that these parties have the capacity to rise to the highest office at the regional level, whether they can function in the day-to-day mundanity of parliamentary national government stands to question.

Certainly, contradictions in campaigns policy, leadership and party structure weaken the efficiency of the RN and EFF. Yet, their ability to rally voters during and through their negotiation of discord may be their hallmark particularly as they move between the traditional distinctions of left and right of centre politics. In this context, this study will contend with and shed light on the rise of the RN and EFF as populist parties in France and South Africa, especially as it is refracted through geography. The comparative and highly contextual nature of the study will further the objective within the academy to examine the relationship between

populism, the people and democracy across place - with an ultimate goal to create a robust geographies of populism literature.

Part I: The indivisible republic and the rainbow nation

Chapter 5

Populism in Industry Dominant Regions of France and South Africa

Introduction: the Case of Hauts de France, Limpopo, North West, and Gauteng Provinces

France and South Africa can initially appear to be fundamentally different countries and societies even when compared in relation to their status as democracies. Apart from the purely geographical differences between France and South Africa, are the epistemological and ontological challenges posed by traditional approaches to comparative research. Even within the political geography literature and the empirical research drawing from it, there are traces of presupposed categorical divides along the lines of geography, ideology, values, and culture (Lawson and Klak, 1993, 1071; Koch, 2017, 145). These approaches and their normatively laden ideas can immediately 'other' and 'orientalise' one society in relation to the other. However, the rise of a distinctly populist electoral politics in similar regions (i.e., single sector dominant regions[11]) of France and South Africa offers an exceptional opportunity to bring these countries into the same analytical space.

[11] Following from the work of Massey (1993) on Spatial Divisions of Labour, a "single industry dominant region" in this context is one where a single economic activity/sector is dominant. See: Massey, D., 1995. Spatial divisions of labour: social structures and the geography of production. Macmillan International Higher Education.

In 2017 – 2019, the *Rassemblement National* (RN) and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) gained considerable electoral support in the 'industrial heartland'[12] of Hauts-de-France[13] and the 'platinum belt'[14] of South Africa's North West province respectively, becoming the primary opposition party in both regions (Ministère de l'intérieur , 2020; Electoral Commission of South Africa, 2020)[15]. The RN and the EFF seem to have gained the electoral support of mining and industrial communities in these regions through a discourse which speaks to the social and economic history of the regions and the distinct political identities which this time-geography[16] has produced.

This chapter advances a comparative and relational analysis of the potential factors contributing to the rise of the RN and the EFF in mining and industry regions of Hauts-de-France and the North West province in South Africa respectively. At the core of this analysis are the combined and contingent outcomes of interactions between the structural, material (i.e., built environment and physical infrastructure), and social space (i.e., political subjectivities and 'realities') produced

[12] I use the term heartland here in two ways. First, in reference to the contemporary and historical effort by the state to spatialise the areas of Hauts-de-France and Nord Pas de Calais as important centres (core regions) of industrial activity. Second, to allude to the contingent and counteractive effort by workers to reformulate the space as a centre of support for a populist party.

[13] Hauts-de-France is the northern-most region of France. It is a new configuration in the fifth republic which is the result of territorial reform in 2016. As a result, the region is a merger of Pas-de-Calais and Nord where many of France's manufacturing industries have been sited since the 19th Century.

[14] A platinum-rich area of South Africa's Bushveld Complex. The area includes parts of the North West province and Limpopo province and accounts for the largest production of Platinum Group Metals (PGM) in the world. Platin is dynamic among metals which accounts for its demand and price. It has petrochemical, automotive, and industrial uses including in the manufacture of technologies such as computers. It is also popularly used to make jewellery.

[15] The French Ministère De L'intérieur (The Ministry of the Interior) organises, monitors and publishes results and laws related to elections in France. Similarly, the South African Electoral Commission is an independent organisation responsible for conducting and publishing results for national, provincial and municipal elections.

[16]Sometimes referred to as time-space, this is an approach in human geography which treats time and space as "resources directly involved in the constitution of social life" (*The Dictionary of Human Geography*, edited by Derek Gregory, et al., John Wiley and Sons, Incorporated, 2009). See also Hägerstrand, T., 1974. aa, Lenntorp, B. *Path in space-time environments. A time geographic study of movement possibilities of individuals*. The authors conceptualize time-space as an ontological contribution demonstrating how phenomenon can be mutually modified when they coexist in time and space.

by a state's accumulation strategy under neoliberalism and the political realities which they give rise to (Berlant, 1996; Massey, 1995; Massey, 2013; Yarrow 1990, 1991). I distinguish between materialities of the neoliberal state and perceptions of the neoliberal state insofar as the former relates to the built environment and physical infrastructure while the latter relates public perceptions and political subjectivities concerning the neoliberal state. Ultimately, the chapter is an effort at bringing my case studies in conversation with the geographies of the state literature, labour geographies, and contemporary populist electoral politics.

A body of literature in labour and political geography deals with concepts of spatial structures of production, divisions of labour, and the distribution of social relations which they enable (Berlant, 1996; Massey, 1995; Massey, 2013; Yarrow 1990, 1991). Drawing from Keble's assessment of social relations and spatial organisation, Doreen Massey argues that the state "particularly the empirical usefulness of industrial location" and the "locational requirements of industry" can explain both "patterns of employment" and social relations within these geographies (Massey, 1995, 13; Massey, 2013). The locational requirements of industry also produce material worlds and socio-political realities. For example, in *The commons: Infrastructures for troubling times,* Berlant (2016), writes that:

> "infrastructure is defined by the movement or patterning of social form. It is the living mediation of what organizes life: the lifeworld of structure. Roads, bridges, schools, food chains, finance systems, prisons, families, districts, norms all the systems that link ongoing proximity to being in a world-sustaining relation" (Berlant, 2016, 393).

In this material space, the politics of 'repair or replacement' concerning infrastructure can be "non-productive. . . generating a form from within brokenness beyond the exigencies of the current crisis, and alternatively to it too" and yield a "glitch" reproducing and reinforcing unresolved politics of repair and replacement (ibid, 2016, 394; Edwards 2003). In this chapter I advance on these ideas, contributing to this scholarship by considering how relationships of materiality, political subjectivities, and 'worker identity' interact in relation to contemporary populism within industry dominant regions.

The rise of populist support in heavy industrial areas of France and the marked increase in support for the anti-globalist discourse of the RN, in the industrial heartland, certainly gives contemporary purchase to these narratives of spatial division, materiality and political subjectivity. The dynamic interaction between spatialised structures of production, labour, and populist politics has arguably laid the foundation for the emergence of populist worker identities today which are separate from and more flexible than conventional 'class based' worker identities of the past. This distinction and fragmentation contributes to broader theorisation of 'worker identities' in the context of the neoliberal state and populism. However, while the case of France and South Africa share certain elements including undercurrents of anti-globalism, not all extractive communities are the same. For example, framings of 'class' differ across the two cases. As a result, this Chapter contrasts and compares populist electoral politics in industrial regions of France and South Africa, using the case studies to shed light on contemporary populism in single sector dominant regions including how different industries can produce distinct political arenas in which different subjectivities are formed, questions of participation and citizenship are reformulated and often vigorously contested even as they interact with local materialities and subjectivities (Rygiel 2012; Hanafi and Long 2010; Sigona 2014).

The use of case studies and field sites in this way not only contributes to literatures in labour geography and contemporary populism theory but it also encourages more nuanced and comparative consideration of the ways in which distinct regional economic and socio-political interests create new political identities and enable alternative regional economic discourses to be forged against mainstream ideas about globalization, state restructuring and competition (Prytherch, 2009, 45; Jonas, 2012, 264).

The evolution of the EFF, and the ways in which the establishment of the party is intertwined with the site and politics of Marikana, brings questions of race and disenfranchisement to the forefront. In particular, it offers a further example of 'parallel but also different' as race and disenfranchisement are salient political issues in the French case too (e.g., in the "Grand replacement" theory). Yet, the material form that this "disenfranchisement" takes in terms of infrastructure and service delivery one hand is vastly different in these two democracies and creates political subjectivities on the other hand which arise from two different impulses concerning signifiers of neglect by the state and notions of belonging to the body politic.

While mining has been one of the preferred accumulation strategies of the South African state since mineral discoveries in the second half of 19th Century; the constitutive social relations and the spaces which this accumulation strategy has constructed are mediated by South Africa's racialised past. Consequently, what is at issue in the is the spatial form of certain *aspects* of social power which the populist turn has brought to the fore even within industrial and mining geographies. First, the spatial perspective i.e., where industries like manufacturing and mining are located and the human-societal dynamics which are produced by this geography. Second, the political subjectivities - and inherent questions of participation and citizenship- that are either reproduced or reformulated across these communities. Third, the possibilities which this time-

space creates for alternative political discourses and new social movements such as populism to be forged against what may be considered 'mainstream' political ideas.

Chapter Structure and Central Argument

The contemporary rise of populism in single industry dominant regions is bound up with the history of state led capitalist development and the socio-political differences which this accumulation strategy embeds whether this is along the lines of disparate experiences of class, inequality or citizenship. This Chapter aims to contrast and compare the possible factors influencing the rise of populist electoral politics in single industry dominant regions through a case study of the EFF in the North West Province and the *Rassemblement National* (RN) in Hauts-de-France, during the period 1990-2020. By thinking relationally, I aim to show the sequence and contingency of the factors leading up to the party's success during the 2019 General Election and the 2017 Legislative Election in South Africa and France respectively. The following sections present the results of a field research study in France and South Africa and subsequent archival and secondary research wherein I comparatively assess the structural conditions and political subjectivities which have evolved in South Africa's platinum belt and France's industrial heartland across time in order to demonstrate why a new political discourse in the form of populism was facilitated there today rather than at any other time in history.

The indivisible republic and the rainbow nation

In France and South Africa, we have two narratives of nationhood buttressed by images of unity and indivisibility which have captured the public imagination. Before delving into a comparative study of the RN in Hauts-de-France and the EFF in the North West, it is important to give

some attention to these images underpinning what is initially compelling about the 'populist moment' in France and South Africa more broadly. A 1993 copy of the RN's youth paper, *Volontaire*, includes an emphatic statement about the party's conception of the nation and nationalism in France. The following extract is drawn from that publication:

> "to be sons and daughters of France is a privilege and a responsibility. Born in Brittany, Provence, Alsace or the North, we are the inheritors of our people. We are attached to this earth by the centuries of labour, suffering and sacrifices of our fathers who, generation after generation, have passed life onto us and who have entrusted us with the national patrimony. This historic communion between our people and our land is the starting point of our nation" (Davies, 2012, 18-19)

Greater than the RN's internal conception of the nation and nationalism, which remained relatively stable over time and fundamentally unchanged between its formation in 1972 and the early 1980s, the quote represents the party's earliest view of France as the world's 'consummate nation state'. This formative conception[17] of a country with little to no mediation between the state and individual citizens, underlies prevailing images of France as an 'indivisible republic' (*l'une et indivisible royaume/ republique*). An imagery which manifests itself in numerous albeit evolving ways (seen in the trajectory from royalism, fascism, and then integratist views) both within and outside of France. Within France, it is apparent in the persistent desire to marry depictions of the state and the nation (e.g., notions about membership in the French national

[17] See Baycroft, T., 2012. National Diversity, Regionalism and Decentralism in France. In *Region and State in Nineteenth Century Europe* (pp. 57-68). Palgrave Macmillan, London and Davies, P., 2012. *The National Front in France: ideology, discourse and power*. Routledge.

community as early as the Revolution in 1789)[18] while outside of France, it is seen in attempts to replicate the perceived seamlessness of the French state through popular affirmations of 'the republic' in constitutional texts (with reference also to the values of the French revolution which spread to and influenced democratic and constitutional text in parts of Europe). A similar imagery has come to be attached to the Republic of South Africa through the discourse of a 'rainbow nation'. In both cases, these imaginaries bely the persistent and underlying tension between regionalism and nationalism.

In *The rainbow nation? Identity and nation building in post-apartheid South-Africa,* Gary Baines argues that South Africa's bid to reintegrate into the "community of nations" has been accompanied by the creation of a new national identity captured by the "rainbow nation" discourse (1998,1). The "rainbow nation" discourse attempts to reimagine divisions between various cultural, ethnic, and racial groups in South Africa (which persisted during the apartheid era) as unified under the new democratic dispensation. According to Baines, the "by now ubiquitous image of South Africa as a rainbow nation" essentially aims to rebrand the country (ibid, 1998).

With reference to the political derivations of the rainbow, Anderson argues that its ritualistic celebration reinforces the sense of a unified nation with a common identity (Anderson, 1991:15). However, this discourse belies the origins of the South African state – one which was founded on a system of racialised segregation established by the white-nationalist National Party (NP) as early as 1948 and which persists today (Gachago and Ngoasheng, 2016).

Apartheid capitalised on difference across gender, class, and race. In this context, the inclusive discourses of "rainbowism" are what Ari Sitas (2010) calls "an ecclesiastical discourse of

[18] See: Safran, W., 1991. State, nation, national identity, and citizenship: France as a test case. International Political Science Review, 12(3), pp.219-238.

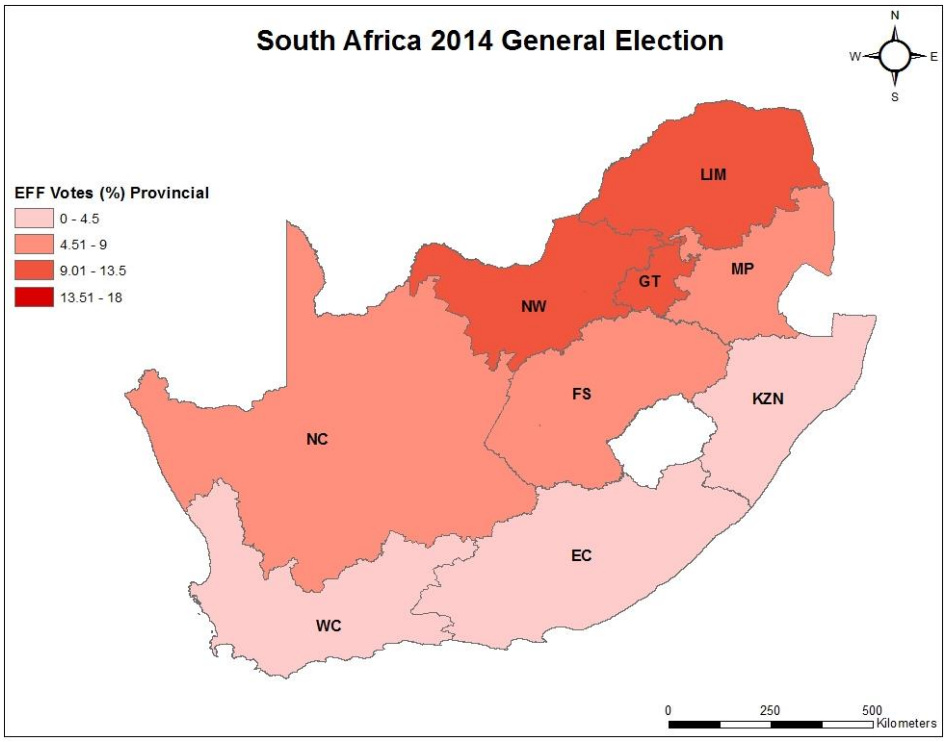
forgiveness. . . which are abstracted from and paper over historical geographies of racial oppression, exploitation and racialised dispossession". The ideology of "rainbowism" (propagated by various actors within the post-apartheid era including established politicians such as the ANC's Nelson Mandela and the country's Arch Bishop the late Desmond Tutu) can be said to invalidate persistent differences in the country's socio-economic outcomes including persistent structural and income inequality which colours the lived experiences of South Africa's predominantly Black population. More importantly, it discards the extended, multi-scalar relationships which are simultaneously material and meaningful that resulted from apartheid, and which frame the political reality of many South Africans today. The experiences of communities surrounding industry and extractives are central in this regard.

The 2019 General Election (South Africa) and the 2017 Legislative Election (France)

On the 8th of May 2019, South Africans voted in the general election which nominated a new National Assembly and Legislatures in each province. At the national level, South Africa's ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC) won the parliamentary election with less than sixty percent of the vote. This is the party's lowest national average since the first democratic elections in 1994 (BBC, 2019). However, the election result is distinct from previous elections due to the unprecedented success of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). Although the ANC and the EFF have significantly different ideological and policy proposals - especially in terms of the EFF's far left position regarding the nationalisation of mines and the expropriation of land without compensation - the EFF garnered eleven percent of the national vote. At the provincial level, the EFF became the primary opposition to the ANC in Limpopo province and the North West province as well as securing nearly fifteen percent of the vote in Gauteng province – its top three performing provinces.

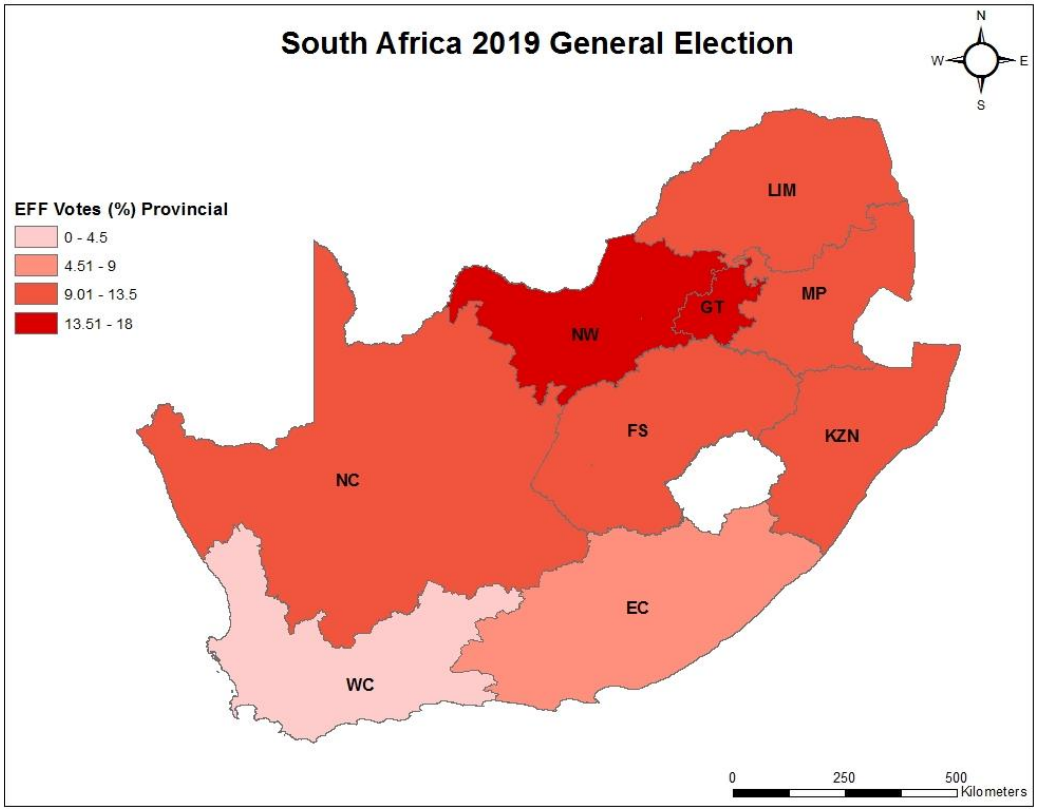
The following maps were compiled using results from South Africa's 22,933 voting districts during the 2014 and 2019 general election (IEC, 2020b). They are presented by province to demonstrate the differences in electoral support for the EFF across provinces over time:

Figure 3. South Africa 2014 General Elections results by voting district. Source: Simphiwe Stewart, 2020.



The results of the 2014 general election, barely a year after the launch of the EFF, indicate that the EFF secured 6.35% of the national vote and 25 seats in South Africa's parliament. The party achieved a significantly higher share of the vote in the Northwestern Province, Limpopo Province and Gauteng province – South Africa's mining belt - than the national voting outcome. In the North West, the party secured 13.21% of the vote and 5 seats in the provincial legislature. It also surpassed the national opposition party, the Democratic Alliance (DA), and became the official opposition in that province. In Limpopo, the party secured 10.74% and in Gauteng 10.3% of the vote, yielding 6 and 8 seats in the respective provincial legislatures (ibid).

Figure 4. South Africa 2019 General Elections results by voting district. Source: Simphiwe Stewart, 2020.



In the 2019 General Election, the EFF maintained a national average of 6.35% and 25 seats in the national legislature (IEC, 2020b). However, support for the party in the North West increased from 13.21% (in 2014) to 18.64% (ibid). Despite the disputed substance of its policies, the EFF dominated both the media and public discourse and achieved far more popular support than was expected for a party that had only been in existence for such a short time[19].

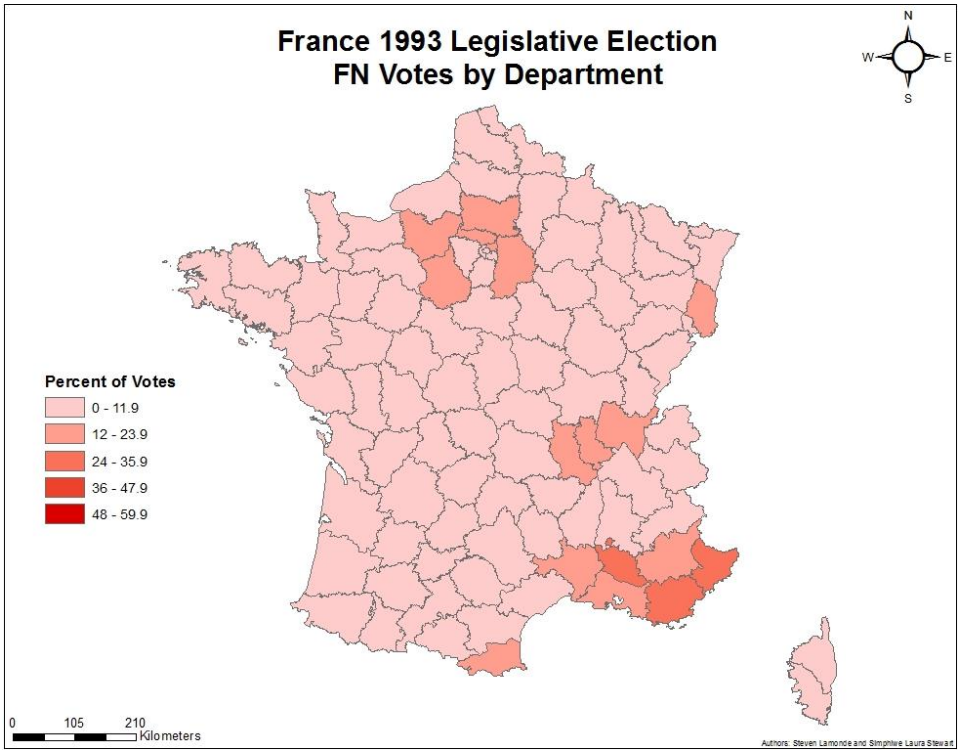
It is impossible to understand the rise of the EFF in South Africa's broader socio-political history and within the North West province more specifically, without the context of what Ben

[19] Interview, Dr Sithembile Mbete (Department of Political Science, University of Pretoria), Pretoria, March 2020.

Fine and others have called "South Africa's minerals energy complex" (Ashman, Fine and Newman, 2011, 47). Just a week after the Marikana Massacre, when many ANC officials could not visit the area, Julius Malema was cheered by crowds of mineworkers and their families in Marikana, as he asserted his claim that white settlers had stolen the country's natural resources (Business Live, 2013). The EFF's first National Assembly, which was first convened at Uncle Tom's Hall, in Gauteng's South Western Township (Soweto), was attended by 1200 delegates including mineworkers who joined the EFF's ranks as party members and who would call Marikana, a mining town, "the Home of the EFF" (South African History Online, 2020).

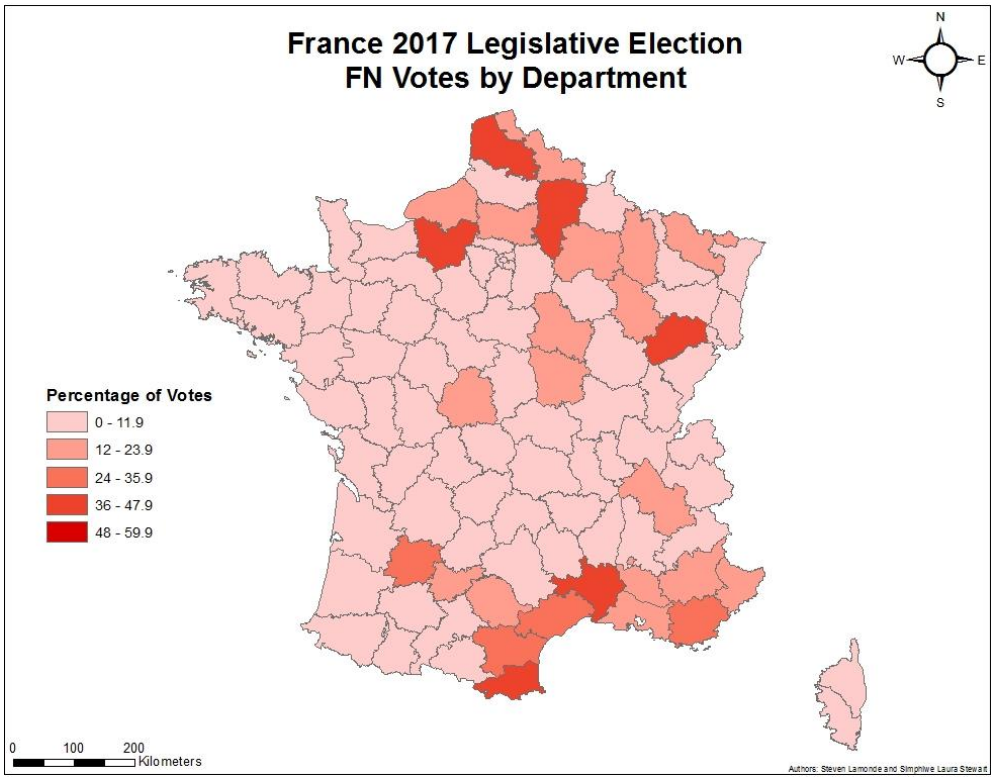
The following maps were compiled using elections results from France's 36,681 communes (Ministry of the Interior, 2020b). They reflect electoral support for the RN during the second round of the 1993 legislative election and the 2019 legislative election respectively. They are presented at the scale of 94 departments in continental France in order to illustrate the regional differences in electoral support for the RN over time.

Figure 5. France 2019 Legislative Election by Department. Source: Simphiwe Stewart, 2020.



In the first round of the 1993 legislative election, the RN secured 12.58% of the national vote. However, its share of the votes subsequently declined to as little as 5.9% in the second round of that election (Ministry of the Interior, 2020). The party gained a somewhat inconsequential seat in the national legislature, prompting Jean Marie Le Pen (the former leader of the RN) to call the outcome a "glaring injustice of the system" (New York Times, 1993). In its traditional support base in the South of France and several areas surrounding Paris, the party performed relatively well in both rounds with as much as 24% of the south-eastern border region and Île-de-France voting for the RN (Ministry of the Interior, 2020).

Figure 6. France 2017 Legislative Election by Department. Source: Simphiwe Stewart, 2020.



For comparison, Figure 6 illustrates the RN's performance in the 2017 legislative election when the party achieved 33.9% of the popular vote (Ministry of the Interior, 2020). As recently as 2014, electoral outcomes in France divided the country in two - along a vertical axis - with most voting for the RN concentrated on the Eastern part of the country in Alsace-Lorraine[20] and Côte d'Azur[21]. In contrast, the west of France has been preserved from the rise of RN. Yet, in the period 1993 – 2019, the RN more than tripled its share of the vote particularly in top heavy industrial regions and regions where workers are unionised in Hauts-de-France. Here, the RN was the first-place candidate in the second round of the election. Remarkably, in two of the five

[20] Alsace-Lorraine is an imperial territory which was historically annexed and established by Germany as a buffer zone between that country and France. Today, it is part of continental France along the north-east border with Germany.
[21] Côte d'Azur is in the south-east of France, along the Mediterranean coastline.

Departments, Pas De Calais and Nord, the party secured 41.13% and 40.9% of the votes respectively (Ministry of the Interior, 2020).

The elections results depict rising support for the RN and the EFF in distinct regions over time. This trend is bounded up with the socio-political history of industrial regions in France and South Africa. Specifically, the structural, material and distinct political identities which this time-space has produced vis-à-vis the state's accumulation strategy. Local narratives of the populist turn in the industrial heartland and the platinum belt suggest "a socially and politically produced system"[22] and a collective 'lens' through which industrial and mining communities view their complex social reality.

Goodyear Factory Amiens, France

In 2007, American-owned tyre producer, Goodyear, attempted to restructure production processes at its factory in Amiens, France, by shifting from making cheap car tyres to manufacturing tyres for farming vehicles (BBC News, 2017). Along with this change, was a proposal to introduce "*quatre-huits*", a new shift pattern with four teams of workers staffing eight-hour shifts - sometimes including nights and weekends- at the Amiens plant. Although the *Confederation Générale du Travail* (GTC), the country's largest Trade Union, refused Goodyear's plan, the 2009 financial crisis spun the conflict from one over working hours to a heavily contested bid to shut down the factory entirely.

[22] See Sum, N.L. and Jessop, B., 2013. *Towards a cultural political economy: Putting culture in its place in political economy*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

In the period which follows, from 2007 – 2019, the Goodyear factory in Amiens was the site of an "epic" series of disputes by workers and their trade union -against the closure - including procedural misconduct lawsuits in Ohio, USA (where the company is based) and protests featuring "piles of burning tyres, huge banners and dramatic headgear" (BBC News, 2017). As Mickael Wamen, the Union's representative at the factory describes:

> "Goodyear must certainly be the only multinational in the world where workers have resisted so much. First of all, they wanted to sack 400 of us then it was 800 then they said they wanted to close the factory altogether. But we have resisted every step of the way." (cited in ibid, 2017).

The workers' protest in Amiens was certainly important in its context. Whirlpool, another factory in Amiens, became the "scene of a *Dantesque* cross" between French President Emmanuel Macron and his then opponent for the Presidency, Marine Le Pen (Baralon, 2019). During an impromptu rally in the parking lot of the Whirlpool factory, where she was greeted by "cheering and hugs", Marine Le Pen praised Whirlpool workers for "resisting this wild globalisation" while criticising Macron stating:

> "When I heard that Emmanuel Macron was coming here and that he didn't plan to meet the workers, that he didn't plan to come to the picket line, but that he was going to shelter in some room at the chamber of commerce to meet two or three handpicked people, I considered that it was such a sign of contempt for what the Whirlpool workers are going through that I decided to leave my strategic council and come see you," (The New York Times, 2017).

While Le Pen was criticised for her mobilisation tactics in Nord Pas de Calais, the region became the "battleground . . .for France's blue-collar vote" (Associated Press, 2017).

Figure 7. A protest by workers at Whirlpool in Amiens, France in August 2017. The banners read "no to the closure of Whirlpool" and "3 months already and more bla-bla". Source: NBC News, 2017



The 2017 Presidential and Legislative elections saw the industrial heartland and more of France, even Brittany, turn populist. In regions which used to be "bullet proof" to populism, the RN gained considerable electoral support. This is especially true for areas which are labour oriented and unionised where voting for populist movements is above average - above national average –

in the 2017 election.[23] In these regions, trade unionists note a correlation between the fall in collective bargaining and union density and the rise of populist parties[24]. However, the populist turn in France's industrial heartland is not unique in the global context.

Lonmin Platinum Mines Marikana, South Africa

> "If Marikana didn't happen on the 16th of August 2012, there would be no political ground fertile enough for Malema to arrive and grow the movement that the EFF has become. He (Malema) was last to speak at the Marikana memorial . . .and there was a political earthquake, a rupture, and the EFF came out of that"[25]

According to Anglo American Platinum[26], South Africa's East platinum belt, was the site of over 400 incidents of social unrest in the period 2016 – 2018. In the North West, protests began as early as the 12th of January 2012, when a small group of rock drill operators (RDOs) at Impala Platinum Mines in the North West Province, refused to work. The strike was over a wage increase. It was also the largest industrial action in the history of South Africa's platinum mining sector. However, the National Union of Mines (NUM), the only recognised mineworker's union at the time, was deliberately excluded from the action. As a result, the action was deemed illegal as the workers proceeded on an unprecedented strike wave characterised by "worker militancy and uncompromising insurgency" (Mzamo, 2012).

[23] Interview, Pierre Hubbard (General Secretary to the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development OECD), Paris, March 5th, 2019.
[24] Interview, Representative 1 (Confederation Générale du Travail), Amiens, 3rd September 2019.
[25] Interview, Nick Bauer (Political Journalist, ENCA), Johannesburg, March 20th, 2020.
[26] Anglo American Platinum is a mining company headquartered in South Africa. Trading on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE), the company is the world's largest primary producer of Platinum.

By the 24th of January, 5000 workers who went on strike had been dismissed by the company amidst claims that the protest was staged "without formal notice" (ibid). Yet, as the strike over wages and better working conditions intensified, the number of workers supporting it increased and the action spread across South Africa's platinum belt – one of the world's largest platinum and chrome deposits – to coal, iron and other sectors. The collective indignation of mineworkers at Impala, the world's number two platinum producer, triggered a series of unprecedented industrial actions across South Africa's mining sector lasting through the better part of 2012 – 2013 (Chinguno, 2013, 160). On August 16th, 2012, workers at Lonmin's Marikana Platinum mine, also located in South Africa's North West province, joined the wave of wage and working conditions protests affecting South Africa's mining industry. The action was met by violence and more than 100 mineworkers were killed by state police. In this context, Marikana had a "bomb-like effect"[27] on South Africa's post-apartheid politics. One result was the formation of the EFF, which was launched on the site of the Marikana Massacre, in July 2013.

[27] Interview, Nick Bauer (Political Journalist, ENCA), Johannesburg, March 20th, 2020.

Figure 8. A protest by mineworkers at Lonmin Marikana Platinum mine in Marikana (North West province), South Africa, in August 2012. Source: Alternative Information and Development Centre, 2018.



During a press conference shortly after the launch of the EFF, the party's commander in chief (Julius Malema) said,

> "we are not like all of them . . . we are not like COPE, we are not like AGANG and all of them . . .we've got a completely different plan. Ours is expropriation of land without compensation" (News 24, 2013).

Malema was labelled a fascist and the party's programmes "a case of media hype over substance" (Friedman, 2014). According to commentators on the right and left of South Africa's political spectrum, the EFF's "seven non-negotiable pillars" (EFF, 2020a) which include the

"expropriation of land without compensation for equitable redistribution" (EFF, 2020a) and "nationalisation of mines, banks and other strategic sectors of the economy" (EFF, 2020a) were reminiscent of the apartheid-era policies of the National Party (Fakir, 2014, 5).

The EFF's policies certainly seem radical in their approach. However, they were dismissed as "essentially empty rhetoric captured in the politics of spectacle, where even complex ideas get pared down to mere slogans" (Fakir, 2014, 5). The pejorative narratives surrounding the rise of the RN in Hauts-de-France and the EFF in the North West, ignore the social and economic history of France and South Africa and the ways in which this time-geography has produced both the social structure and the distribution of social relations[28] facilitating the rise of both parties. Crucially, they ignore the contemporary, political significance of relationships of subordination and power which are characteristic of single sector dominant regions like France's industrial heartland and South Africa's platinum belt.

Spatial dispossession

The testimonies given by my interviewees shed light on fundamental differences between the politics of dispossession and uneven development in France and South Africa's resource regions. Harvey (2003, 137-182) argues that neoliberal policies facilitate "accumulation by dispossession". However, this observation does not account for the situatedness of contemporary resistance to spatial dispossession. Particularly, how history, race, class and the nature of the state interact with the space and mediate how spatial dispossession takes shape in practice. First, it is important to

[28] See Lefebvre, H., 1974. The Production of Space, trans. D. Nicholson-Smith, 1991; Massey, D., 1995. *Spatial divisions of labour: social structures and the geography of production*. Macmillan International Higher Education

consider how such resource states are produced through longer regimes of uneven development on one hand and coloniality on the other hand. The "dark side" of uneven development is framed as the result of "arrangements and outcomes of firms or firms in regional contexts" (Werner, 2019, 948).

There are several limitations following from firm-centrism including its limited attention to relationships between labour, the state and geopolitics. While industrial workers who have lived in the North of France since the early 1960s seem to seek restoration of "imagined, orderly pasts" and their constitutive social relations including "stabilized class bargains, hegemonic and heteronormatively white dominion over the nation" (Yarrow 1990, 1991), mineworkers in South Africa's North West articulate a 'struggle' and core tension to invent spaces of egalitarian inclusion, democratic practice, and non-capitalist economic relations (Berlant 1996; Gibson-Graham 2006).

Hauts-de-France

> "Amiens has changed - there's a lot of roadworks and other works here. Like the train station. There's too many road works. . . too much infrastructure development. The trains and buses and roads have changed. The infrastructure has changed - it's more. They've added parks and renewable buses. The place is different. The actual area has changed and it's not as good".[29]

[29] Interview, Jean (RN voter 7), Amiens, France, August 24th, 2019.

The development of industry in Amiens was for the prosperity of the Republic and in many ways its citizens. In the 1900s, the coal produced in France's coal belt accounted for nearly seventy-five percent of the country's coal output (Dumont, 1923, 487). The coke, a coal-based fuel and reducing agent used for melting iron ore, produced in Nord Pas De Calais was also essential to the growth of France's iron districts and the country's steel industries (ibid). The infrastructure systems which were developed, renovated and extended throughout the early 19th Century - railway lines, waterways and "surface construction unequalled anywhere in the world"- sustained the mines and the small towns growing in the districts of Nord and Pas de Calais (U.S Bureau of Mines; 1921).

As Price (1987, 10 – 34) recounts, France's once static and isolated rural communities (outside Paris) were fundamentally altered by the early 19th Century establishment of 'heavy industry'. Here, large scale industrial projects concentrated in the northern towns of Lille and Lorraine, the old ore belt, Rhone and Lyon - a major source of the country's raw materials and a burgeoning textile industry – produced the material form of the region. However, the unprecedented in-migration of industrial workers gave these new arrivals a numerical and political majority in the region enabling them to both shape and produce the life world of the industrial heartland.

These changes are not isolated to Hauts du Nord in particular and had impacts in urban centres including Paris. Levy notes that in Paris, "excess growth" from urbanisation resulted in population growth over 200 percent in Paris between the period 1862 – 1892 (1982, 64). This occurred during the same period as migration to the industrial heartlands and rural depopulation resulted in a 30 percent drop in areas like Lozere (a landlocked department in the region of Occitanie in southern France) where populations remained as low as 70,000 while Departments in Nord (Hauts-de-France) accounted for as many as 2.5 million inhabitants (ibid, 1982).

However, based on their numerical majority and their deliberate inclusion, by the state, in the politics of the growing industrial heartland miners, industrial workers and their families came to see themselves not only in the infrastructure of their local towns but also in those at the level of the Departments and the region.

In Hauts-de-France, infrastructure materialized vital circulations and gave permanence (or by its decay impermanence) to political relations (Barry, 2013). This dynamic became clear in a focus group discussion with RN members in Calais[30]. One participant said, "Amiens has changed. When I arrived, there was a lot more industry. . .Goodyear and Whirlpool, which are gone now" [31] . His companion added "today it is less industrialised, and we are very conflicted. People didn't want to take that (the factory closures) so there are protests and expensive court cases"[32].

The observations of RN members were emphasised in an interview with Remi Cardon, a French Senator in a department of Somme (Hauts-de-France). Senator Cardon, who is a member of Parti Socialiste (until 2017 France's main centre-left party) offered:

> "the votes for the RN in this region. . .it's not about people crossing borders. . . but also visible aspects of difference where optics become compelling evidence for different trends"[33].

[30] Calais is a city along the northern Coast of France – on the border between France and the UK. It forms part of the Department of Nord Pas de Calais and attracted global media attention as the site of one of the largest refugee and migrant encampments in Europe, "the Calais Jungle".
[31] Interview, Michel (RN member), Calais, France, September 15th, 2019.
[32] Interview, Eloise (RN Member), Calais, France, September 15th, 2019.
[33] Interview, Remi Cardon (French Senator), Lille, October 30th, 2019.

North West Province

In contrast to the experiences of workers in France's resource regions, South African mineworkers occupy a space which was created based on racialised dispossession and exclusion. The origin of the South African state and its constitutive infrastructure and social relations can be traced to the Union of South Africa which paved the way for the establishment of a mining and agricultural sector that left the Black majority proletarianized by mining companies. The Union was a tenuous compromise between the British (especially British mining magnates) who wanted to unite the country and the Afrikaners who wanted to maintain a colony which was independent from British rule. The union was forged on a system of disenfranchisement and dispossession of land of the Black majority. This union was turned into a state by the South African war of 1899. In this war, the old Boer states and ruling class were swept aside. It transformed the human geography of the region and it "thrust entire communities into new political and economic relationships" (Manson and Mbenga, 2014, 49).

Infrastructure includes long-term investments including investments in care and repair (Jackson 2014, Houston et al 2016). However, the development of infrastructure in the North West South province was created on the premise of racialised separate development. Mining companies including the British South Africa Company, pioneered by British mining magnate and governor of the Cape Colony, Cecil Rhodes, were "keen to secure the conditions that would allow for a flourishing mining industry and for the industrialisation of the country" (South African History Online, 2020b). This project required a steady supply of labour to meet the demands of the mining and agricultural industries (ibid). Therefore, the Union, both in terms of its geography and the state bureaucracy presiding over it, was engineered towards maintaining the growing

industry and the interests of those (white capitalists) who forged it[34]. The mining infrastructure that was rapidly established from the early 1900s onwards – reinforced by annexations and divisions of territory – enabled the constitutive and spatial division of South Africa and her constitutive social relations in mining towns.

In an interview with, Mikateko Mahlaule, a member of parliament in the ANC government, he began: "I was born in Limpopo. When we talk about the EFF and Marikana, we have to ask why Marikana exists in the first place?"[35]. This comparative assessment of the historical development of spatial divisions in Hauts-de-France and the North West contrasts the life worlds which the state's accumulation strategy – vis a vis infrastructure – can produce and how regional development can shape and be shaped by a community.

In South Africa, spatial segregation enabled by the mining and agricultural projects was reproduced through accreted laws and policies. As Mentz writes, South Africa's racialised "separate development" was upheld by a control and law and order bureaucracy (1993, 441). The Union's system of spatial segregation and social difference was meant to subdue the Black workers and assure the interests of South Africa's growing industrial project(s) for the white minority. In 1978, then Minister of Plural Relations and Development, Connie Mulder told the House of Assembly:

> If our policy is taken to its logical conclusion as far as the Black people are concerned, there will be not one Black man with South African citizenship ... Every Black man in South Africa will eventually be accommodated in some

[34] Interview, Dr Sithembile Mbete (Department of Political Science, University of Pretoria), Pretoria, March 2020.
[35] Interview, Mikateko Mahlaule (Member of Parliament), Johannesburg, April 2020.

> independent new state in this honourable way and there will no longer be an obligation on this Parliament to accommodate these people politically (Poku, 2001, 24).

This quote underpins how substantive citizenship was constituted and indexed by the state's accumulation strategy and how resources shaped the very construction of South Africa's territorial state.

The EFF takes the economic disaffection and spatial dispossession in this context and links it with a radical racial politics (Mpofu-Walsh, 2017). In contrast, the RN in Hauts-de-France relies on the support of a white majority with the access to capital and the means of production. Faced by increasing economic decline and resultant social instability, several councils including Calais, "a depressed former coalmining town struggling with high unemployment, factory closures and a corruption scandal involving the former Socialist mayor", saw "record popularity" for the RN in the 2009 election (Vinocur, 2012). Here, the party won 39% of the vote for "its first town council in a decade . . .after gaining ground in the north's former mining heartlands of Pas de Calais" (Chrisafis, 2009). In South Africa the black majority does not have access to the means of production. As a result, being pro-RN in Hauts-de-France occurs in a context of white domination over the economy and society while in the North West, being pro-EFF is markedly different because there is a black majority disenfranchisement. The numerical politics is similar, but the power politics are different.

Political identities

The contrast between responses to questions of infrastructure in Hauts-de-France and the North West offers a second layer of consideration. On one hand interviewees expressed concerns about built infrastructure and on the other hand they shared concerns about water and service delivery. These notions prompted me to interrogate the relationship between the political identities of workers in Hauts-de-France and the North West and how they are differentially framed by infrastructure in terms of physical infrastructure in one context and access to water as a public service in another[36].

Built infrastructure in Hauts-de-France

Workers' unionized brotherhood has exerted a longstanding influence over the geography of the bituminous coal and manufacturing industry in Hauts-de-France. The support of the state through material and administrative resources in this region enabled the growth of active, working-class communities. For example, in the 1960s – 1970s when coal was no longer viable, the French government redirected its resources and attention to replacing the mining projects with factories (Dumont, 1923, 487). As a result, many of the world's largest auto industry plants and manufacturers established themselves in the North of France, providing a vital socio-economic clutch to the declining economy in the former mining heartlands.

[36] In his PhD thesis on the political life of Cholera, Dr Simukai Chigudu calls attention to different conceptualisations of citizenship in Zimbabwe in relation to public health crisis. See Chigudu, S., 2019. The politics of cholera, crisis and citizenship in urban Zimbabwe: 'People were dying like flies. *African Affairs*, *118*(472), pp.413-434.

Service Delivery North West Province

> "There's a serious problem of infrastructure in the (North West) province especially water. Many townships don't have water. In areas with white people there is water. An example is Mamusa – Dr Ruth District – in that town there's water. Here, we have to get water privately". [37]

In comparison to social and political relations enabled by the state's accumulation strategy in France, South Africa's resource regions were built on material and administrative exclusion. In 1994, Black South Africans were administratively reincorporated into the South African body politic when the fall of the white supremacist apartheid regime ushered in a democratic country and the nation held its first democratic elections. The extension of formal citizenship to Black South Africans promised equality and "belonging that assures its bearer of equal membership in the national polity" (Anand 2017). However, a focus group discussion with six 'born free'[38] members of the EFF in the North West, referenced in the quote above, highlighted the difference between the nominal citizenship conferred by democracy and the lived reality wherein the "distribution of substantive civil, political, socioeconomic, and cultural rights among individuals and how these are differentially recognised by state and/or state-like institutions" come to the fore (Holston 2008).

In this context, Ong's articulation of a more nuanced conceptualisation of citizenship where "citizenship is a contingent, often flexible form of political subjectification that emerges through

[37] Interview, Sipho (EFF Member, North West province), Rustenburg, South Africa, May 20th, 2020.
[38] 'Born Free' is a local term used to describe the generation born after the fall of apartheid in South Africa.

both iterative and constitutive interactions and performances between the state and its subjects" finds full expression (ibid, 2008).

When one of my interlocutors observed that "the ANC didn't take care of the water pipes here. They left the pipes in the municipality how they found them in 1994 and now we don't have water. We have to wait for the ANC to give tenders so we can get water from companies"[39], she was referencing this cyclical, iterative process enacted through 'hydraulic citizenship' which depends on social histories, political technologies, and the material-semiotic infrastructures of water distribution in the city (ibid. 2017: 8; Chigudu, 2019, 430). In the North West, support for the EFF is mediated by an exercise of citizenship in terms of a bid to reintegrate in the body politic through claiming entitlements (water and service delivery) from the state[40]. EFF members here are not demanding the right to infrastructure, like their counterparts in Hauts-de-France, but rather the right to a regenerative and inclusive national circulatory system coursing with capital, opportunity and state support as healthy blood.

A recent survey conducted by the Royal Bafokeng Authority (RBA) suggests that the massive numbers of informal workers, including those who are reliant on miners for their subsistence, now account for more than forty percent of the population in Fokeng areas (Flomenhoft, 2019, 278 – 279). This influx has presented marked challenges to the already weak public service infrastructure in the North West. The resulting "rebellion of the poor", by way of sweeping service delivery protests, is relevant for two reasons (ibid, 2019, 278 – 279). First, that a massive

[39] Interview, Kwanele (EFF Member, North West province), Mahikeng, South Africa, July 30th, 2020.
[40] The Dictionary of Human Geography presents a brief conceptual history relating to citizenship and its "expansion of individual freedoms (such as the right to work and habeas corpus) into a national institution (which was) one of the key components of the growth of modern citizenship. It reflected a shift from local, communal relations and social rights rooted in village membership into a sense of a national community and of individual rights guaranteed by a state" (2009).

number of the protests have been situated in South Africa's platinum mining towns and second that they seem to be "locally-organised protests that place demands on people who hold or benefit from political power (which includes, but is not limited to, local politicians)" in these areas (Alexander, 2010, 25; Eye Witness News, 2014).

The protests in Hauts-de-France and the North West are discreet examples of resource communities seeking to participate in the national polity. However, in France, it is a participation foregrounded by a demand for the space to continue to represent the rights and interests of the workers who 'shaped' the industrial heartland while in South Africa it is, as Von Schnitzler (2008), forcefully argues about reclaiming "the power to materialize environments that enable a better life" (ibid, 2008, 905).

Reintegrating into the body politic

> In 2014, something happened that made me ask questions about my society. There was a protest in my area about water and people were killed. I wondered why people are protesting about water when there's a lot of water in our township and there are mines. Dali Mpofu came and addressed the town – you guys aren't supposed to be struggling like this. . . nationalisation of mines etc. I did some research on nationalisation of mines and I wondered why it wasn't a policy in our area. Also, the land question – in rural areas women can't inherit land. This made me realise that I wanted to join a party.*41*

[41] Interview. Omphemetse (EFF Member). Brits, South Africa, July 23rd, 2020

Neoliberal policy regimes may be conceptualized as historical processes of spatial dispossession that diminish and sometimes destroy the collective spaces of working-class life. Brenner (2010) argues that the inclusion of neoliberal logics in politico-economic governance necessitates a *recurring* series of territorialized reinstitutionalization. In France the collapse of the Fourth Republic, the arrival of De Gaulle to power, and the establishment of the Fifth Republic saw the introduction of new regional policies by the incoming équipe which differed considerably from those of the Fourth Republic in that they emphasized national rather than regional development (Davis 2017). Similarly, in South Africa, efforts by the post-apartheid government to reorganise state space in order to direct new capital investments while sustaining the rates of capital accumulation in more affluent regions/parts of the population give context to these observations[42]. However, the empirical evidence suggests that neoliberalization works simultaneously in and through multiple sites in France and South Africa. This dynamic does not occur in a post-ideological vacuum.

In recounting her decision to join and mobilise members for the EFF, one of my interlocutors proposes: "the ANC government has had majority. It had every opportunity from 1994 to fundamentally transform South African society, the economy etc. But there was a lot of self-serving politics because ANC had become intoxicated by private interest"[43]. The reflection underpins how the dramatic ruptures of neoliberalization processes in post democratic South Africa have reshaped the contours of the inherited institutional landscapes and rewoven the interconnections among them. What is at issue are the social relations and power-laden relationships that are simultaneously material and meaningful and actively produced through

[42] See also Lim, K.F., 2014. 'Socialism with Chinese characteristics' Uneven development, variegated neoliberalization and the dialectical differentiation of state spatiality. *Progress in Human Geography*, *38*(2), pp.221-247.
[43] Interview. Dimpho (EFF member 8), Johannesburg, South Africa, July 29th, 2020.

contests against neoliberalising logics which have come to be the norm in a post-cold-war era (Lefebvre 1974; Massey, 2013, 327; Massey, 2013). Therefore, in Hauts-de-France and the North West, we have two narratives of a crisis of social identity, with life and death consequences, that delineate and underpin hierarchies of citizenship in these regions and the broader national space which they occupy.

The contrast in the territorial nature and response of the state to contestation is a vital issue. Jonas (2012) proposes that regions can be considered semi-coherent territories "within which place-specific causal properties could shape – and in turn were shaped by – the wider dynamics of capital accumulation, state intervention (or withdrawal) and uneven development" (Jonas, 2012, 263). However, in comparing notions of regional territoriality in Hauts-de-France and the North West, an additional consideration is violence and how it brings to attention issues of inclusion, citizenship and power. Specifically, a contrast of the strategies which the French and South African state pursued in "defending spaces by excluding some activities and including those that enhance, more precisely, what it is in the territory that (they) want to defend" (Cox, 2009, 108; Cox, 2002).

Social movements in Hauts-de-France

On the 31st of January Goodyear announced that it would be closing its main French plant. The closure heralded redundancies of 39 percent of the workforce during an ongoing labour dispute and decreasing demand for cars (for which Goodyear makes tyres) in Europe. "The Goodyear

issue is the main conflict in Amiens. I saw in the news one of the workers beat-up a policeman and another one grabbed his shield" [44].

In response to the protests in Hauts-de-France, the French Government proposed to reform the labour regulation that has held up the factory's closure after five years of attempts by the company to restructure the plant. A representative of Goodyear remarked "the French workforce gets paid high wages but works only three hours. . .they get one hour for breaks and lunch, talk for three hours and work for three. I told the French union workers this to their faces. They told me that's the French way!" (Bremer, 2013). One report detailing the "violence" in Amiens recounts how "only a spray of tear gas pushed the mob back" (France-Presse, 2013).

Social movements in the North West

> "The ANC doesn't advocate for us because they are in bed with the mines. The ANC needs tribal leaders to cement their rural base so they wouldn't want to tamper with the interests of the chiefs and the mining operations. Chiefs are also in bed with the mines. That's why there's no accountability. If a government is really for the people, then the ANC should be stepping in against the chiefs benefiting from mining"[45]

The historical and contemporary relationships between the state, its institutions and mineworkers in the North West are markedly different from those illuminated by the French experience. The rise of the mines and the traditional authorities in the North West are the first

[44] Interview, Sophie (RN member), Amiens, France, August 25th, 2019.
[45] Interview, Bandile (EFF member 25), Polokwane, South Africa, June 20th, 2020.

example of this unique set of relations. Following an 'election' in 1975, the Bophutatswana Democratic Party, led by Mangope, secured the independence of the Bantustan from South Africa proper. Mangope became a particularly contested tribal leader as the election effectively revoked the South African citizenship of over 2 million Black residents and paved the way for the material wealth of Mangope's Bafokeng tribe in the North West (Manson and Mbenga, 2014, 118).

According to Manson and Mbenga, Mangope (then chief of the Bafokeng) had his own traditional authority over others widely refuted and he depended to a large extent on the support of the South African state (Manson and Mbenga, 2006). With the support of the apartheid government, the Royal Bafokeng retained control over Bophutatswana from the late 1970s - 1994, amassing considerable wealth during and after apartheid. Since tribal-trust land was often purchased with mineral rights attached, the chieftaincies were endowed with the capacity to appropriate substantial royalty revenues from the platinum corporations. For comparison, one of the largest traditional authorities in the North West received over 6 million Rands in royalties, in 1968, when they entered a mining lease with Rustenburg Platinum mines (Manson and Mbenga, 2014, 155). The Bafokeng surpassed this figure in 2007. As Manson and Mbenga write:

> In 2007 royalties with Impala Platinum were exchanged 'for an issue of 9.4 million shares (worth R10.6 billion at the time) which made the Royal Bafokeng Nation the largest single shareholder in the world's second largest platinum producing company [Impala Platinum Holdings Ltd]' (ibid)

The wealth of the Bafokeng and its inextricable relationship with both the mining capital and the apartheid state was a source of longstanding disputes between the tribe, its subjects and neighbouring indigenous communities throughout the 1970s – early 1990s. Although Mangope was deposed through a coup in 1994, the relationship between the Bafokeng, the state and mining companies has only been revised and sustained in a post-apartheid administration.

A second incident which highlights these unique relationships is the Marikana Massacre. In contrast, to the events in Hauts-de-France, the 'Marikana Massacre', following a protest by mineworkers in the North West, is described by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism as the "most lethal use of force by South African security forces against civilians" since Sharpeville in 1960 and the Soweto uprising in 1976 (McClenaghan, 2012). As Nick Davies writes, Marikana stands out as a "nightmare" in post-apartheid South Africa insofar as it revived "images of massacres by the state in the old apartheid era" (Davies, 2015). Yet, Marikana was different because, "this time it was predominantly Black policemen, with Black senior officers working for Black politicians, who were doing the shooting" (ibid, 2015). In this context, Marikana had a bomb-like effect on South Africa's post-apartheid politics. One result was the formation of the EFF, which was launched on the site of the Marikana Massacre, in July 2013[46].

Events like the Goodyear protest and the Marikana massacre have the unique ability to both produce and reflect socio-political difference. In these two cases. they serve as a stark and contrasting representation of the contours of exclusion. In the South African case, the EFF as a social movement represents the outcomes of mineworkers' encounter with different institutions and officials of the state and the political subjectivities that are born out of these encounters.

[46] Interview, Andile Mnxgitama (Politician), Johannesburg, South Africa July 2020.

In Marikana, mineworkers protest was met by gunfire as more than 100 mineworkers were shot and 34 were killed. In a similar interaction, community members in Mothutlung in the North West, were shot at during demonstrations about water shortages during a service delivery protest in 2014. Here, the police killed four people amidst mounting concerns about alleged corruption and mismanagement in the Madibeng Municipality. The protests were not isolated to Madibeng, as communities in Rustenburg, Jericho, Maboloka and Rethabile also engaged in the wave of service delivery protests which have lasted through 2019 (ibid). In the North West, the additional problems of overlapping authority between the tribal government of the Bafokeng and the municipalities staffed by elected officials, present a unique reinforcement of the exclusionary and violent relationships between the state and mineworkers. The response from workers in terms of protest against the state and the tribal authorities which are seen as a part of that institution reflect this set of relationships. During one protest over water shortages in Brits, both a tribal council office and the home of a local councillor were set alight when the protestors, holding signs about service delivery and access to housing, turned violent (Eyewitness News, 2014).

EFF members in Limpopo, the North West and Gauteng (whose homes surround some of South Africa's largest mines and the sites of the historic service delivery protests), encounters with the state have led many of them to believe that the state (that is the ANC government and its motive forces) are a sinister institution. It is worth highlighting that in the examples described above, one state killed its workers and the other went so far as to suggest changing legislation in order to protect their interests. Ultimately, the differential power dynamics and relationships of subordination and dominance highlighted by these dynamics have created opportunities for new social movements in Hauts-de-France and the North West. In both cases, the rise of populist

parties presents a moral critique of the health of the body politic. The difference is the extent to which these critiques are combined and contingent outcomes of class and race respectively.

Conclusion

The narratives and imagery surrounding the French and South African republics perpetuate a view of the state as a naturally bounded unit. Yet, experiences in the regions, particularly the single sector dominant regions of South Africa's platinum belt and France's industrial heartland, contradict this conceptualisation. The rise of populism in these regions presents an opportunity to ask questions about the factors giving rise to a populist electoral politic across industrial communities and the extent to which these factors are comparable. The longitudinal assessment of electoral outcomes and field research in both locations highlights these factors. Specifically, the spatial structure within which industries like manufacturing and mining are embedded; the political subjectivities - and inherent questions of participation and citizenship- that are either reproduced or reformulated across these communities and; the possibilities which this time-space creates for alternative political discourses and new social movements to be forged against what may be considered 'mainstream' political ideas.

Crisis is certainly the refrain of populists. However, the experiences of industrial workers in Hauts-de-France and the North West, especially at a time of crisis, highlight how the state and its institutions remain a principal reference point for collective notions of substantive citizenship, rights and belonging. I do not attempt to present a teleological argument. Instead, one that fully considers the unique histories of these communities and the social relations which they have produced over tie. By examining the relational dynamics of time, space and illustrate the path

dependency and the contingency that facilitated a populist turn in Hauts-de-France and the North West between 2014 and 2019, rather than at any other time in history.

In conclusion, the rise of populism amplifies differences in agency and social power across these two communities. It shows how uneven pulses of capital, goods, people and resources generate varying experiences of certainty and uncertainty that is a key dimension of class inequality and flashpoint for social movements. Crisis is certainly the refrain of populists. However, the experiences of industrial workers in Hauts-de-France and the North West, especially at a time of crisis, highlight how the state and its institutions remain a principal reference point for collective notions of substantive citizenship, rights and belonging. Insofar as these experiences occur in a context mediated by race and a racialised history, the rise of populism and the inherent demands for infrastructure on one hand and service delivery on the other bring into view how a populist politic emerged from these time spaces.

PART II: "We are at peace"

Chapter 6: Militarism, Gender, and Social Power

Introduction

In *Chapter 5*, I drew from the work of Berlant, Massey, and Yarrow on spatial divisions of labour to examine the rise of populist electoral politics in single industry dominant regions of France and South Africa (Berlant, 1996; Massey, 1995; Massey, 2013; Yarrow 1990, 1991). I argued that in places such as Hauts de France and South Africa's Limpopo, North West, and Gauteng provinces, contemporary populism can result from interactions between the structural, material, and social space(s) produced by the state's accumulation strategy (whether industry in the French case or mining in the South African case) and the political realities and 'worker identity' which this can give rise to.

In this Chapter, I advance my analysis beyond the political economy of single industry dominant regions towards the national level and the populist discourses and electoral outcomes which can be produced by neoliberalism more broadly. For example, how populist political parties leverage historical mechanisms of control and order once deployed by the state (i.e., militarism) and the extent to which this tactic seeps into the populist party 'capitalising' on the neoliberal state's retreat from its traditional role as an arbiter of public good (in favour of letting the markets decide) appropriating even the same language and rhetoric associated with more establish political organisations and state governments. What follows is primarily the product of remote and in-person field research in France and South Africa over the period September 2019 – December 2021 including interviews, visits to archives, and an examination of political party campaign materials, and media publications relating to the RN and EFF.

In all my discussions with RN and EFF officials, I was repeatedly told that the RN "defends the (French) people"[47] and that the EFF is a "radical and militant organisation for the economic emancipation of the working class"[48]. During interviews, RN and EFF voters explained that the parties brought their "struggles"[49] to the mainstream. Similarly, reports by political commentators and journalists described how the parties "use Parliament itself as an ideological battleground"[50]. This militaristic and militant imagery was evident not only in the oral accounts of the RN and the EFF by my interlocutors but also in the campaign materials, protests, and practices of the RN and EFF. As recently as 2021, we saw how:

> "governments around the world enacted unprecedented responses to COVID . . . (and how) governments have repeatedly used rhetoric invoking notions of war. . . often they've painted the virus as an "invader" and a "wicked enemy" (Ralph & Stoove, 2021).

In France, RN rallies were replete with images of French military figures, most prominently Joan of Arc, as well as militaristic uniform such as the beret. Similarly, South Africa's EFF donned berets, jumpsuits, and military style sunglasses, as well as militaristic titles such as "commander in chief" within the party structure (EFF, 2022). The proliferation of military symbols, terminology, and practice in the RN and EFF discourse were particularly striking for their contextual relevance against the backdrop of both France and South Africa's militarised political pasts including as far back as France's 100 years' war with England, to the Algerian war of independence, and South Africa's domestic experience of apartheid and the subsequent

[47] Interview, RN Municipal Counsellor, Amiens, France, August 24th, 2019
[48] Interview, EFF student organiser 1, Pretoria, South Africa, November 19th, 2020
[49] Interview, EFF student organiser 2, Pretoria, South Africa, November 19th, 2020.
[50] Interview, Political Commentator 1, Johannesburg, South Africa, August 13th, 2020

'liberation struggle' of the late 1980s and early 1990s. The question I had to examine was how the RN and EFF's militarised party culture relates to both the neoliberal state in France and South Africa as well as the working class voters it was directed towards.

Early approaches to researching military geography point towards a first step in interrogating militarism in populist discourse. Although early approaches were committed to questions of "state . . .empire. . (and) political identities. . ." associated with the military and defence institutions, they demonstrate the longstanding and unyielding connection between the earliest forms of the neoliberal state and concepts of conflict and violence (Woodward, 2005, 721). Traditional military geography, and the sub disciplinary focus in human geography, suggested an over emphasis on the military objectives of the state, "the contributions (geography) can make to the pursuit of military objectives, and essentially positivistic analysis of armed conflict and violence " (Woodward, 2005, 724). According to Lohman and Fuhriman (2019), these studies, which proliferated during times of war and conflict, account for geography's connections to empire within the Anglophone literature (Unwin, 1992, Jones and Phillips, 2005) and analysis of the state military – geography nexus in French and German literature (Heffernan, 1994, 21; Mamadouh, 2005).

To the extent that early approaches to militarism in Geography were state centric, they sit somewhat uncomfortably with what I observed as a pattern of militarism deployed by non-state actors. Several geographers have criticised these studies not only for the narrowness I have mentioned but also for being "inconsistent and controversial" in their application (Lohman & Fuhriman, 2019, 10). Despite these limitations, I propose that early approaches to militarism in geography illuminate the "ways in which militarism permeates societies the world over, in different forms and to different degrees" (Stavrianakis and Stern, 2018, 5-6) and consequently

how conflict and violence in the foundational years of a democracy might permeate space and time to inform the contemporary political culture.

The Second and more vital step advanced by the early approaches to militarism in geography is their encouragement of more critical and contemporary military geography. This emerging scholarship moves beyond the state towards "the impact of militarism and military activities on social life, societies, and landscapes" (Lohman & Fuhriman, 2019, 10). It takes for granted that:

> "militarism and war have become normalised and ordinary. . . occurring from above – in the discourses of national leaders and elites . . . and from below in ordinary people's attitudes towards the use of violence and expectations from their governments" (Wiist and White, 2017, 77)

and brings to the fore:

> "opportunities for questions to be asked about localised impacts and outcomes . . . ideas and strategies associated with militarism (which) are being operationalised as well as interpreted and responded to by a variety of actors on the ground" (Woon, 2019, 115-116).

In this Chapter I pay attention to the former (traditional) approaches while contributing substantively to the latter more critical and contemporary geographies of militarism literature. Insofar as both of these somewhat intersecting elements can be traced in the militaristic

ideologies, values, and practices of populist parties and the populist electoral calculus which they give rise to.

The mobilisation of militaristic ideology, values, and practice outside of the confines of the state and especially in the discursive repertoire of non-state actors such as political parties are well documented. In *Militarism and security: Dialogue, possibilities, and limits,* Stavrianakis and Stern argue that an increasing number of nonstate actors (spanning humanitarian groups, international non-governmental organisations, civic and political organisations) including those traditionally perceived as mediators of peace and security are increasingly facilitating the discursive shift from state-centric forms of militarism towards a "new militarism" (Stavrianakis and Stern, 2018, 3-4). In this Chapter I draw on Stavrianakis and Stern's conceptualisation of new militarism to examine the populist discourse of the RN and EFF at the national level. I operationalise a definition of new militarism as: a set of values, ideas, and practices which extend military influences into civilian social, political, and economic spheres through political conditioning and ideational trends (ibid; Thee, 1980, Shaw, 1991, Carlton, 2001). Within this framework, I leverage critical military geographies to further my argument about the extent to which the new militarism effects the populist electoral calculus in neoliberal democracies of the global North and South.

Historical Context : 'Gunpowder-brained'

> *gunpowder-brained, literally men who only think of war. . . the sight of a man in military uniform always reminds them of their fate. . . A soldier provokes apprehension, doubt, weariness, distrust. The memory has been passed down from their parents' generation.* Criselda Yabes, *Peace Warriors: on the trail with Filipino soldiers, 2017*

In *Peace Warriors: on the trail with Filipino soldiers* Filipino journalist Criselda Yabes writes about the day to day experiences of soldiers and everyday life inside the military camps of Muslim Mindanao. She narrates the soldiers' struggle to find peace, at the end of the Filipino's longest-running insurgency, despite the predominance of warring mindsets and mentalities typical to "men who only think of war" (Yabes, 2017, 20). Although Yabes' ethnography is not underpinned by academic debates, it sheds light on the interplay between war, conflict and the "gunpowder brained" subjectivities and political imaginaries which can flourish from it (ibid, 2017,20). I take empirical inspiration from Yabes in terms of grounding the militarised party culture of the RN and EFF in their historical context and the socio-political outcomes which protracted war and conflict can facilitate.

Both France and South Africa share in common a highly militarised past including wars abroad in the French case and liberation struggles at home in the South African case. The social and political memory of these militarised histories finds full expression in the populist discourse, values, and practices of the RN and EFF and the populist electoral calculus (characterised by apprehension, distrust, and a persistent struggle) which these parties give rise to. This section of the Chapter pays attention first to the militarised past of France and South Africa and the potential ways in which this past informs and inspires the contemporary rise of populist parties in both countries. I argue that the new militarism in French and South African populist politics highlights the inaccuracy of a powerful set of neoliberal national discourses (circulating in economically advanced nations) that we are at peace. I contend that the militarised party cultures of the RN and EFF demonstrate how social (and racial) tensions left unresolved by the neoliberal state can result in a lack of social reconciliation which is perpetuated and enacted by contemporary populist parties through their discursive repertoires and systems of representation.

The RN's legacy as a product of France's war in Algeria and the party's subsequent attachment to questions of military power and French nationalism serve not only as a foundation for the party's identity as a 'protector' of the interests of French people but also as a lens through which the RN makes sense of its gains and losses in France's electoral landscape. Much like the EFF, the rise of the RN is inextricably linked to the military history of France. The party's founder, Jean Marie Le Pen, is a veteran of the French-Algerian war of independence (Davies, 2012, 3) whose connections to Poujadism (a distinctly French brand of populist right wing politics) come from his tenure as Pierre Poujade's deputy (ibid). During France's war in Algeria, Le Pen served as a paratrooper (paras) and is frequently accused of engaging in brutal tactics in the Paras' effort to pacify the Algiers casbah (Cook, 2005).

Poujadism, which flourished in the last years of France's Fourth Republic, articulated the grievances and economic interests of shopkeepers and proprietor managers of small business who saw the economic and social changes of the time as a direct assault on French identity (Shields, 2004, 36). Beyond this personalised legacy is the heritage of France's losses (and perceived gains) in historical military operations. The French – Algerian truce, for example, was negotiated and implemented by senior figures within France's political establishment in order to stem unsustainable violence and economic losses in the European neighbourhoods of Algeria (Cohen, 2002; Evans, 1997). While it ultimately formed the basis of Charles De Gaulle's rise to power in French politics, the ambitions of French citizens and soldiers committed to the expansion of French influence and culture in Algeria were left fundamentally unsatisfied when the truce was codified in 1962.

The RN's early politics perpetuated these sentiments of loss and gain from the militarised state. In many ways, military conquest and the defence of France's nationhood against elite interests

(such as those within established politics who facilitating the Algerian-French truce) become the focal point of the RN's early politics and their discourse on the preservation of French identity, a defence of the French people (against foreign and domestic threats) and the party's own self-presentation as an ostracised party "excluded from the corridors of French power", by the established "band of four" prominent political parties in France (Davies, 2012, 4-10). According to the Rally, the *Rassemblement pour Republique* (RPR), *Union pour la Democratie Francais* (UDF), *Parti Socialist* (PS) and *Parti Communiste Francais* represent a "corrupt oligarchy of parties at the centre of French politics" (Davies, 2012, 3). By espousing a common man politic, the Rally managed to cement its thematic focus on the plight of ordinary French people and what it saw as injustices in the day to day lives of French citizens – a victimised class with whom the party empathised (Davies, 2012; Birenbaum, 1991).

Through its early politics, the RN's rhetoric casts the long shadow of France's war in Algeria into contemporary French political discourse. This is evidenced in part by the party's longstanding veneration of French military figures such as Charles De Gaulle and Joan of Arc. For example, in Paris, I spoke with an RN member of the European Parliament who said:

> "Marine Le Pen is very much like Charles De Gaulle in her leadership. De Gaulle had a lot of conviction, and many people miss him, but with Marine Le Pen, we have the authority of De Gaulle again in French politics" [51].

[51] Interview. Annika Bruna. RN member of the European Parliament. Paris, France. 1st September 2019.

In Amiens, I spoke with a regional counsellor who likened Le Pen to Joan of Arc stating:

> *"*she (Le Pen) is fighting for the sovereignty of France and the French people . . . very much like the French hero Joan of Arc. Under Le Pen, the party continues to pursue the fight for a sovereign France. We want to be able to determine how we govern our country, as we have always. . . we believe in Europe, but we believe in a European construction made of sovereign European space*"*[52]

Like the EFF, military figures and military symbols feature prominently in many of the RN's official events. The reference to Joan of Arc, who is considered a heroine of France and a martyr in the Hundred Years' war against the English, was also a central feature in the party's 2014 May Day Rally. At the rally, images of Joan of Arc were used to represent and reinforce the RN's position as a bulwark against globalisation and liberal immigrant politics in France (McPartland, 2014). Three years later, at the launch of the party's 2017 presidential manifesto in Lyon which was themed *Freedom for France and a Voice for the People*, Marine Le Pen stood in front of a banner with the words "in the name of the people", further espousing the party's populist politics and calling on militaristic imaginaries of the RN as a protector of and fighter for the French people and French identity. In 2020, notwithstanding the rise of COVID-9 and the containment measures in place in France, Marine Le Pen "pressed ahead with her party's annual May 1 tradition of honouring mediaeval heroine Joan of Arc" in defiance of COVID-19 lockdown rules (Irish, 2020). Finally, despite a media hiatus following her loss in the April 2022 French Presidential election, Le Pen made a public statement on May 1st urging the public to vote in favour of RN deputies in the upcoming parliamentary elections. In the video, Le Pen

[52] Interview. Patricia Chagnon. RN Regional Counsellor. Amiens. August 2019.

conspicuously wears a necklace featuring a large cross – a symbol taken directly from the coat of arms of Joan of Arc which connotes to how holy she was and simultaneously alludes to Joan of Arc being burned at the cross – further mobilising the imaginary of Joan of Arc as the party's own nationalist symbol (ibid, 2020; Adey, 2022).

In South Africa the 1990 opening of parliament speech by then President FW De Klerk was posited as the end of a 'season of violence' intended to usher in a "time of reconstruction and reconciliation" [53]. However, the latter years of the apartheid state and the early years of South Africa's new democratic dispensation proved that sentiments and realities on the ground were irrefutably contrary to De Klerk's assertion in 1990.

On 17th March 17 2020, three days before I was scheduled to travel to South Africa for field research, the country closed its borders in response to COVID-19. Despite the lockdown measures, I was able to conduct remote 'field' research, beginning with a series of interviews with officials of the EFF and South African opposition parties including senior officials in the incumbent African National Congress (ANC). In one of these telephone interviews, during the early stages of my remote field research in April 2020, I spoke at length to Mr Mikateko Mahlaule, a politician from Limpopo and member of parliament (MP) for the ANC about the role of military ideas, values, and practices in South African politics. Our conversation began with the centrality of militarism in the 'negotiated settlement' for a democratic transition in South Africa. As Mahlaule sees it:

[53] FW De Klerk (Opening of Parliament on 2nd February 1990). See: https://omalley.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/03lv02039/04lv02103/05lv02104/06lv02105.htm

> *"*you can't think about Malema's EFF . . . and the spectacle of the beret . . . without understanding the era of politics and the type of revolutionary . . . struggle politics that raised Julius Malema*"* [54]

The 'struggle politics' Mahlaule describes is the era of political violence and the armed struggle against apartheid which was a key factor in ushering in pro democratic negotiation and a transition to the 'negotiated peace' of the 1990s in South Africa[55]. Indeed, political violence was a mechanism for the consolidation of power by the apartheid regime as well as a tool for resisting the increasingly draconian system of apartheid in the late 1980s. Ultimately, the rise of political violence perpetuated by the state and deployed by forces of the liberation movement made South Africa ungovernable and the futurity of the apartheid regime increasingly unsustainable. According to the Nelson Mandela Foundation (1990), De Klerk opened the second session of the 9th parliament of South Africa stating:

> "a realisation by an increasing number of South Africans that only a negotiated understanding among the representative leaders of the entire population can ensure lasting peace"[56].

De Klerk went on to announce the unbanning of political parties - including the African National Congress (ANC), the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), and the South African Communist Party (SACP)- the release of political prisoners, and the abolishment of media and emergency regulations under the state of emergency (ibid). Over the course of 5 years South

[54] Interview, Mikateko Mahlaule, Johannesburg, 08 April 2020.
[55] Interview, Mikateko Mahlaule, Johannesburg, 08 April 2020.
[56] De Klerk, F.W. 1990. FW de Klerk's speech to Parliament. 2 February 1990. South Africa.

Africa went from a militarised state constituted by social conflict towards democratisation and 'racial reconciliation'. However, as De Klerk put it, the demilitarisation and democratic transition were the result of "a negotiated understanding among the representative leaders" at the highest level(s) of regional and national government (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 1990). Ultimately, the settlement proved to be a short-lived compromise and a tenuous agreement, at best, between the political establishment(s) of the time.

In April – June 2019, I spent several weeks reading through archives held by the Nelson Mandela Foundation which are held at the Centre of Memory (in Houghton, South Africa) including reports produced by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and interviews with first hand witnesses of the violence of the 1980s and early 1990s conducted by Padraig O'Malley[57]. Archival research was crucial in understanding the extent to which demilitarisation and South Africa's transition out of the 'season of violence' in the late 1980s and early 1990s trickled down from the political establishment of the day to popular sentiments on the ground. In contrast to the reports of government and state agencies, experiences on the ground reflected a continuation of violence and the persistence of a militarised ethic both within factions of political parties and between groups at the local level well beyond 1990. Within the armed wing of the ANC (*Umkonto weSizwe*), for example, several leaders expressed a commitment to continuing the armed struggle.

[57] The Padraig O'Malley interviews are a resource held by the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory. Much of the archival data is available online. See: O'Malley, P. O'Malley Heart of Hope. 1985-2005. O'Malley's Political Interviews. Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory, South Africa. https://omalley.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/03lv00017.htm

During an interview with Siphiwe Nyanda (then an MK leader operating in the ANC underground), Nyanda expressed that:

> "when the unbanning happened, we continued with what we were doing until we were given other instructions. . we behaved as normal soldiers would, following the instructions of the ANC[58]

Political violence and civil war did not only continue following the negotiated peace in 1990, but it also increased well into the early 90s including in concurrence with the first democratic elections in South Africa which took place in 1994. Following the 'era of negotiations and transition', the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) received statements suggesting pertaining to more than 5,000 instances of politically motivated violence between 1989 and immediately before the first democratic election in 1994. Overall, between early-1990 and the democratic election in April 1994, more than 14 000 South Africans died in instances of politically related violence (ibid).

The escalation of violence across South Africa coincided with a splintering of political factions and the establishment of new political parties in the country including the rise of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) as a national party in July 1990 and the development of Self-Defence Units (SDUs) in largely ANC and United Democratic Front (UDF) strongholds (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 1998). Instead of a clean break from the violence and militarisation

[58] " O'Malley, P. Nyanda, Siphiwe. 27 October 2001. O'Malley's Political Interviews. Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory, South Africa. https://omalley.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/03lv00017/04lv00018/05lv00221/06lv00243.htm

of the 1990s, the early years of democracy and the very foundations of post democratic party politics saw the embedding of these values in the 'new South Africa' most apparently though the redeployment of militant political leaders and veterans of the armed struggle into the incumbent government of the ANC and contemporary populist parties such as the EFF.

The rise of the EFF as a political party in South Africa is inextricably linked to the militarisation and protracted social conflict of the late 1980s and early 1990s in the country. Prior to founding the EFF, Julius Malema succeeded militaristic figures within the ANC including Makoba (who is credited with the popularisation of the armed struggle song *Kill the Boer kill the Farmer*) as the President of the ANCYL and became a mentee of Madikizela-Mandela (who is a prominent female figure in the armed struggle both due to her insistence on wearing military attire throughout the late 80s and early 90s as well as her use of militarised violence via necklacing during liberation struggle). Malema credits Makoba and Madikizela-Mandela for "producing" his political career (Roets, 2018, 187). It is this political grooming which arguably facilitated and contributed to the continuation of a militarised ethic in the discourse of the EFF.

The prizing of military ideals is evident both during Malema's tenure in the ANCYL and his founding of the EFF. As President of the ANCYL Malema faced considerable controversy for publicly stating that the League was willing to "take up arms and kill for Zuma" (News 24, 2008). During a 2010 rally on the premises of the University of Johannesburg, Malema sang the Kill the Boer, kill the Farmer song as hundreds of students and young people listened on (Mail and Guardian, 2008; Roets, 2018, 191). Yet, it is upon founding the EFF that Malema's veneration of military symbols, terminology, and practices (such as performances of hegemonic masculinity, hierarchy, and obedience in politics) find full expression in South Africa's post democratic political arena.

In the context of France and South Africa's militarised pasts, we see the RN and EFF reproduce and leverage this socio-political history in their populist discourse. In France, the RN mobilises the imaginary of a strong and impenetrable nation by keeping the legacy of France's colonial conquests alive while perpetuating the notion that the country is still under attack by external forces. In South Africa, the EFF deploys the history of the armed struggle and frequently re-enacts the days when the 'people' had a clear enemy and focus for their frustrations in the apartheid government. In both cases, we see that efforts at peace and reconciliation which focus primarily on bringing warring elites to the negotiating table do not address the social and economic conditions underlying civil violence or "the rage of soldiers and civilians who, often left out of such settlements or marginalized by them, may look for scapegoats against whom to vent their anger and frustration" (Lipschutz, 1998, 6). Under such circumstances, a peace among elites has little chance of being a just or lasting one, inasmuch as, in the longer term, it does little for the population at large. Yet, much of the literature on peace and conflict resolution pays little attention to the problem of social/societal reconciliation.

With this historical context in mind, a critical approach to the study of the geographies of militarism that is capable of understanding their full geographical constitution and expression including within civilian spaces is all the more necessary. What follows is a contribution to this analytical approach wherein geographies of militarism within the populist electoral calculus (as the shaping of civilian space and social relations by military objectives, rationales, and structures, either as part of the deliberate extension of military influence into civilian spheres of life and the prioritising of military institutions, or as a by-product of those processes) can be fully conceptualised.

Contemporary Context: A Militarised Party Culture

In the sections which follow, I argue that militarism structures populism through systems of representation. I consider representation as both a social practice and a strategy through which meaning is constituted and communicated such as through the use of symbols, terminology, and practices. Systems of representation are an unavoidable element of militarism and there is a vast body of work within the geographies of militarism that attends to the representational practices deployed by military institutions, armed forces, and defence institutions (Woodward, 2005, 721). While much of this literature seeks to explain military presence and power across environments, landscapes, and spaces, it tends to be confined to geographies of the West and their attendant institutions including those as far back in history as ancient Rome and as modern as England (Woodward 1999; 2001) and North America (Taylor, 2003). In this sense, the existing literature does little to explain how the vestiges of militarism operate in the global South and how these compare to the global North. Indeed, this gap in the literature also does little to elaborate on how these traditional practices of representation extend to contemporary populist electoral politics.

What follows is a critical and comparative examination of the RN and EFF's discursive repertoire. I argue that the use of fundamentally militaristic symbols, terminology, and practices by both parties provides a critical inroad into the ways in which militarism has come to similarly structure the discursive repertoire of contemporary populist parties (in democracies of both the global North and the global South). I also contend that the deployment of these strategies within the populist electoral calculus draws from traditionally military modus operandi to leverage perceptions of legitimacy, authority, and power.

Military Symbols

The first level of analysis are the ways in which contemporary populist parties use quintessentially militaristic symbols including the beret, military figures, and a fundamentally militarised aesthetic to legitimise their political activities and discourse in relation to both working class and nationalistic electoral bases.

Figure 9. Marine Le Pen wears a blue beret at a campaign stop in Brachay, northern France. Source: The Spectator, 2016.



Figure 9 depicts RN leader, Marine Le Pen, in a militaristic beret. Since the mid-20th Century, berets have been a component of the uniforms of many armed forces beginning with a blue bonnet worn by the Scottish forces in the 16th and 17th century, the Spanish military during the Carlist Wars of Succession, and the French Chasseurs Alpins (Alpine Forces) who wore the headgear (described in some early accounts as "a soft cap or tam o'shanter") due to its resistance to extreme mountain weather (Lubitz, 2016). As early as the 1800s, the beret became a political

statement "when Tomas Zumalacarregui, a leader of the Carlists appeared wearing a red beret. . . beginning a long line of revolutionaries and militarized persons donning the flat hat" (ibid, 2016). In the contemporary political imaginary, prominent images associated with revolutionary figures including Cuba's Che Guevara, Burkina Faso's Thomas Sankara, Venezuela's Hugo Chavez, and Fred Hampton) one of the founders of America's Black Panther Party) feature these figures in militaristic uniforms including the beret – marking the beret as an item quintessentially worn as part of the uniform of the military. When RN and EFF officials, particularly the leaders of the party, wear the beret it can be considered a symbol of militarism.

For its own part, the RN uses the blue beret to nod to its foundation in France's military history. It is important here to consider the longstanding relationship between militarism and the very foundations of the French Republic, particularly how France became one of the first militarised societies (both in army and naval terms) in response to perceived threats from abroad (Hicks, 2008, 136). During the early years of the French Revolution, the fledgeling republic declared war against perceived aggressors and enacted mass levies and conscription campaigns to protect '*la patrie en danger*' (the nation in danger). Much of this mobilisation and indeed a majority of the soldiers conscripted to the armed forces were working class men from the northern regions of the country (Boudon, 2004). As early as the 1880's and including the Napoleonic wars, the French 'Chasseurs Alpins' (Alpine Hunters) who are an elite mountain infantry force in the French army trained to operate in both mountainous terrain and in urban warfare wore the beret as part of the standard uniform (Pawly, 2012, 43). Even today, the Alpins are touted as an elite force of the French military who undergo "demanding training" characterised by "challenging drills" in presumably impossible conditions to perfect their expertise in defence of the Republic (NATO, 2022).

The historical and contemporary proliferation of the blue beret as a mark of strength and expertise further embeds the symbol in the public discourse. In 1959, following the Algerian War of Independence, the blue beret was replaced by a blue forage cap worn by all non-paratroopers and Legion units further deploying this symbol into the contemporary visual culture and discourse (Sumner and Vauvillier, 2012, 62). The use of the blue beret is thus a vital discursive scaffolding for the RN's ideological mobilisation particularly of the working class insofar as it represents the French military history, the elite strength and capacity of France's military institutions in defence of the republic, and the strict codes and systems governing this industry. All of which tie into the historical and contemporary working class reality as an under celebrated sector of society and les oubliés de la France (the forgotten of France) in an increasingly globalised context and the working class's cultural connection to the imaginary of the French Republic.

Figure 10. A banner depicting Joan of Arc displayed at the RN May Day Rally reads "No to Brussels. Yes, to France". Source: Pierre Andrieu/AFP 2014.



The image of Joan of Arc is perhaps the second most ubiquitous military symbol deployed by the RN. In Figure 10, a likeness of Joan of Arc is displayed on a banner at an RN rally, behind Marine Le Pen. Arc is a nationalistic symbol of France's victory over Britain in the 100 years' war - one of the most significant conflicts of the Middle Ages. As such, Joan of Arc is a potent figure in the French political imaginary. The image of Joan of Arc, who is considered a heroine of France and a martyr in the Hundred Years' war against the English, was a central feature in the RN's 2014 May Day Rally – an event at once aimed at the working class and at the RN's more right wing electoral base. At the rally, images of Joan of Arc were used to represent and reinforce the RN's position as a bulwark against globalisation and liberal immigrant politics in France (McPartland, 2014). At the launch of the party's 2017 presidential manifesto in Lyon which was themed *Freedom for France and a Voice for the People*, Marine Le Pen stood in front of a banner of Joan of Arc embellished with the words "in the name of the people", further espousing the party's populist politics and calling on militaristic imaginaries of the RN as a protector of and fighter for the French people and French identity (Rothwell, 2017).

Figure 11. EFF, Election Poster in 2019. Source: News 24, 2019 https://twitter.com/news24/status/1110836387287306245?lang=bg.



The beret is equally ubiquitous in the EFF's campaigns and visual discourse, as seen in the EFF election campaign posted depicted in Figure 11. This militarised aesthetic, as signified by red berets and other faux military gear, features prominently in the party's electoral campaigns and official events suggesting that it is of equal significance to the EFF as the party's manifestos, speeches, press releases and policy proposals. The beret is a particularly potent revolutionary symbol and Malema has acknowledged in his own words that it is a symbol associated with revolutionary leaders such as Che Guevara, Fidel Castro, and Thomas Sankara who are also giant figures in the working class imaginary especially in South Africa (Thelwell 2014).

During the 2019 elections, the red beret featured prominently in the EFF's campaigns. The party's election poster features Malema dressed in a red beret which unambiguously indicates the

EFF's revolutionary and military stance. The embroidery depicted on the EFF's berets is also of significance. It incorporates a five pointed star, a raised fist with a spear, the African continent, and a mineshaft. With the exception of the mineshaft, these symbols all appear in the logos of established political parties in South Africa. The ANC (founded 1912) logo contains a clenched fist with a spear, the South African Communist Party (founded in 1921) logo includes a black star, and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) (founded 1959) logo incorporates the African continent and a gold star.

The use of military symbols in the South Africa context connotes to the struggle for freedom by liberation organisations (even in as much as it borrows from the use of such symbols internationally). These organisations have a much longer and more established history in the country. In this sense, the EFF's beret and the symbols contained within the logo featured on the beret, therefore claim authenticity and legitimacy for the party within the country's formative history and in the context of the working class imaginary therein. Remarkably, the beret aggrandises the position of the EFF in the contemporary political context. Despite the party representing a minority of South Africans, accounting for 1.8 million votes and barely more than 10.7 percent of the national vote during the 2019 General Election (IEC, 2019), the spectacle of 100 uniformly dressed EFF supporters in red berets and marching with party flags creates "the illusion of a vast army of freedom fighters across South Africa, ready to mobilise at a moment's notice"[59].

[59] Interview, Matthius Pauwels University of Johannesburg, August 2021.

Military Terminology

The second element which bares analysis is ostensible use of military terminology which pervades the populist discourse of both the RN and EFF. Here, characteristically military terms including 'struggle', 'take up arms', 'defend' and 'protect' have come to be so embedded in the parties' campaigns such that the media and public discourse surrounding them is entrenched with the same terminology.

In October 2019, I embarked on an ambitious pilot field research study from the UK to France. I spent over a month in France travelling by train from Paris to Amiens, and then onwards to Lille and Calais (where I departed back to England aboard the Dover ferry). While most of my interviews were scheduled ahead of the trip, I was able to use snowball sampling to schedule additional in-person interviews with interviewees ranging from RN members and senior party officials to journalists, political commentators, and policy practitioners, and card-carrying members of the party. During one such interview in October 2019, I spoke with Patricia Chagnon who was the RN's regional councillor in Hauts de France (Picardie) at the time and a prominent figure in the region owing in part to her rank in the decidedly anti-immigrant RN despite being a naturalised citizen of France. Our conversation reinforced the ways in which militaristic terms and imaginaries pervade the discourse of the party. According to Chagnon, the RN's philosophy which the party "stands for. . . is to defend first and foremost the interests of the French people" [60] .

[60] Interview, Patricia Chagnon (Conseillère régionale de Picardie), Lille, France, October 29th ,2019.

She elaborated that:

> "we think of French people in the first place. If the French government doesn't do that, then it is not a French government. When we take that (defending the interests of French people) as a fact, we can deduct from those other policies. For example, "we are against liberal trade in the European when it harms French people" (ibid, 2019).

In a similar conversation with an RN municipal councillor in Amiens, my interlocutor boldly indicated that:

> "The RN is a force for the people of France. We will fight for the working class until the last (breath) because we and they are the beneficiaries of the social and economic conditions in France"[61].

These terms not only reinforce militaristic notions of order and discipline within the party (whose objective and result I discuss in subsequent sections of this Chapter) but it also brings concerns which traditionally fall within the purview of the state's defence institutions (including security and protection) into the civilian space. Insofar as populists deploy this language in the public discourse and remain complicit in its attachment to their campaigns within this space it also provides a legitimacy over the use of force, typically reserved for the state, into the purview of non-state actors. This has contemporaneously positive and negative results in the electoral space as evidenced by the use of military terminology in South Africa's EFF.

[61] Interview, RN Municipal Counsellor, Amiens, France, August 24th, 2019.

Malema's introduction to contemporary politics outside of his tenure in the ANC is inextricably linked to militaristic discourses particularly his popularisation of the "*bulala amabhunu* – Kill the Boer, Kill the farmer" song which was popular during South Africa's armed struggle against apartheid. When the ANC made its legal entry into South African politics in 1990, it brought the rhetoric of armed struggle and the spectre of militarism from the 1980s into the post democratic dispensation. The founding President of the ANC Youth League (ANCYL) was a militant man named Peter Makoba. After the first democratic election, Makoba was tapped by the ANC to become a Deputy Minister in Nelson Mandela's cabinet (Roets, 2018, 180). While Makoba stands as a giant figure in the anti-apartheid movement, he was also a controversial figure in the early years of democracy and is credited, for example, with the popularisation of the militant song "Kill the boer, Kill the Farmer" (bulala amabhunu) which was often sung by the militant wing of the ANC-in exile (ibid, 2018).

In 1993, then a senior figure within the ANC, Peter Makoba spoke at a mass rally convened by the party in Cape Town and chanted "kill the boer, kill the farmer" while urging students to "prepare for war" (Roets, 2018, 181). The song thus maintained its contemporary relevance through the ANC, often sung at various rallies held by the party through the early 1990s including the funeral of MK veteran, Chris Hani, and as recently as June 2002, at Makoba's funeral (ibid, 2018). The song not only normalised war and preparations for war but also the earliest examples of state military discourse and terminology appropriated by political actors in South Africa and the resulting politics of venerating the military ideals of the 'struggle' in the contemporary political imagination (Mihali, 2016, 140; Roets, 2018, 187;Mann, 1988).

The undercurrent of militarism and civil unrest propagated by the ANC through its songs, speeches, and attire found intergenerational purchase through the leadership of figures such as Makoba and Winnie Madikizela-Mandela. Through figures such as these and the ANC's campaigns militarism ultimately pervaded the politic and discourse of contemporary south African political culture and influenced young members of the party including Malema who would succeed Makoba in his position within the Youth League and claim Madikizela Mandela as a personal mentor. Here, militarism seeps into the populist electoral politics of the EFF.

The rise of the EFF as a political party in South Africa is inextricably linked to the militarisation and protracted social conflict of the late 1980s and early 1990s in the country. Prior to founding the EFF, Julius Malema succeeded Makoba as the President of the ANCYL and became a mentee of Madikizela-Mandela. Malema went on to credit both stalwarts for "producing" his political career (Roets, 2018, 187). By her own account, Madikizela-Mandela claimed that she had "groomed" Malema and referred to him as her "product" well before his rise to senior positions in the ANC and ultimately in his capacity as leader of the EFF (ibid; Forde, 2011, 62). It is this political grooming which arguably facilitated and contributed to the continuation of a militarised ethic in the discourse of the EFF as signified by the party's use of militaristic terminology.

As President of the ANCYL Malema faced considerable controversy for publicly stating that the League was willing to "take up arms and kill for Zuma"[62] and during a 2010 rally on the premises of the University of Johannesburg, Malema sang the "kill the boer, kill the farmer" song as hundreds of students and young people listened on (Mail and Guardian, 2008; Roets, 2018, 191). In November 2016, Malema appeared in the Bloemfontein Magistrate Court (in Newcastle),

[61] News 24. 21st June 2008. "We will kill for Zuma". https://www.news24.com/news24/we-will-kill-for-zuma-20080616

where he was facing charges for singing "kill the boer, kill the farmer" (in 2010) under the apartheid-era riotous assemblies act (News 24, 2016). Following his court appearance, Malema addressed a crowd of supporters outside the courthouse stating:

> "When we leave here, you see any beautiful piece of land, you will like it, occupy it! It belongs to you. It is the land of your forefathers. It was the land that was taken from us by white people, by force, through genocide. They killed our people!" [63]

and

> "when we take over power, Afrikaner males you will know your place . . . Afrikaner boys. . . the poppe sal dans. The EFF is coming for you, boy!"[64]

A report compiled by the AfriForum suggests that the month following Malema's speech saw at least 12 farm murders "as opposed to the monthly average of 6.25 for that year" constituting an "upward variance of 92% in farm murders" (Hermann, 2013; AfriForum, 2017). The EFF faced a similar rhetorical crisis when, having won 6% of the vote during the 2014 general election, the party's commander in chief threatened to "remove the government through the barrel of a gun" (Al Jazeera, 2016). Here, the use of military terminology in the EFF's electoral calculus serves an at once divisive and precaratising function while simultaneously positioning the party as a

[63] News 24, 28th February 2017."If you see a beautiful piece of land, take it – Malema". https://www.news24.com/News24/if-you-see-a-beautiful-piece-of-land-take-it-malema-20170228 .
[64] Malema speech. 14th November 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dGuObAzWyi4

legitimate protector of those who did not benefit from the change in political dispensation of the early 1990s.

Military Practices

The third element of militarism in contemporary populism(s) are the employment of military practices. Populism seeks to set itself apart from other political parties, so it is necessarily anti-establishment and its politics anti-institutional (Taggart, 2000, 88). However, this requires populist parties to navigate a somewhat intractable balance between exceptionalism and organisational efficiency. As argued by Taggart, this anti-party tradition creates distinct challenges for organisational mobilisation (2000:103). In this section, I draw on Taggart's observation to argue that militaristic organisational forms are one method through which populists circumvent the challenge of organisational mobilisation and create 'simple' forms of organisation (ibid, 2000).

Through militaristic practices such as marching and party structure (and the attendant prizing of military ideals such as order, discipline, and obedience), populists are able to retain their distinctly anti-party tradition while addressing potential obstacles to organizational mobilization including dissent and intra-party division. Moreover, a militarised party structure addresses the demand for an unmediated link between the leader and his/her followers through both centralization and personalization. The use of militaristic practices in populist party structures thus contributes to a growing body of work on populism as an organisational form. It also advances the literature on military geographies as militaristic organisational forms transcend defence institutions and inform the structure and practice(s) of non-state actors in civilian spaces.

It is important to note the longstanding scholarly agreement on concentrations of power in military networks and their lack of elasticity relative to place. Early empirical studies of the geographies of military power as early as the work of Mann (1988) in his analysis of the 'lost geographies of power' and Allen (1999; 2004) observe the ways in which power in military networks is "highly concentrated, and coercive relative to place" (Woodward, 2005,718). These early studies brought to the fore how power in military networks is highly concentrated, coercive, and mobilized relative to place, yet limited when stretched (ibid, 2005; Allen 2004). More recent empirical research including analysis of post war military networks in Liberia demonstrate the ways in which concentrations of power in militaries can be so intractable that even following war times the structures of command and control are obstinate (Themner 2015, 334). Along these lines, the use of military practices by the RN and EFF suggests that military power and controls over space can extend beyond the conceptual spaces traditionally observed by military geographies into non state and civilian spaces.

In the next section, I depart from early empirical studies of the geography of military power to argue that military power and control are elastic when considered in terms of the populist electoral calculus. Here, the practices of the RN and EFF demonstrate not only the ways in which military power can be operationalised by non-state actors through controls over representational strategies but also the mechanisms through which this is operationalised and 'stretched' into non state spaces. In this way, the work contributes to a critical military geography, which should not just describe the outcomes of military power and control but also the mechanisms through which it can operate beyond the realm of the state and its pursuit of military objectives.

Marching is a characteristic part of RN rallies. During the party's May Day rally, and as early as the 1980s, RN members and senior party officials have marched to the statue of Joan of Arc, an adopted symbol of French nationalism, for their celebrations (Fraser, 2014). Beyond mobilising Joan of Arc as a core symbol of the party's core message on nationalism and identity, the marches have been used as a forum to display the party's strength in terms of numbers and support (Davies, 1993, 10; News Wires, 2012). During the 2014 May Day Rally, Marine Le Pen addressed a crowd of "thousands of supporters of the far right national front party" (Beardesley, 2014; Fraser, 2014). The march, which takes place annually on workers day, is not only a deployment of militaristic discourse particularly towards working class French voters but also a platform through which the party deploys militaristic practices and visual imaginaries to demonstrate their own capacity. At the 2014 rally, Marine Le Pen and other senior party officials stood in front of a banner depicting a woman in armour demonstrating Le Pen's own capacity as a female leader. However, the march has also been the site of violence in the past, reinforcing the potentiality for elements of military power such as coercion and violence to also seep into civilian spaces when mobilised by populist parties.

In October 2019, I travelled to Lille (in the North of France) as part of a pilot field research study. On the 28th of October I met with two RN members, at L'Ecart café on Rue Jeanne d'Arc, who participated in the RN's 1995 re-election campaign. According to my interlocuters, during the 1995 May Day celebration, the RN's march to the statue of Joan of Arc turned violent when "a group of white men, who were probably nationalists"[65] broke away from the main procession and murdered a Moroccan immigrant. Media accounts of the incident suggest that the man was murdered when the group threw him into the river Seine in Paris (Marcus, 1996, 310). Although the political fallout and subsequent media coverage painted a negative image of

[65] Interview, Pascal, RN Member and Catherine, RN Member 7, Lille, France. October 28th, 2019.

the RN and Le Pen (senior) had not specifically called for violence, the incident further demonstrates how the RN's use of militaristic and simultaneously nationalistic discourse can broaden its electoral appeal to an electoral base which the party cannot effectively contain or control.

Militarised Party Structure

Beyond the use of marching, is the RN's use of militaristic practice in terms of the party structure. As early as 2013, when the RN transitioned from leadership under Le Pen senior to Marine, their rallies and meetings were replete with militaristic narratives and performances of dynastic continuity. For example, during the May 1 rally in Paris in 2013, Marine Le Pen's closing speech included the passing of blue roses between Le Pen senior and Marine, father and daughter seated alongside each other (with Marine at the centre), and both "were wearing matching black suits, with MLP wearing a powder blue scarf and JMLP in a powder blue tie" (Geva, 2020, 11). A student who was present at the meeting indicated that the function showed that:

> ". . .the RN is the only party to maintain, over decades, its political coherence,
>
> and Marine Le Pen, like Jean-Marie Le Pen, is committed to this coherence.
>
> All these years he sowed the seeds for her to take power."[66]

These militaristic performances of dynastic continuity have also been perpetuated through reproduction of ritual displays of military discipline at RN rallies. Beyond the comparison of Marine Le Pen to French military figures such as General De Gaulle and Napoleon, militaristic practices are implicit to party gatherings and events. In October 2021, I conducted a telephone interview with Francophone journalist Nicholas Vinocur, who was based in Brussels at the time – overseeing POLITICO Europe's policy – but was educated in France and previously led a team of journalists providing coverage on European politics, policy, and technology. Nicholas was directly involved in providing coverage and analysis of the 2017 French presidential election

[66] Ibid, 2020.

including the RN's campaign launch in Lyon. During our discussion, I learned that during the 2017 campaign launch in Lyon, which occurred amidst Le Pen's co-optation of Trump's populist rhetoric in the United States, two working class members of the RN from Avignon had brought American flags to the launch. According to Vinocur, the two planned to raise the flags in solidarity with the US election and Trump's presidential election which had taken place several months prior to Le Pen's event. Vinocur recalled that:

> "private security hired by the RN approached them and told them to take down the flags. . . and instead of talking about their rights to freedom of expression, they were more upset that they were not told earlier to take down the flags and worried they may have been photographed. . . bringing the party into disrepute"[67].

Vinocur recounted other displays of adherence, military comportment, and discipline "like they were following seemingly implicit rules" during the rally including chanting and marching behind Le Pen in distinctly militaristic formation even as she was surrounded by senior RN officials dressed in military attire (ibid, October 2021).

The EFF has become synonymous with militaristic practices including the singing of songs and dances from the days of the armed struggle against apartheid, stylised military attire, raising of fists, marching, and other re-enactments of military practice. The party's commitment to a militaristic visual culture finds full expression in its uniforms and marches. The militaristic connotation of men in jumpsuits, sunglasses, and berets is an undeniable one particularly within the South Africa context. Under apartheid and particularly during a state of emergency following

[67] Interview, Nicholas Vinocur, remote interview, October 2021.

the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960 – when South African police fired on a crowd of Black people in the township of Sharpeville near Vereeniging killing or wounding more than 250 of them – the sight of members of the South African marine troops dressed in jumpsuits, army caps, and often wearing black sunglasses marching through Black townships to stage raids, roadblocks, and other securitising measures were not uncommon (Blakemore, 2021). Schieber writes that the presence of armed forces in Black townships demonstrated the "immediate power of the government, with the military in reserve" and the "overwhelming strength of the police forces and a legal structure which permits the use of wide ranging powers in the name of defending national interest" (1976, 27).

Beyond the practical usefulness of drill insofar as it centralises the command of a group of soldiers, marching in formation when deployed by the EFF serves as a performative re-enactment of the struggle days under apartheid. It also serves a particular function in terms of the party's populist calculus as it satisfies a longing for simpler times when a clear and more straightforward enemy, in the South African government, could be identified and against whom the Black population could fight or 'take back' power.

Figure 12. EFF members and senior officials march to the offices of the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC) dressed in red jumpsuits, sunglasses, and berets[68]. Source: News 24, 2014.



The EFF's re-enactment of struggle days and its mobilisation of military practices such as stylised uniforms and marching has become an increasingly frequent visual in the South African political imaginary. Between 2020 – 2021, I conducted 9 months of in-person and remote field research in South Africa. Part of the research contributing to this Chapter included consulting two different, yet arguably mutually influencing, sets of data including visual archives of EFF election and campaign materials (from 2014 – 2019) held by the party and over 250 images, videos, and media interviews related to the EFF held by South African news media. Both the party and the media's coverage of the EFF's march to the offices of South Africa's Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) stand out as the moment when the EFF succeeded in deploying its

[68] Interview, EFF Political Commissar / Student Command, Johannesburg, 29th July 2020.

brand and image - as a radical and militant organisation - into the public discourse and cemented both its militarised culture and its ideological position in relation to the established organs of South African government.

In February 2014, the EFF engaged in "a battle with South Africa's Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), President Zuma and the Minister of Home Affairs" (EFF, 2014). During the 2014 protest, the party launched an urgent application in a bid to interdict the IEC from claiming the registration fee required to contest the provincial and national elections. According to the EFF, the R605,000 (28,000 GBP) fee for participating in an election was prohibitively expensive for parties in the South African context (Mbete, 2015, 40). Although the interdict was dismissed (with costs), Malema "arrived at the IEC offices in EFF branded trucks, wearing the military suits, red Che beret, and those police sunglasses . . . to deposit the money"[69]. The spectacle of the EFF opposing South Africa's executive and the IEC, particularly against the backdrop of the militarised aesthetic, was reminiscent of securitised townships and urban areas under apartheid. It conjured a visual comment on both the numerical power of the party (in terms of its electoral base) but also its power in relation to the position of the vis a vis established organs of South Africa's post democratic government.

The EFF describes itself as a "radical and militant economic emancipation movement" (EFF, 2022). The party structure, including the senior leadership and provincial command teams, certainly reflect the militance of the party with organisational branches including the "commander-in-chief", the "ground forces", the "military wing" and the "student command" (ibid, 2022). This system of governance is one of several mechanisms which populists borrow

[69] Interview, Nick Bauer (Political Journalist, ENCA), Johannesburg, March 20th, 2020.

from military practices in order to concentrate power and control. The terminology concentrates power and codifies obedience, order, and other militaristic ideals.

In April 2020, I conducted an interview with Nickolaus Bauer, a prominent South African journalist and political commentator, who introduced me to a former founding member of the EFF. After various exchanges by email and WhatsApp, I was able to schedule an interview with the former founding member and in July 2020, we spoke extensively by phone between Oxford and Johannesburg. During our exchange (at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic), I gained a deeper understanding of the extent to which populist parties, particularly the EFF, can co-opt militaristic practices as mechanisms for power and control. According to my interlocutor, "the militarised party culture is an effective way to deal with the organisational challenges of a political start-up. . . It serves to quell internal dissent. It makes everyone tow the party line and maintains tight control over party structures"[70]. Through the militaristic practices and terminology entrenched in the structure of the EFF "Julius has hegemonized the EFF as the centre of fighting and resistance. . . and cemented his position in senior leadership. The EFF will only end if Julius dies or goes to jail"[71]. According to another member of the EFF, a commissar in Gauteng:

> "the party is a proper cult type thing. Julius is the EFF and EFF is Julius. Nobody will challenge Julius. People underestimate Julius as a political administrator and manager – he knows who is where and is running an intelligence network even within the party. He is in control. He also understands punishment and reward.

[70] Interview, former founding member of the EFF, remote interview June 11th, 2020.
[71] Ibid, 2022.

> He has huge leverage from patronage system that he dispenses – he has the party under his control [72].

What is clear from the mobilisation of militaristic practice in the populist organisational form is that it achieves several functions both within the party and in terms of the visual imaginary created by the party in relation to its voters. On one hand, the militaristic party culture engenders systems of centralisation, order, and obedience within the party. On the other hand, it perpetuates not unproblematic military ideals such as the prizing of particular militaristic masculinities. It is the latter outcome which, considered in the context of the RN in France and the EFF in South Africa, facilitates the mobilisation of gendered identities as a tool in the populist electoral calculus.

[72] Interview, Political Commissar of the EFF Student Command in Gauteng, remote interview July 29th, 2020.

A double-edged sword: Gender, Social Power, and the Populist Electoral Calculus

Gender



Figure 13. Marine Le Pen 2017 Presidential election campaign poster. Source: Sebastien Nogier, 2017.

Figure 13 depicts Marine Le Pen's 2017 presidential campaign poster. Despite several women winning leadership positions in European populist parties (including the RN's Marine Le Pen, Siv Jensen of the Danish Progress Party, Pia Kjersgaard, who co-founded the Danish People's Party, Alice Weidel, of the AfD in Germany and Giorgia Meloni of the Brothers of Italy) gender has not received sustained attention in contemporary populism literatures (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2015; Chrisafis et al, 2019). Much of the contemporary populism literature has focused on the rise of male leaders and paid little attention to women (Abi-Hassan, 2017). However, a growing number of women are at the forefront of populist parties and the populist imaginary regarding women, femininity, and gender more broadly has become a salient feature of populist electoral campaigns.

In this regard, the geographies of militarism literature provide Halisian opportunity to interrogate the role of gender and the mobilisation of femininity in particular within populist militarised party culture. Especially in as far as the populist enactment of gender links to longstanding spatio-historical relations of endemic militarism (Daley, 2008), "legacies of racial domination" (Halisi, 1998, 403), and the inability of neoliberal peace frameworks to reorient the relationship between the militarised state and the contemporary electorate in France and South Africa.

In *Manoeuvrers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives,* Cynthia Enloe writes that "militaries rely on women and presumptions of femininity. . . but not all women experience militarisation identically" (Enloe, 2000, x). The case of women, and their role in the populist campaigns of the RN and the EFF, exemplify the myriad ways in which gender and femininity are negotiated and enacted and how gender is socially and historically constituted. Drawing from the work of feminist human geographers from Enloe (2000) to Daley (2013), the case militarised gender roles in the RN and the EFF sheds light on the extent to which the military geographies of French and South African politics (both past and present) seep into the parties' respective mobilisation(s) of gender and femininity.

For her own part, Marine Le exemplifies the extent to which the RN has succeeded at mobilising the same militarised and gendered tropes relating to French women as those enacted by the state. In September 2016, shortly after launching her presidential election campaign, Marine Le Pen visited the French town of Brachay – a stronghold of the RN in north-eastern France where as many as 72% of the electorate voted in favour of the party (Pfeiffer, 2016). Following the visit, international and local news media railed against Le Pen's choice of clothing referring to her outfit as "dishevelled" and her overall style as "mumsy" (ibid, 2016). While the media denigrated Le Pen's clothing choices, political commentators lauded the move. They argued that Le Pen

dressing as "*madam tout le monde*" (Mrs Everybody). . . as comfortable and at home in the political sphere as she is in her own bathroom" created a sense that the RN (then referred to as the Front National) is an inclusive and representative party (ibid, 2016; Poirier, 2017). Through a gendered performance of femininity and "motherliness", including donning what local news referred to as a "forgotten . . .turquoise plastic clip from her signature flick-up hair do", Le Pen succeeded at mobilising her identity, self-styling, and "the illusion of feminism" as a political tool - prompting several outlets to agree that Le Pen is "using fashion as a political weapon" (Pfeiffer, 2016; Poirier, 2017; Twigg, 2022).

Marine Le Pen's deployment of fashion as a "political weapon" is not isolated to the "mumsy" attire of the 2017 Presidential election (Pfeiffer, 2016; Twigg, 2022). In fact, Le Pen's self-styling in previous years and since the 2017 election has oscillated between performances of femininity and a militarised aesthetic. The latter aesthetic speaks very explicitly to France's military victories and national grandeur as embodied through Joan of Arc – a female warrior heroine (Poirier, 2017). During the RN's 2021 May Day rally in Paris, Le Pen was seen donning militaristic sashes with the colours of the French flag, jewellery baring symbols from Joan of Arc's coat of arms, and a straight cut suit reminiscent of the soldier's uniform (Demetriou, 2021). These images draw on a more masculinist political imaginary. Yet, they achieve a crucial function of positioning the RN as representative of 'motherland' France and Le Pen as both captain-heroine and mother of the nation. Along these same lines, militaries – and militarised civilian elites – have relied on sporadic infusions of a "few good women" (Enloe, 2000, xi).

Enloe (2000, xi) reflects on the ways in which militaries have tried to "control the very notion of femininity . . . in all its myriad guises" (Enloe, 2000, xi). These mechanisms of control extend to "the provision of services. . . commitments of marital fidelity. . . the domestic space(s) of the

military complex" (ibid, 2000,xi). The self-styling of the EFF, especially in relation to women within the party's leadership, is reminiscent of the gender identity which the apartheid state enacted for African men and women (i.e., a worker on the street or a maid in someone's house). These gendered and militarised identities, perpetuated for the purpose of control and subordination, have not disappeared. Instead, they prove to be paramount to the EFF's electoral campaigns and its positionality in relation to the electorate i.e., (un)skilled labour.

The differential representation of women within the RN and within the EFF sheds light on the party's militaristic tendency to control and exploit femininity - relying on the respective historical contexts of France and South Africa to achieve electoral relevance. Notably, it reinforces the argument made in this Chapter that the populist military party culture demonstrates (in this case through the lens of gender) that "contemporary global frameworks for peace-making and peace building that rest on the acceptance of neoliberal political and economic models cannot lay the foundations for the conditions necessary for sustainable peace" (Daley, 2006, 303-204).

Within the RN, Marine Le seems to occupy various masculine and feminine militarised roles. In relation to young adherents, she occupies the feminine role of mother, to older adherents she is seen as daughter, and through her co-optation of Joan of Arc - a message of national grandeur, as embodied through a female warrior heroine - she also occupies the masculine sign of captain and defender of the nation (Lecoeur 2003). In all of these contexts, she succeeds at distancing herself from professional politicians while embodying French history and dynastic continuity through militaristic repertoires. Le Pen's gendered performances "instituted through a stylised repetition of acts . . . the stylization of the body . . .and bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds" constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self that is ultimately masculinist and militarised (Butler, 2004). It activates gender in a socially constituted temporality not only referencing back to French political history but also mobilising a distinctly populist sense of 'the people'.

In contrast, women leaders within the EFF don the domestic worker sartorial trop reminiscent of the state's enactment of the role of Black women under apartheid.

In contrast to Marine Le Pen and the RN, women in the EFF wear domestic worker uniforms which reinforce a counter revolutionary and precaritised gendered identity in the South African context.

Figure 14. Naledi Chirwa, EFF Member of the National Assembly of South Africa, dressed in a stylised maid uniform. Source: Naledi Chirwa, February 2021[73].



In Figure 14, an EFF member of the national assembly is captured donning a stylised domestic worker uniform. Although women dressed in domestic worker uniforms, reminiscent of a gender identity which the Apartheid state enacted for African women (as a worker in the street or a maid in someone's house) seems to belie the EFF's revolutionary credentials, this self-styling

[73] This image was reproduced from the private Instagram of Ms Naledi Chirwa with her permission.

works in tandem with the party's militarised culture to indicate that the precarious position of workers, and certainly women, has not changed in South Africa. Black women in domestic worker uniforms speaks back to days when 'the people' had a common enemy, who women should be protected against, and who the EFF (in its militarised role) can effectively protect. This gendered aspect of the militarised party culture has crucial repercussions for questions of social power in the populist electoral calculus.

Social Power

Within the RN's militarised party culture, we see the party simultaneously mobilise a discourse of fear while presenting a declaration of intended self-defence on behalf of working class French people. During my field research in the North of France, I observed RN election materials and posters which pit "hard working" French nationals against the globalist policies of the European Union on one hand and the "overwhelming" numbers of immigrants in the country on the other hand[74]. The party's posters seem to blame the EU and immigrants for the insecurity experienced by working class French people and the decline of the former industrial heartland. Figure 13 depicts these anti-immigrant and anti-globalisation politics which are produced and sponsored by the RN in small towns and villages surrounding parts of Amiens and Lille.

[74] Quotations are taken from field research notes related to posters seen in Hauts de France.

Figure 15. An anti-migrant poster in Beziers reads "the state is imposing them on us. That's it, they're coming. Migrants in our town". Source: Pascal Guyot/AFP, 2016.



The poster in Figure 15, photographed by Pascal Guyot in 2016, was installed in 100 locations in Béziers, by RN – supported mayor Robert Ménard, in October 2016. This was shortly after the party launched its 144-point plan to "put France back in order" (Bulman, 2016, Rassemblement National, 2017). In locations such as Beziers, RN supported visual images propagate a discourse of fear. The same visuality is evident in small towns and villages in parts of southern France.

On the other hand, we see the EFF donning domestic worker and mineworker uniforms - one of the most captivating visualities in contemporary South African politics – to perpetuate a discourse of insecurity within the working class electorate. Since its founding, the EFF has drawn on workers' clothing, including the overall and domestic workers' uniform, to shape its identity and signify their "revolutionary credentials" (Mbete 2016, 599). Upon securing 25 seats in South

Africa's Parliament in 2014, the EFF mobilised the domestic and mineworker sartorial trope as an ideological tool in Parliament. In May 2014, following their first sitting in South Africa's National Assembly, EFF members dressed in stylised maid and mineworker uniforms and "sang and danced" around a statue of former president Nelson Mandela (BBC News, 2014b).

During an on-site interview, the EFF's Deputy President, Floyd Shivambu emphatically stated:

> "the working class and poor now know they've got representatives in Parliament. There is no other organisation which associates itself with the struggles of the poor" (Ibid, 2014b).

Since their instatement, the EFF's female MPs have worn red headscarves and aprons, and the men red overalls to Parliament in "an open act of defiance of the parliamentary dress code", which forbids political party symbols in the National Assembly (Thelwell 2014). Yet, the visuality serves a constant reminder that the working class does not yet belong in the halls of power in the country.

Although the uniform of the EFF makes sense in the context of the position of workers in the South African political economy, it demonstrates how the party simultaneously propagates a crisis of insecurity and positions while presenting itself as a solution to this challenge. As recently as 2022, the EFF has been at the forefront of controversy over their policy proposals relating to immigrants in South Africa – a country where "there were more than 40 attacks on foreigners in eight of the past 13 years — and more in 2019 than in any year in the last 10 years" (Dendere,

2022). Following a spate of xenophobic attacks, primarily in Gauteng province, the EFF allegedly joined "the anti-black immigrant chorus" by demonising immigrants from Zimbabwe, visiting businesses suspected of hiring foreigners, and identifying how many non-South Africans are employed in the establishment (ibid, 2022).

When the domestic and mineworker uniforms are considered in the broader context of the EFF's visuality and politics, they speak less to empowerment and the radical transformation of the position of workers in the country and more to the precarity and situations of insecurity of workers and an essentially populist claim and militaristic notion that the party can both protect and defend (South African) workers from insecurity particularly but not limited to contexts such as businesses in the centre of Johannesburg and as far as the seats of power in South African parliament.

Conclusion

The politico-military relations which are enacted and perpetuated by the RN and EFF are grounded in France and South Africa's (colonial) history and socio-economic development. In this sense, they are the outcome of specific social forces and historically formed relations between the military, soldiers and civilians in those countries and a critical view into the manner in which the colonial origin of military forces can both bequeath a clear legacy and can shape the relationship between state and society in contemporary politics particularly where underlying social, racial, and class tensions are left unresolved.

Through the representational strategies deployed by the RN and EFF, including the use of military symbols, terminology, and practice, we gain a crucial window into the extension of military geographies into civilian spaces through the populist calculus. Ultimately, the RN and EFF demonstrate how populist parties can leverage militarised geographies (and a 'new militarism') to legitimise their political activities and discourse, set themselves apart from 'elite' politics, and contend with the organisational challenges associated with the highly personalised structure of populist parties.

Through my analysis of media publications, RN and EFF campaign materials, and interviews with RN and EFF members, political commentators, and leaders of opposition parties in France and South Africa, I gained insight into the RN and EFF's militarised party culture. RN and EFF campaign materials particularly demonstrated how socio-political identities and relationships embedded in military systems (such as those related to performances of hegemonic masculinity) can also be extended into civilian spaces via the populist discourse. The militarised party culture coming out of this research, was not unproblematic for the role of women and female politicians within the French and South African political culture.

Crucially, this Chapter indicates the position of contemporary populist parties in relation to the working class and the extent to which the militarised populist party culture can truly produce the emancipatory politics claimed by populists. It is clear from the RN and EFF's perpetuation of a discourse of fear and insecurity of positions that the militaristic self-styling of populist parties serves only to enforce a discourse of control over the working class electorate. This is achieved through the party's clear evocation of an acute sense of being under siege by hostile forces and simultaneously its own centrality in resolving this challenge. This powerful internal contradiction and lack of ideological robustness is perhaps the most crucial insight which militarism can give

on contemporary populist politics and the central claim that populist parties represent and defend 'the people'.

Part III: Existential Crisis

Chapter 7: Vote for our lives: The Future of Populist Electoral Politics

"On the ground the issues are always the same – unemployment, landlessness, poverty. . . and fear for your life" [75]

Introduction

Previous Chapters have interrogated the rise of contemporary populism at the regional level (*Chapter 5*) and the national level (*Chapter 6*) in France and South Africa. In *Chapter 5*, I argued that the structural, material, and social space(s) produced by the neoliberal state's accumulation strategy can facilitate a populist turn in deindustrialised regions. In *Chapter 6*, I argued that populists exploit militaristic discourse, traditionally used by the state, to mobilise votes at the national level. These Chapters call attention not only to factors facilitating the rise of populism in regional and national elections but also the myriad ways in which neoliberal governance models have failed to address existential questions such as social, political, and economic reconciliation (particularly among the working class) within these contexts.

This Chapter considers the significance of contemporary populism in the context of neoliberal democracy more broadly. I apply the case of populism in France and South Africa, through the lens of COVID-19, to interrogate the condition of the neoliberal democratic model and the ways in which it facilitates the rise of populist actors globally. Throughout the Chapter, I foreground 'issues on the ground' through the narratives and political analysis of my interlocutors. I bring the narratives of my interviewees into conversation with the contemporary populism literature

[75] Interview, Thibedi Lebeloane, ("a left leaning activist"), Brits, South Africa, 17th August 2020.

and my own investigation of government policy proposals, parliamentary decisions, and responses in the wake of COVID-19. Applying this lens in the sections that follow, I argue that the rise of populism is facilitated by increasingly perceivable failures, limitations, and prevailing logic(s) of neoliberalism which incapacitate the state in its role as an arbiter of the public good. Here, the embeddedness of neoliberal logics necessarily requires the state to recede from the space of politics and issues of the public good towards the mediation of markets and private capital. In this context, I advance my final argument that the declining role of the neoliberal state (in politics) has left a vacuum filled by populism. Ultimately, the question which contemporary populism scholars must contend is what forms of political organisation, including populism, will replace the 'neoliberal state in politics' as it makes its penultimate shift to a mediator of markets and private capital.

Revisiting the contemporary populism literature

Much of the success of contemporary populist movements is attributed to three recent trends. First increases in rates of relative deprivation, second various social, economic, and political crises, and third the rise of anti-politics (or depoliticization) among the electorate which is spurred by a deep dissatisfaction with prevailing political and financial systems. I expand on these three trends in the following section.

The issue of relative deprivation has become almost ubiquitous with contemporary populist politics (Kriesi et al., 2008; Norris and Inglehart, 2019). Following the global recession and financial crisis of 2008 – 2009, populist parties across the globe have seen an uptick in electoral support and attempts to explain this rise, especially in western and industrialised democracies,

have proliferated mainstream politics and public discourse. The story of how labour market changes, overarching globalisation processes, and popular sentiments of relative deprivation among "losers of globalisation" have contributed to populist electoral success have been told and retold (Cox, 2018, 239; Weyland, 2001; Rodrik, 2020). "Dramatic political uprisings" including the election of Donald Trump, the Brexit vote in the United Kingdom, and popular support for the Renzi reforms in Italy form part of this (Fraser, 2017; Barkan, 2018). Under these propositions, "the lethal combination of austerity, free trade, predatory debt and precarious, ill-paid work that characterizes present-day financialized capitalism" are considered strong predictors for populist support (Barkan, 2018, 139).

A second approach to the rise of contemporary populism considers crisis as a central concept (Moffitt, 2014). Along these lines, several studies indicate that a surge in populist electoral support follows economic, political, or crisis of representation. These studies have spurred the notion that 'some degree of crisis . . . is a necessary precondition for populism' (Laclau 2005a: 177). The strongest proponent of crisis as the constant refrain of populists is Ernesto Laclau (1999, 2005a,2005b). For Laclau, a number of historical populist figures would have gone unnoticed were it not for crisis paving their way, including the rise of Hitler following the 'slump' of the 1930's, De Gaulle's appeal following the French Algerian war in 1946, or the rise of Peron following the demise of Argentinian oligarchy in the 1930s (Laclau, 2005a).

Related to the rise of historical populist figures following crisis, are analysts following the work of Laclau who argue that contemporary populist parties would not "emerge or succeed without crisis spurring it into existence" (Moffitt, 2014, 192). For example, the story of how perceived economic, social, and political crisis spurred by European integration and immigration have influenced the rise of populist parties in both Nordic and mainland European democracies has

been told and retold over the past decade. These examples include the rise of the UK Brexit party in May of 2019, the *Perussuomalaiset* (PS)[76] party in Finland, Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia (FI) and Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement (5SM) in Italy, as well as parties such as the Radical Left (SYRIZA) in Greece (Pappas and Kriesi, 2015; Roberts, 2012; Mouffe, 2005). We've seen notable gains for the Swiss People's Party, the Austrian Freedom Party, the Swedish Democrats, Greece's Golden Dawn, and the Danish People's Party (Inglehart and Norris, 2016, 2-3). A similar approach is evident in the literature on contemporary populism in parts of Latin America including Venezuela (Roberts, 2012) and Peru (Levitsky and Loxton, 2012). These approaches ultimately focus on crisis as a conducive (at times necessary) precondition for populism to emerge and its advocates agree that across geographies, crisis facilitates a 'breakaway' from hegemonic discourses and an opening for counter-discourses (such as populism) to emerge. In these cases, "the emergence of new discourses and new identities is always related to the dislocation or crisis of previously hegemonic discursive orders . . . this is also the case with populist discourses" (Stavrakakis 2005, 247).

A final argument which began to take root following the 2008 – 2009 financial crisis, and which has recently gained purchase among human geographers specifically, considers populism as a form of 'anti politics' (Cayla, 2021; Clarke, 2015). Theorists within this school of thought argue that anti politics operates primarily through depoliticization in response to contemporary socio-economic trends including increasing austerity in the world's largest economic. According to these theorists, "a mutual withdrawal by politicians and citizens" from established politics, its institutions, and rationales marks the political environment of the last 15 years (Clarke, 2015: 191). Here, populism is said to draw on the subjectivities produced by reductions in government

[76] The Perussuomalaiset (PS) translates to Finns Party. The PS is also frequently referred to as the "True Finns" in some English writing.

spending and deregulation more broadly (Clarke, 2015). Proponents of this approach argue that populist discourse lays bare the inherent contradictions of neoliberal state policies and exposes the contradictions between neoliberal democratic ideals (including those which imply that people should decide) and the prevailing strategy of neoliberal governments which prioritises markets and competition, making them the final arbiters of social and economic development (Cayla, 2021).

Delving deeper into these ideas, one can find that they share a similar and overlapping set of limitations. First, they underestimate the legitimacy of a 'politics of expectation' from a voting public in relation to their government. That is, the inherent right of citizens to expect access to certain entitlements (including employment, health, security) from the state. Second, while considering crisis as "an opening for counter-discourses (such as populism) to emerge, these studies inaccurately attribute populism to "the dislocation of previously hegemonic discursive orders" such as neoliberalism (Stavrakakis 2005, 247) whereas the empirical evidence indicates that the logic of neoliberal governance is more embedded today than at any other time in history. Third, insofar as they point to 'anti-politics' or a depoliticization among the electorate, they fail to consider the progressive retreat of neoliberal government itself from the sphere of politics and its most innate role as an arbiter of the public good. Notably, they are largely inspired (and then verified) by the experience of a few democracies in Europe and the Americas.

Through the collective limitations of their geographical scope (in terms of conceptualising contemporary populism in the West as ontologically distinct from the rise of populism in Africa) early populism studies miss the opportunity to consider the extent to which populism signifies the existential crisis of the neoliberal democratic state, unfolding in similar and intersecting ways, across the globe.

Political context

Unmet expectations, neoliberal logics, and the rise of contemporary populism on the ground

My interviewees repeatedly described a growing realisation about the failure(s) of French and South African national government as the most salient reason for the recent uptick in support for the RN and EFF respectively.

In their *Empirical Analysis of Populism as a Thin Ideology,* European and American Sociologists, Mark Elchardus and Bram Spruyt argue that "populism turns out not to be directly influenced by a weak or uncertain economic position, by dissatisfaction with personal life or feelings of anomie. Support for populism appears foremost as a consequence of a very negative view of the evolution of society – declinism – and of the feeling of belonging to a group of people that is unfairly treated by society" (Elchardus and Spruyt, 2016, 111).

Yet, the observations and analysis of my interviewees consistently provided a scathing yet substantive view of socio-political crisis, anxiety about the future of their country, and pessimism about society more broadly. Their comments railed against the government's failure to meet popular expectations on its most basic functions, the administration's increasing attention to matters of financial markets despite pressing economic questions including employment, education, and the governance of natural resources, and an ultimate sense that the state is receding away from the political sphere towards matters of business and capital. Together, these reflections offer a crucial indication about the ways in which neoliberal democracy has perceivably failed and as such influenced the rise of a populist electoral politics in neoliberal democracies including France and South Africa.

A politics of expectation

"Why has the government of the ANC thrown away the charter of the people" [77]

I began all of my interviews in France and South Africa with the same question: why are an increasing number of voters turning to populist parties (the RN and the EFF) in this country (France or South Africa)? Omphemetse, a self-described "left leaning activist" in Brits – a centre for both agriculture and heavy industry – in South Africa's North West province candidly described the socio-political crisis in South Africa:

> "On the ground the issues are always the same unemployment, landlessness, poverty. . . and fear for your life. The African population deals with these issues. I think people are motivated to vote EFF because of how they see these ground issues and how they experience neglect by current government. The ANC went in an opposite direction to the mandate of the people. . . I still remember when Zuma was president and there was a time when EFF presented issue of the freedom charter[78] in Parliament. Why has the government of the ANC thrown away the charter of the people?"[79]

The Freedom Charter, a statement on the core principles underlying a democratic South Africa, was produced by the ANC and its allies (the South African Indian Congress, the South African Congress of Democrats and the Coloured People's Congress) shortly after the democratic transition in 1995. The charter was "for almost 40 years an impressionistic template of the

[77] Interview, Omphemetse Thibedi Lebeloane, ("a left leaning activist"), Brits, South Africa, 17th August 2020.
[78] The Freedom Charter
[79] Ibid, August 2020.

dispensation that would succeed apartheid" and included ideals such as: "The People Shall Govern!"; "All Shall be Equal before the Law!"; "The People Shall Share in the Country's Wealth!", reflecting the vision of every constituency in the anti-apartheid movement (South African History Online, 2021). According to Omphemetse, and a growing number of activists in South Africa, the ruling party had failed to pursue and achieve even its most foundational aspects.

I faced similar responses in France, in speaking to a group of young people in Lille who had built an informal campsite attached to the Yellow Vest movement across from the hostel (Auberge de Jeunesse) Lille Stephane Hessel where I was staying:

> "The French government is worth nothing. They use money for their own salary but they're not using it for infrastructure and bettering people's lives. . . Politics aren't that viable" [80]

In Amiens, I spoke to a 30 year old resident of the town who had supported REM (and participated in field organising for Macron's election campaign in his hometown of Amiens) who posited that:

> "Many young people here voted for Macron. But after he left Amiens, it was like the central government left too. There is no philosophy. They have no philosophy. . . each government only comes to try and make their mark . . . they

[80] Focus Group Discussion, Youth C (Yellow Vest Movement), Lille, France, 13th September 2019.

> take on a flagship project, but we are getting tired of flagship projects. . . the people in Amiens feel they've been abandoned by the central government [81]

A previous interview held in Paris, earlier that month, with the General Secretary to the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) brought these narratives together and gave an expert opinion of what I was observing:

> "When people feel they have been neglected by the national government, there is a political danger . . . Since 2008, there have been many crisis impacting regions outside cities especially those with a top-heavy industrialization process for example many factories and businesses closed. What we are seeing today is austerity, reducing public service . . . a reduced government. It shows when you see votes for the RN cover more and more of France (even Brittany) which used to be bullet proof to Populism . . . there is now strong voting results for RN".[82]

Across these reflections, perspectives of a broad-based crisis of government, in relation to its citizens, prevailed.

[81] Interview, Youth campaigner 1, Amiens, France, 7th September 2019.
[82] Interview, General Secretary to the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Paris, September 2019.

An embedded neoliberal logic

"These parties are beneficiaries of the economic conditions at the moment"[83]

The state of the economy in France and South Africa was a recurring theme in my conversations. My interlocutors communicated how the state of the economy not only created anxiety about the future but also presented tangible evidence that the government prioritised capital and financialization over the public good. According to my interviewees, this split in 'allegiance' facilitated the rise of populist parties in each country.

In conversation with students, political theorists, and government officials alike I was consistently told that the EFF and RN were "beneficiaries of the economic conditions at the moment"[84] particularly insofar as the state had "abandoned . . . people . . . to pursue the prerogatives of private capital"[85]. In conversation with South African student leaders who campaign for the ANC, EFF, and the Democratic Alliance (DA) on university campuses, I learned of the youth perspective about the government's embedded neoliberal logic. Matt, a student member of the DA, emphasized:

> "The ultimate indictment of this government . . . the government of our generation is seen through the lens of the Fees Must Fall movement. The government has abandoned young people and students to pursue the prerogatives of private capital . . . and their interests. We knew this from the moment we

[83] Interview, Commander Happy (EFF Provincial Leadership), online, August 7th, 2020.
[84] Warren, EFF Student Command, Johannesburg South Africa 7th August 2020.
[85] Interview, Gemma, DA Student Leader, Johannesburg South Africa, July 11th, 2020.

> realized that there were no fruits which materialized from the protest about financial aid on campus".[86]

In August 2020, I conducted a telephone interview with Mr Sahlulele Luzipo, the chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Mineral Resources and Energy and a member of the ANC. We spoke at length about the role of the state and private capital in various sectors of the South African economy.

Focusing on the dynamics relationship between the state, the private sector, and mining in particular (which is discussed in great detail in *Chapter 5* of this thesis) Luzipo asserted:

> "Ordinarily workers would feel aggrieved by the ANC over the 26 years because the ANC has not followed up on making sure companies are carrying out their social responsibility. As Department of Mineral Resources and Energy, for example, the mining charter (Section 54) says to make sure communities benefit from mining and that 51% of shareholding (in mines) is held in trust for community (traditional leadership or otherwise) and then an investor must hold the remaining 49%. (Under BEE it should be 26%) . . . for you to get that land or mine, you would need to convince the community that they would benefit from the mining activity. . . We've seen in most cases that that hasn't happened. In most cases the community doesn't have shareholding in that mine".[87]

[86] Interview, Matt, DA Student Leader, Johannesburg South Africa, July 11th, 2020.
[87] Interview, Sahlulele Luzipo, Chairperson of Portfolio Committee on Mineral Resources and Energy, Johannesburg, August 17th 2020.

The financialization of key sectors of South Africa's economy including education and natural resources reinforces the notion that a neoliberal logic prevails at the highest levels of government.

In France, I spent several days walking around Lille to conduct in person visits at the outposts of RN opposition parties where I read their material, conducted interviews with party representatives, and generally observed the operations of the party on the ground. On one of these site visits, I visited the office of the Socialist Party (La Fédération du Parti Socialiste de la Somme) or PS.

I spoke at length with the Socialist party's first federal secretary for the region (Premiere Secretaire federal) Remi Cardon who emphatically stated:

> "There has been a fracturing in France. A fracture between the economic and cultural sides of the country which we see through the government. On one side is the traditional . . . the established government and on the other are the economic interests of everyday people. To reunite the economic and cultural sides of France we need the traditional. . . the government and its economy to return to issues of everyday people . . ."[88]

Cardon pointed to the issue of unemployment as "the biggest issue"[89] especially as its impact on perceptions of stability, security, and inclusion was driving perceptions of abandonment by the

[88] Interview, Remi Cardon, Partie Socialiste of the Somme Region, October 2019.
[89] Interview, Remi Cardon, Partie Socialiste of the Somme Region, October 2019.

French government. Cardon argued that there has been a progressive shift, within the government, away from questions of the economy towards "other interests" (ibid, 2019).

Cardon's observations were underscored by my interview with Alain, a member of *Les Jeunes Insoumis* - the youth branch of France's left wing *La France* Insoumise. I was introduced to Alain through a Support Committee of the party based in Lille. According to Alain:

> "National government focus too much on the economy and less on people. . . they play a chief role in stabilizing the economy and the financial markets. . . when the focus should be more focused on people. This plays out in restrictions of funding of the economy and austerity. The government focuses on the economy, so they implement austerity - more money for the economy and less money for people"[90].

Whether seasoned opposition party members, student activists, or youth representatives the consensus among my interlocutors was an overwhelming sense that the government has progressively become more of a mediator for financial markets and private capital than a regulator of the public sector. In their analysis, this shift facilitated the creation of a discursive space for populist campaigns in France and South Africa.

[90] Interview, Alain, Les Jeunes Insoumis, Lille France, September 2019.

When the state recedes from politics

> "if people vote RN, it's more because of disillusionment with the French political system . . . politics is more about business than politics" [91]

A running thread across all of my interviews was a sense of disillusionment about the state of society and the glaring absence of the state as an intervener and arbiter of the public good. Whether a South African mother of 3 who I spoke with at the bus station in Johannesburg or the General Secretary of TUAC at the OECD, my interviewees repeatedly expressed "disillusionment with the political system" as "politics is more about business than politics" (ibid, 2019). Likewise, populism scholars, including those advancing the 'thin ideology' view of populism, agree to some extent that populism thrives during times of social, cultural, and political crises. These scholars underscore the perceptions expressed by my interviewees, that populist attitudes can be associated with anxiety about the future of one's group or country, with anger, protest, insecurity, and an overall pessimism about the state of society (Elchardus and Spruyt, 2016; Jay et al., 2019). What remains under theorised is why populist electoral politics has seen such success despite the presence of 'thicker ideologies' associated with established neoliberal governance.

Until recently, the chief mobilisation and rallying tool of populist parties has been "dramatic and lively" yet ephemeral social protest[92] (Fraser, 2017). Political systems appeared to be relatively

[91] Interview, Pierre Hubbard, General Secretary to the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Paris, September 2019.
[92] In Chapter 4, I discuss the use of protest as discourse within the RN and EFF. The EFF in particular gained considerable momentum between 2013-2015 as a protest campaign movement including through key national campaigns which influenced South African political culture including the *Zuma Must Fall* Campaign and the *Land Without Expropriation* Campaign.

immune to the types of social protest advanced by populists. Theorists, party fonctionnaires, and establishment elites alike frequently dismissed populism as "essentially an empty rhetoric captured in the politics of spectacle, where even complex ideas get pared down to mere slogans" (Fakir, 2014, 5). However, "populism has not lost its appeal at the ballot box" (Rooduijn et al., 2019). A growing number of populists are gaining unprecedented results in national and regional elections, winning seats at the highest levels of government. Yet, prevailing populism theory does not provide a cogent explanation for the inability of 'thicker' ideologies to contain the rise of populism e.g., by counteracting popular perceptions and populist discourses of crisis and anxiety with the more substantive (and parliamentary) politics and practices associated with established politics. Instead, the rise of populist parties (and leaders) presents a scathing view of the internal crisis within neoliberal government models.

An argument can be made, which I advance in the sections that follow, that while "liberal democracy . . . the only legitimate form of government . . . (to which) there was no alternative" is withdrawing from its role as an arbiter of the public good, it has created a vacuum in politics which not only facilitates the rise of populist actors but creates opportunities (in government) for populists to develop a more robust and ideologically coherent politics (Galston, 2018).

COVID-19

Contemporary populism scholars argue that several events of the last decade such as social and economic upheaval (including the great recession), the refugee crisis, climate change, and "diplomatic discords created by the Russian invasion of Ukraine" have buoyed the populist turn of the last decade (Maher, 2022, 819; Mols and Jetten, 2016; Montiel et al., 2021). What has been understated is the extent to which the neoliberal state's response to these crises facilitate a

populist turn. In particular, the ways in which the neoliberal state's response to crisis can magnify gaps and inconsistencies in government intervention and facilitate opportunities for populists to shape public perceptions about the causes and consequences of crisis and to direct collective action in response to it according to their institutional ambitions, political ideologies, or world views.

Neoliberal governance models are primarily driven by a mode of (economic) thinking which is insensitive to social complexity. This framework including "the lethal combination of austerity, free trade, predatory debt and precarious, ill-paid work that characterizes present-day financialized capitalism" has arguably played the greatest role in facilitating a populist turn (Barkan, 2018). The COVID-19 crisis offers a crucial inroad (and renewed focus) into this condition (and other foreseeable future challenges of neoliberal governance) which have the potential to further fuel populist sentiment for many years to come.

During his opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the World Health Organisation (WHO) Director General "made the assessment that COVID-19 can be characterized as a pandemic" (WHO, 2020). According to Ghebreyesus, the coronavirus was an unprecedented public health event. He stated:

> "We have never before seen a pandemic sparked by a coronavirus. . . we have called every day for countries to take urgent and aggressive action. . . We have rung the alarm bell loud and clear" (ibid, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic obligated governments across the globe to devise urgent and exceptional health and economic responses. Within 7 days of the WHO announcement, on the 17th of March 2020, France went into a nationwide lockdown (*confinement*) under the terse motto "stay home" (France 24, 2021). Following suit on the 23rd of March 2020, South Africa' President Cyril Ramaphosa announced the first lockdown. The lockdown was scheduled to last for 21 days (from March 26 - April 16, 2020) in an effort "to contain the spread of the coronavirus" (DIRCO, 2020). Both in France and South Africa, the COVID lockdown was marked by extraordinary measures which disrupted social and economic life. Between France's Interior Minister, Christophe Castaner, and South Africa's National Coronavirus Command Council (chaired by President Ramaphosa) lockdown measures were announced including the administrative closure of shops, restaurants and cafes, border closures and halt of international air travel as well as the shutting of places of worship and culture (Mazoue, 2021; SA Gov Newsroom, 2020).

COVID-19 presented numerous threats at the same time. In the public sector, challenges related to employment, education, housing, and social life were widespread, simultaneously magnifying and exacerbating already historic rates of socio-economic inequality between people. In the private sector, the economic shock of COVID-19 reinforced the role of the state as a facilitator of economic markets and business and its focus on insuring economic risks.

France

During my field research in Amiens, I met with several workers including long distance truck drivers, former employees of the infamous Whirlpool Factory in Amiens, nurses, and home-based care workers who described their perspective on the state's relationship with workers. A

critical comment on the state's neglect of the public sector was foregrounded in my discussion with Jean, a former home-based care worker in Amiens who suggested that:

> "National government could do better. They focus too much on the economy and less on people. They should be more focused on people. In my job, I care about people but the government doesn't care about us. This plays out in restriction of funding of the economy. . . austerity. . .the government focuses on the economy, so they implement austerity. . .focusing on the economy means more money for the economy and less money for caring about people. . . "[93]

Jean's reflections on the government's failure to "care about people" found full expression in the state's response to COVID-19, particularly in relation to the working class.

Over the course of April 2020 – March 2022, I joined a fledgling team conducting extensive peer-reviewed research on government policy responses to the pandemic. Our findings were consolidated in the *COVID-19 Government Policy Response Tracker*, housed at the Blavatnik School of Government in Oxford, which was the largest government policy tracker in the world by July 2020. Collecting data from statistical research departments, government gazettes, and reports from development and humanitarian bodies, I contributed to tracing the responses of several governments to COVID-19 including in France and South Africa. Across the board, and certainly in France, socio-economically vulnerable groups faced the brunt of the pandemic. While a quarter of the population working in France's formal sector transitioned to working from home (*télétravail*) by the Spring of 2020, unemployment increased nearly 2 percent from 7%

[93] Interview, Jean (home-based careworker), Amiens, France, 5th September 2019

in 2019 to 9.08% in the third quarter of 2020 for 'blue collar' workers (Mazoue, 2021; Statista Research Department, 2022). In the northern part of France, including Amiens where I conducted my field research just one year prior, workers (in comparison to more qualified socio-professional categories) were disproportionately affected by unemployment (ibid, 2022). At the population sub-group level, women, despite their nationality were especially hard hit (Statista Research Department, 2021).

Various public sector functions, services, and processes saw the greatest impact of the pandemic. The French education system, described by OECD as one in which learning inequality is closely linked to socio-demographic background, saw remarkable increases in educational inequalities during the period of school closures (OECD, 2019; Pirone, 2021). Beyond the 1 million French people pushed into poverty by COVID-19, charities reported as many as 300,000 cases of homelessness in the country "without provision for tests or accommodation by the state" over the course of the 2020 lockdown (Euro News, 2021). More recent statistics indicate that as many as one million French people were pushed into poverty within the first year of the pandemic. By 2021, as many as 8 million people were reportedly food insecure in the country and "knocking on the doors of food banks" (ibid, 2021; Pirone, 2021, 356).

Although the COVID-19 pandemic certainly highlighted structural weaknesses of the global health system, it also brought to the fore the embeddedness of the state's neoliberal logic in relation to workers and the public sector more broadly. On one hand, responses by the state to the first wave of the pandemic in France revealed a low level of preparedness for pandemics, an overly hospital-centred provision of health care in favour of private insurers and their clients, and a fundamentally ineffective health strategy (Or, 2021). Yet, at the same time as the public sector was reeling from the impacts of COVID-19 and associated shutdowns, the government

set in motion various protections and bail outs for the private sector including businesses, banks, and other financial services.

Within 10 days of the lockdown announcement in France and barely 2 weeks following WHO's declaration of the coronavirus pandemic, the French Government set in motion government orders[94] including temporary changes to the national insolvency law in a bid to "protect companies, employees, and managers from the cash flow consequences of the state of health emergency" *(Fink, 2020)*. The order, including amendments to Book VI of the Commercial Code relating to companies in difficulty was fashioned as a safety net to protect businesses from debt and "difficulties during this period and in the months to come" (ibid, 2020; Government of France, 2021). Additional temporary measures aimed at the private sector in France included time limits for payment of social and fiscal instalment (such as social security paid by employers for registered employees), tax rebates, guarantees on bank lines of credit, credit mediation and support from the State and the Bank of France and mediation of potential conflict resulting from employee complaints (or suppliers) to the Business Ombudsman (KMPG, 2020). The state went as far as insuring companies against the potentiality of lawsuits arising from unpaid contributions to social security, and an assurance that they would be "addressed through an amicable procedure" (ibid, 2020).

South Africa

Following the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions in South Africa, I returned to South Africa in June 2021. In conversation with two housekeepers who were formerly employed as housekeepers at the University of the Witwatersrand (WITS) I gained a first-hand look into the

[94] See: Government order dated 27 March 2020 (No. 2020-341).

impacts of COVID-19 and the insufficiency of government responses to the crisis in relation to the working class and poor. According to Jabu:

> " . . . the government is not giving people the jobs, land, or support they promised. As we speak there are land expulsions in Gauteng. . .people are in shacks. The government is not employing. . . and we have no job security".[95]

The South African experience during the COVID-19 lockdown, the political subjectivities and narratives that arose from that period, are not dissimilar to those I encountered in France. Across South Africa, the pandemic underscored longstanding structural weaknesses in the country's job market, precarious conditions within the working class, and a seemingly ambivalent state. Reports published by the World Bank during this period indicated that low wage workers like Jabu suffered as much as four times the rate of job losses than high-wage workers with young people disproportionately faced with acute unemployment (World Bank, 2021).

Nearly 1.5 million South Africans lost their jobs by the end of 2020 while those who kept their employment saw pay cuts as high as 15% (ibid, 2021).

The ambivalent response of the neoliberal state to social crisis finds full expression in emergent debates about a basic income grant (BIG) during the lockdown period in South Africa. South African Economist and Director of the Institute for Economic Justice (IEJ), Gilad Isaacs explained:

[95] Interview, Jabu (domestic worker), Johannesburg, South Africa, August 16th , 2021.

> "the issue of a basic income grant (BIG) gained a lot of traction. The South African Federation of Trade Unions (SAFTU) was suggesting R1,500 per month but Civil society returned a finding of R1268 . . . but the state returned a figure of R500, which hasn't materialised into any pragmatic policy".[96]

Despite unprecedented rates of inequality, growing calls for a basic income grant, and the sweeping impacts of COVID-19 on the working class in South Africa, a panel of economic advisors in the Presidency railed against implementing a BIG concluding "the cost could deepen debt and hinder economic growth" (Business Tech, 2022).

The embeddedness of the state's neoliberal logics and the incapacity of neoliberal techniques to fulfil public sector functions was also clear in the resettlement campaigns in South Africa. In December 2021, I conducted an interview with Rupert, a medical doctor who was stationed in Cape Town during the pandemic and who volunteered with Doctors Without Borders at a resettlement site there. The conditions in the resettlement site brought into light the governments limited response to crises in the public sector following the lockdown:

> "The UN encouraged many countries to build resettlement sites especially for homeless people during the pandemic to stop the spread of COVID. But they didn't equip the temporary shelters and quarantine sites to meet the scale of what we were seeing in Cape Town, Tshwane, and Johannesburg"[97]

[96] Interview, Dr Gilad Isaacs (economist), Johannesburg, South Africa, November 2021.
[97] Interview, Rupert (medical doctor), Cape Town, South Africa, November 2021.

While a government regulation passed under the National Disaster Management Act (57 of 2002) compelled the South African government to identify to identify temporary shelters, quarantine sites and self-isolation sites for homeless people, in line with health protocols, the state failed to effectively resource and equip the centres. According to Rupert:

> "In the shelters we saw record numbers of homeless people but there was no support for infection and prevention control. People were coming in because they were homeless and destitute but I saw an incalculable number of patients who left the sites with TB, COVID, and other diseases. I can unequivocally say the state failed the destitute and homeless in Cape Town".[98]

By November 2021, government resettlement sites, their chronic underfunding (including limited availability of screening and healthcare equipment) were the subject of human rights violations cases and inspections by the South African Human Right Council. At Strandfontein Temporary Relocation camp, where Rupert volunteered, nearly 2,000 people were resettled, and the South African Human Rights Commission found:

> "evidence of inadequate healthcare access, lack of proper social distancing, inadequate healthcare access; lack of food, water and ablution facilities, and allegations of sexual assaults. . . conditions were so appalling, that the

[98] Ibid, 2021.

Commission recommended the site be closed immediately" (South African Human Rights Council, 2021)[99]

The protections offered by the South African state, including income relief from the Covid-19 Temporary Employer/Employee Relief Scheme and as well as its attempts to regulate occupational health and safety ultimately proved to be grounded in neoliberal logics. Much like the French case, these 'techniques of neoliberalism' were embedded in legislation and policy at the onset of the pandemic. While the state failed to utilise and commit financial resources to protect workers' rights and access to basic services, several efforts were mobilised to buttress the operations and processes of business and financial markets.

On the 25th of March 2020, South Africa's Minister of Employment and Labour, Nxesi signed a directive[100] obligating employers (who had registered their workers for the Unemployment Insurance Fund) to access funds for lost wages. These sums were intended to be accessed through the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) to allow companies to pay lost wages during periods when workers were not able to work (Department of Employment and Labour, 2020). When the scheme was announced, the Departmental press release read: "companies facing distress due to pandemic to be assisted" and it became clear as early as 17th March 2020, that the government's legislative and policy responses to COVID-19 would be geared towards lessening the financial impact of the crisis on employers rather than workers.

[99] A full copy of the judgement on the Matter with the City of Cape Town on Strandfontein is available online at the SAHRC or commission website.
[100] A full copy of the directive is available on the Department of Employment and Labour website at: https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/202003/43161gen215.pdf

Whereas the government promulgate rules and policies related to the UIF, there was no mechanism compelling employers to apply the scheme (Runciman, 2021). Figures released by the DEL indicate that as much as 33% of companies were noncompliant with the provision from the onset and the "result of this was that workers would be punished for their employers' failure to follow the law" (ibid, 2021, 265). Collectively, policies purported to support workers ultimately facilitated business and the private sector's exploitation of workers through a lack of regulation in worker registrations and a loophole provision allowing employers to apply directly to the scheme instead of workers themselves which "was justified on the grounds that the scheme would be unable to cope with millions of individual claims" (Izwi Domestic Worker's Alliance, 2020).

Under the lens of COVID-19 and the state's response to the crisis, it is clear that the role of the neoliberal state as a mediator of private capital and markets has grown leaving crucial public sector functions underserved. A mineworker in South Africa's Limpopo province noted that "today we work less than before but we are told to produce more" and a trade unionist in France commented:

> "There are no decent jobs and no mechanism for cohesion and public service . . . A French acronym RGPP - la revue general de politique publique – was a massive restructuring of entire public service programs initiated by Sarkozy in 2008. At the peak of the restructuring in 2011- 2012 we saw massive cuts in public expenses as a massive austerity measure. It destroyed a number of resources of public administration. Unions have been raising alarm bells about this since 2008, on the long-term impacts which are not only not cutting costs but - when reducing public sector services, you have to hire temps... you must gut the entire

> health system. . . many hospitals haven't recovered. Many hospitals and police force do not have capacity to do the most basic functions . . . ".[101]

The reflections and political analysis of my interlocutors, whether a mineworker in South Africa or a trade unionist in France, testified to the acceleration of a neoliberal logic in the state's relationship to workers and the public sector more broadly. While some might argue that the state's interventions in COVID-19 reflect "a return of the state and intervention measures", it is apparent from the policy, legal, and economic slant of the state in France and South Africa that the underlying impetus in neoliberal state interventions rises from the state's role as a "global firefighter of the capitalist system" (Cayla, 2021, 3)

The impacts of COVID-19 on core public sector functions such as employment, housing, and health and the undercurrent of neoliberal techniques in the state's response impresses the argument developed in *Chapter 5* and *Chapter 6* of this thesis. First, that the producer, investor, and redistributing functions of the state in the public sector have reduced significantly. Second, that the state has not regressed in financial terms but in terms of its approach to workers and the public sector - increasingly shaping and recreating itself in its role as facilitator of business and major financial insurer of economic risk.

[101] Interview, Pierre Hubbard (General Secretary to the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development OECD), Paris, 2nd September 2019.

According to French economist Olivier Passet:

> "The state has maintained itself financially while it has gradually abandoned entire sectors of production that it can't efficiently manage anymore. It has concentrated with stunted means on its sovereign functions: security and justice in particular". The return of the state into the economy is therefore, for the time being, a mere trompe-l'oeil. The way it responds to the crisis is symptomatic of the new role it has taken on. It is spending huge sums while the bulk of productive action is being delegated to the private sector. It finances without controlling, if at all, and without engaging in real strategic coordination of productive action. Is this a return of the state? There is reason to doubt it. On the contrary, we are experiencing the apotheosis of the insurance state and its resignation from the field of production of common goods". (Passet, O., 2020. Du trop d'État à l'État démissionnaire. Xerfi Canal).

What much of contemporary populist scholarship should be concerned is what will replace the neoliberal state in politics. We have seen, through COVID019, that the state producing common goods has effectively demised. If it had not, it would go beyond the mobilisation of billions (through the IMF, Central Banks, and other financiers) or importing masks and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) from China. Its responses would not be financial but pragmatic for the public good. Its responses to crisis would not only be financial, but real and its interventions would be aimed at mediating systemic failure not saving it from bankruptcy.

Conclusion: Caught napping[102]

> "The ANC was "caught napping" and are now following the EFF. I actually raised this issue in caucus: until when are we going to have a situation where EFF is drafting an agenda for the ANC and Parliament? They come with the radical proposals - which we should have come up with because we are the ones who have that resolution – instead we find ourselves supporting their proposals"[103].

Chapter 5 and *Chapter 6* of this thesis argued that neoliberal techniques, which have come to inform the state's the relationship to workers, have facilitated a populist turn at the regional and national level in France and South Africa. *Chapter 6* in particular argued that populists are increasingly taking on the discourse of the state, progressively modelling themselves around the organisation, policies, practices, and representational strategies of the state through militarism. This Chapter completes the central argument of the thesis in its contention that neoliberal governance models, insofar as they limit the state's role as an arbiter of the public good and compel the state to act as a facilitator of private capital and financial markets, create a further vacuum in government systems and administration in the world's most established democracies.

In line with Mikateko's assertion that the state in South Africa was "caught napping", this Chapter argues that the withdrawal of the neoliberal state in politics has reinforced disillusionment and feelings of distrust in a perceivably impotent political structure and ultimately created a political vacuum exploited by populist actors. Further to Mikateko's

[102] Interview, Mikateko Mahlaule (Member of Parliament), Johannesburg, April 2020.
[103] Interview, Mikateko Mahlaule (Member of Parliament), Johannesburg, April 2020

reflection, the Chapter highlights the potentiality for populist actors to fill the vacuum created by the neoliberal state in politics. As the state withdraws from the public sector, as seen in its interventions and responses to COVID-19, populist actors are increasingly able to 'set the agenda', to shape public perception, and to direct collective action according to their institutional ambitions, political ideologies, or world views.

As the neoliberal state in politics gradually resigns from its role as an arbiter of the public good in favour of preserving and repairing the market; my interlocutors (workers, trade unionists, activists, political commentators and journalists and established party leaders) demonstrate that people are grappling to make geopolitical meaning out of their own circumstances (and their circumstances in relation to the receding neoliberal state in politics). Their reflections and political analysis suggest that further research in contemporary populism theory should move beyond perceptions of populism as a 'moment'. Instead, we should be engaged with the types of governance models, including populism, which will come to fill the gap left by the neoliberal state in politics.

In conclusion, political and human geographers in particular, need to look at populist parties for their rhetoric, the ways in which their spatially contingent campaigns connect to and reflect the historical circumstances of everyday people (workers) and the places where populism operates. If crisis is necessary for the political survival of populism, then we should be especially concerned with the objective conditions created by a perceivable crisis in neoliberal government. Future research should consider how the roots of populism (refracted through the feelings of distrust, disillusionment and powerlessness depicted by my interlocutors) are watered by the withdrawal of the neoliberal state in politics, its inability to act in the economic sector, and the concurrent

attempts by 'people on the ground' to contend with the existential questions once mediated by the state: "unemployment, landlessness, poverty. . . and fear for your life"[104].

[104] Interview, Thibedi Lebeloane, ("a left leaning activist"), Brits, South Africa, 17th August 2020.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

> *There is always a supply of demagogical and manipulative politicians found everywhere. But only sometimes and in some countries do they reach the electorate resonating with their moods and emotions. And only then do the populists have a chance of winning power.*
>
> Piotr Sztompka, *The 'demand side' of populism: The case of Poland*, 2016 pp.73

Introduction

As early as 1969, the rise of populism in several democracies including the United States, parts of Europe, and Latin America garnered the attention of the public, political theorists, and academics. This period, driven by observations equating populism with the rise of communism in democratic theory, was marked by a keen scholarly interest in defining populism and led to major developments in the early populism literature including scholarly consensus on the core tenets of populism which are: the people, the elite, and the general will (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017, 9-11; Agnew and Shin, 2017, 915). Paying attention to populism in parts of mainland Europe, North and Latin America, the core tenets of populism were applied and tested against a range of actors since defined as 'populist' (Ionescu and Gellner, 1969; De Kadt, 1970; De la Torre, 2017, 195). These studies moved the field closer to an 'ideal type' of populism and imbued the term 'populism' with a new found analytical utility.

Early populism research certainly renewed academic interest in populist electoral politics and provided a strong foundation for populism studies, however it has left a challenging and not uncomplicated set of questions for contemporary populism research. While early studies drew on the 'ideal type' emerging in the 60s and early 70s, which made populism analytically useful, this

body of work essentially concerned itself with the supply-side aspects of populism such as those questions concerned with the evolution of populist parties, how they are sustained, and "the things populist parties do to increase their electoral appeal" (Mols & Jetten, 2020, 557; Berman, 2021). In addition to the glaring omission of populism in Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, and the rise of populism outside of the geographies first cogently described by Ionescu and Gellner, early studies have left several opportunities for further research and contributions to demand side populism questions concerned with the "reasons why voters become attracted to populist parties" and the basic question of what "the people" are to whom populism refers (Mols & Jetten, 2020, 557).

Against the backdrop of early populism research, this work approaches supply-side questions related to contemporary populism through the lens of geography, in particular human geography and the sub discipline of political geography, to interrogate contemporary populist electoral politics. It considers the politics of the RN and the EFF, in terms of their conceptualisation of 'one people', 'one will', and 'one leader' as both evidence of populism and the definitional basis of this work. Through a comparative political geography of the RN in France and the EFF in South Africa, this work brings two case studies of populist actors in the global North and global South, the electoral impulses which they give rise to, and their implications for neoliberal democratic models into the same empirical space.

Situating the RN and EFF as populist parties

The first endeavour of this work is to impress the sustained relevance of populist electoral politics in contemporary public discourse and its purchase as a subject of scholarly inquiry. The descriptive Chapters of the thesis (*Chapter 1: introduction, Chapter 2: Literature, and Chapter 3:*

Method) set the scene for the rest of the work. They revisit early populism theory (particularly the definitional aspects of populism), pointing to the typology of populism emerging from these studies, which are the definitional basis of this work. The descriptive chapters go on to assess the gaps in supply-side populism research, and the theoretical advancements and disciplinary contributions which this study can yet make including the geographies of the state literature, labour geography, and contemporary populism theory more broadly. The descriptive Chapters argue that the RN and EFF are not only comparable case studies of populist parties but that they are also illustrative case studies of the potential factors driving the supply-side populist electoral politics in neoliberal democratic states. The rest of the thesis is structured around three research questions which are interrogated in the substantive Chapters (*Chapter 5, Chapter 6*, and *Chapter 7*) of the work. In the following sections, I briefly synthesise the arguments arising from these substantive Chapters and state the original contributions that this analysis makes to academe.

Regional Populism: Industry Dominant Regions of France and South Africa

The first question I posed in this study was: *what is the spatial distribution of populist electoral politics in France and South Africa and what factors can account for the rise of populism in these areas?* I developed my answer in *Chapter 5: Populism in Single Industry Dominant Regions of France and South Africa*. I employ the rise of the RN in distinct regions of France and the rise of the EFF in distinct regions of South Africa as case studies to further my argument. In *Chapter 5*, I draw on the geographies of the state literature and longstanding research in labour geography to further two arguments. First, that the territorial distribution and considerable electoral support for the RN and EFF in the 'industrial heartland' of Hauts-de-France and the 'platinum belt' of South Africa's North West province map onto a dense and complex political history of the neoliberal state's accumulation strategy. Second, that the neoliberal state's historical accumulation strategy has

produced populist identities through its geographies of labour in "single sector dominant regions. It is these socio-politically constructed 'populist identities' which have facilitated the rise of a populist electoral politics in this time space today. From the vantage point of the working class, which is one socio-politically constructed identity produced by the neoliberal state and reinforced by populist parties, I contend that populist electoral politics are a result of the combined and contingent outcomes of interactions between the structural, material, and social space(s) facilitated by the neoliberal state's accumulation strategy and the political realities which they give rise to (Berlant, 1996; Massey, 1995; Massey, 2013; Yarrow 1990, 1991).

What is at issue in *Chapter 5* is not what populists do to gain power but how populism is bound up with the history of state led capitalist development and the socio-political differences which this accumulation strategy embeds whether this is along the lines of disparate experiences of class, inequality, or citizenship. From this vantage point, I argue that the potential factors driving populist electoral politics include the spatial structure within which industries like manufacturing and mining are embedded, the political subjectivities - and inherent questions of participation and citizenship- that are either reproduced or reformulated across these communities - and the possibilities which this time-space creates for alternative political discourses and new social movements such as populism to be forged against what may be considered 'mainstream' political ideas.

The underlying argument of *Chapter 5* follows from the French and South African narratives of nationhood buttressed by images of unity and indivisibility which have captured the public imagination. It is important in the context of the wider study to call to attention the overarching narrative of neoliberalism, the meta narrative under which mainstream political ideologies and recently populism operate under, which is insensitive to social complexity. The ideology of

"*fraternité*" in France and "rainbowism" in South Africa rails against perceivable and persistent differences and as such the persistent structural inequality which colours the lived experiences of working class people in these geographies. More importantly, it discards the extended, multi-scalar relationships which are simultaneously material and meaningful that have resulted from the rise of neoliberal democratic models. The experiences of communities directly engaged with and within industry dominant regions (or surrounding industry and extractives) are central in this regard.

It is impossible to understand the rise of populism in industry dominant regions of France and South Africa without paying attention to the broader socio-political history of these countries including what Ben Fine and others have called "the minerals energy complex" (Ashman, Fine and Newman, 2011, 47). This endeavour necessarily involves excavating the experience of the voter in this context and the collective 'lens' through which industrial and mining communities view their complex social reality, in relation to the neoliberal state. On one hand, the site and politics of the deindustrialised North of France with its "socially and politically produced system" and on the other hand South Africa's Marikana mine where workers who joined the EFF's ranks as party members would call the mining town of Marikana "the Home of the EFF" (South African History Online, 2020). Through the political subjectivities of the working class electorate here, I argue that we can gain understanding of the electoral striving for placemaking and their bid to reintegrate into the body politic.

The recounting of the rise of the RN and the EFF, through the narratives of my interlocutors, impressed the pervasiveness of epistemic and ontological isolation of the politics of the North in relation to the global South. In recollections of the Whirlpool factory protests in Amiens, which occurred fully 5 years after the Marikana massacre in South Africa, journalists suggested that:

> "Goodyear must certainly be the only multinational in the world where workers have resisted so much. First of all, they wanted to sack 400 of us then it was 800 then they said they wanted to close the factory altogether. But we have resisted every step of the way." (BBC News, 2017).

Yet in South Africa, the dynamic relationship between the site and politics of workers struggles and the electoral alure of populist parties was firmly embedded in the public discourse. As one of my interlocutors relayed:

> "If Marikana didn't happen on the 16th of August 2012, there would be no political ground fertile enough for Malema to arrive and grow the movement that the EFF has become. He (Malema) was last to speak at the Marikana memorial . . .and there was a political earthquake, a rupture, and the EFF came out of that"[105]

Resolving this epistemic and ontological 'separateness', which find its way into populism literature and the populist electoral calculus, is arguably the most salient contribution which *Chapter 5* makes to the geographies of the state literature, labour geography, and contemporary populism theory more broadly.

[105] Interview, Nick Bauer (Political Journalist, ENCA), Johannesburg, March 20th, 2020.

National Populism: Militarism, Gender, and Social Power

The second question which the research undertakes to answer is: *how are the neoliberal state's multiscalar methods of control and order reproduced at the intimate levels of party politics and voter behaviour? How do the discursive constructions of populist parties reflect these methods and what is their impact on the electoral calculus in French and South African elections between 2014 – 2019?* I answer this question in *Chapter 6: militarism, gender, and social power*. Recalling that *Chapter 5* departs from narratives circulating in neoliberal democracies about indivisibility and unity (despite neoliberalism's insensitivity to social complexity), *Chapter 6* also departs from a powerful (albeit inaccurate) set of narratives circulating in economically advanced neoliberal democracies suggesting that "we are at peace" (Lipschutz, 1998, 6). I posit that populist electoral politics are an indication of just how inaccurate these narratives are. Instead, social, class-based, and racial tensions left unresolved by the rush for a 'neoliberal peace' have contributed to the populist turn. I leverage the disciplinary literature on the geographies of militarism, bringing it in conversation with the views of my interlocutors in the field, to further my argument.

Beginning with the longue durée of militarism in French and South African political history, including France's wars abroad and the 'liberation struggle' of apartheid South Africa, I contend that "gunpowder brained" militarism has seeped into and become inextricably linked to the contemporary political culture of both countries (Yabes, 2017). Considering the symbols, terminology, organisational structure, and practices of populist parties, I demonstrate how military geographies not only persist through history but also permeate the international, to the regional and individual dimensions to mediate "the 'playing out' of military activities in everyday, mundane spaces" including the populist electoral space (Woon, 2019, 115; Pain, 2015,64).

Through the lens of the RN and EFF, *Chapter 6* brings to the fore how populists deploy militarised discourse (once solely the purview of the state) and extend militaristic influences into civilian social and political spheres through political conditioning and ideational trends (Thee, 1980, Shaw, 1991, Carlton, 2001). At the same time, this framework gives rise to the populist electoral calculus in neoliberal democracies – where mechanisms of control and order once solely the purview of the state come to inform the popular discourse and ideology of electoral politics. Ultimately, the RN and EFF's visual culture which can be understood as forming a part of the party's broader declaration of intended self-defence on behalf of France and South Africa's workers simultaneously evokes an acute sense of being under siege by hostile forces (out to destroy the party) and the capacity of the organisation to defend itself and "the people". This seemingly duplicitous visuality falls squarely within the populist calculus of both creating and enacting crisis while positioning itself as a solution to the same challenge.

The research conducted in *Chapter 6* offers a sustained treatment of populism *per se*, through the lens of Geography. It contributes most substantially to a more robust geographies of populism literature. Grounded in disciplinary approaches to militarism, including comments on violence, subordination, and gender, the research elucidates the ways in which populist parties leverage militarism in relation to the electorate and the internal party structure. First, to legitimise their political activities and discourse, second to set themselves apart from 'elite' politics while contending with the organisational challenges associated with the highly personalised structure of populist parties, and third position themselves in relation to the working class electorate.

It is clear from the RN and EFF's perpetuation of a discourse of fear and insecurity of positions that the militaristic self-styling of populist parties can at once mobilise the electorate while precaratising the working class voter. This is achieved through the party's clear evocation of an

acute sense of being under siege by hostile forces and simultaneously its own centrality in resolving this challenge. This powerful internal contradiction is perhaps the most crucial insight which geographies of militarism can offer contemporary populism theory. It is also a potential launching pad for further research including how we separate the political ambitions of populists from the aspirations and striving of voters.

The future of populist electoral politics

My own intrigue about future research on populism gave rise to the study conducted in *Chapter 7* of this work. In *Chapter 7*, I answer the question: *what does the rise of the RN and EFF signify for the futurity of parliamentary democracy in France and South Africa? What lessons can the rise of COVID-19 tell us about the condition of neoliberal democratic models in relation to populism and populists in power?* I answer this question by interrogating the significance of populist electoral politics as an embedded feature of neoliberal democratic models. Through the lens of COVID-19, particularly within geographic locations where populists are in government, I interrogate the contradictions and contestations inherent to neoliberal democratic states against the populist electoral calculus.

Chapter 7 relies as much on the narrative circulating in neoliberal democracies as previous Chapters. However, it goes further than elucidating how populist electoral politics debunks these narratives to argue that populism is a signifier of the increasingly contradictory character of neoliberal democratic models more broadly. The Chapter challenges political geography and the contemporary populism literature to think of populism not as a contradiction or contestation of neoliberal democracy but as a symptom of its existential crisis.

Much like *Chapter 5* and *Chapter 6* of this work, *Chapter 7* foregrounds the findings of my field research and the critical political commentary of my interlocutors. The central argument of the Chapter is that the electorate is contending with a set of everyday challenges bound up with the embeddedness of neoliberalism at the same time as the state, once a mediator of these challenges, is receding from its role as an arbiter of the public good. I suggest that it is on this premise that a populist electoral calculus is both facilitated and perpetuated in established democracies of the global North and the global South.

This argument is encapsulated in a conversation with Thibedi Lebeloane, a left leaning activist in Brits South Africa who emphatically stated that:

> "On the ground the issues are always the same – unemployment, landlessness, poverty. . and fear for your life"[106]

From this discussion with Thibedi, and a dynamic pool of interlocutors including trade unionists, senior political party officials in France and South Africa, and those employed by or living in industry dominant regions (often politicised as 'working class'), my research points to an electoral calculus facilitated by increasingly perceivable failures, limitations, and prevailing logic(s) of neoliberalism – which necessarily requires the state to recede from the space of politics and issues of the public good towards the mediation of markets and private capital.

[106] Interview, Thibedi Lebeloane, ("a left leaning activist"), Brits, South Africa, 17th August 2020.

Chapter 7 is structured in terms of a critical analysis of the unmet politics of expectation, the embeddedness of neoliberal logics, and a glaring absence of the state as an intervener and arbiter of the public good exemplified by government policy responses to the corona virus (COVID-19) pandemic. It questions the growing orthodoxy in contemporary populism literature, particularly the demand side approaches to studies of populism, which dismiss populist politics as a "thin ideology" and its attendant electoral impulses as an uncritical response to "performance over substance". In so doing, the Chapter challenges a fuller conceptualisation of contemporary populism not only as a "thicker ideology" but as a feature of neoliberal democratic models which is not going away.

Final reflections and future research

In *Chapter 7*, I substantively engage with the relationship between the state, elites, and capitalism and how capitalism and neoliberal economic models have transformed the state in recent decades so that it has retreated from its role as both an arbiter of the public good and provider of welfare and entitlements to instead allow 'the market to decide'. Drawing on the geographies of the state literature, I demonstrate how techniques of state-orchestrated governance have fundamentally changed and potentially facilitated the rise of populist parties and its constitutive populist electoral politics. My argument about the mediating influence of neoliberalism over state governance policies, practices, and processes and its mediating influence on contemporary populism contributes both to a spatialised theorisation of populism as well as contemporary thought on the geographies of the state.

What remains is a gap in democratic theory and practice. While this thesis introduces significant examples of the future of populism in terms of the RN and the EFF there are other geographies indicating the rise of populism beyond a 'moment'. In *Chapter 6*, I discuss the recent uptick in popular support for populist parties across Europe and in particular the preeminent role of women in these parties. The rise of parties including the RN (Marine Le Pen), the Danish Progress Party (Siv Jensen), the Danish People's Party (Pia Kjersgaard), the AfD in Germany (Alice Weidel) and most notably Giorgia Meloni and the Brothers of Italy are all compelling evidence that it makes sense to think about populism in more longitudinal ways. In Southern Africa, the rise of leaders and parties considered populist including in Kenya, South Africa, and Zambia e.g., Michael Sata, Raila Odinga, and Jacob Zuma, show the increasing need for comparative and critical scholarship not just in term of the long termism of populism as a political organisation but its potential to interact with other dynamics such as gender, class, and interstate relationships. At the state level, we should be engaged with conceptualising the types of governance models and electoral impulses, including populism, which will come to fill the gap left by the neoliberal state in politics.

To the extent that crisis is necessary for the political survival of populism, we should be especially concerned about the perceivable crisis in neoliberal government: where will "political power" reside? what actors and political ideologies will attempt to leverage the state's inability to act in the economic sector? and which territorialised impulses (including ethno-nationalism and xenophobia) might be produced by the electorate's concurrent attempts to contend with the existential questions once mediated by the state: "unemployment, landlessness, poverty. . . and fear for your life"[107]?.

[107] Interview, Thibedi Lebeloane, ("a left leaning activist"), Brits, South Africa, 17th August 2020.

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Primary Sources[108]: Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

INTERVIEWEE	AFFILIATION / POSITION	LOCATION	DATE
	FRANCE		
PATRICIA CHAGNON	Rassemblement National / Regional Counsellor	Lille	October 2019
REMI CARDON	Socialist Party / Senator	Lille	October 2019
PIERRE LARROUTUROU	Socialist Party /Regional Councillor Ile De France	Virtual	October 2019
MUNICIPAL COUNSELLOR 1	Rassemblement National / Municipal Counsellor Abbeville	Amiens	August 2019
ANNIKA BRUNER	Rassemblement National / European Union Member of Parliament	Paris	September 2019
MUNICIPAL COUNSELLOR 2	Rassemblement National / Pas de Calais	Virtual	February 2020
AURELIA BEIGNEUX	Rassemblement National/ Departmental Councillor for Pas-de-Calais	Calais	September 2019
MUNICIPAL COUNSELLOR 3	Rassemblement National / Pas de Calais	Virtual	March 2020
NICOLAS VINOCUR	Journalist	Virtual	October 2021
PIERRE HUBBARD	General Secretary to the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)	Paris	September 2019

[108] In accordance with the University of Oxford CUREC guidelines and protocols, interviewees were given the option of anonymity. Participants who have asked to remain anonymous are indicated in the primary sources table. Participants who have agreed only for the use of their first name are also indicated in the primary sources table.

ANONYMOUS ACADEMIC	Helsinki University	Virtual	October 2019
ALAIN	Les Jeunes Insoumis	Lille	September 2019
MATHILDE	Les Jeunes Insoumis	Lille	September 2019
JULIE	Les Jeunes Insoumis	Lille	September 2019
STEPHANE	Les Jeunes Insoumis	Lille	September 2019
BERNARD	Les Jeunes Insoumis	Lille	September 2019
MICHEL	Rassemblement National / Member	Calais	September 2019
ELOISE	Rassemblement National / Member	Calais	September 2019
CHRISTIAN	Rassemblement National / Member	Calais	September 2019
AARON	Rassemblement National / Member	Lille	September 2019
PAUL	Rassemblement National / Member	Lille	September 2019
ELIZE	Rassemblement National / Member	Calais	September 2019
ANGELA	Ministry of Social Affairs and Health/ Inspector	Amiens	August 2019
MYA	L'Auberge Des Migrants / Coordinator	Calais	September 2019
SIDENIY	L'Auberge Des Migrants / Coordinator	Calais	September 2019
SYLVIE	L'Auberge Des Migrants	Calais	September 2019
FRANCOIS	L'Auberge Des Migrants / Vice President	Calais	September 2019
YELENA	Volunteer	Calais	September 2019
SOPHIE	Rassemblement National / Member	Amiens	August 2019
PASCAL	Rassemblement National / Member	Lille	October 2019
CATHERINE	Rassemblement National / Member	Lille	October 2019
YOUTH CAMPAIGNER 1	Gillets Jaunes (Yellow Vest Movement) / Organiser	Amiens	September 2019
YOUTH CAMPAIGNER 2 (CLAUDE)	Gillets Jaunes (Yellow Vest Movement)	Amiens	September 2019
YOUTH CAMPAIGNER 3	Gillets Jaunes (Yellow Vest Movement)	Amiens	September 2019
JEAN	Care worker	Amiens	September 2019

LAUREN	Jean's Wife / Psychiatric Nurse	Amiens	September 2019
MANON	Care worker	Amiens	September 2019
GEOFF	Whirlpool Factory Worker	Amiens	September 2019
CHRISTOPPHE	Whirlpool Factory Worker	Amiens	September 2019
GILLES	Whirlpool Factory Worker	Amiens	September 2019
	SOUTH AFRICA		
DR SITHEMBILE MBETE	University of Pretoria/ Political Scientist	Virtual	March 2020
MIKATEKO MAHLAULE	ANC / Member of Parliament	Virtual	April 2020
SAHLULELE LUZIPO	ANC/ Chairperson of Portfolio Committee on Mineral Resources and Energy	Virtual	August 2020
DR SIZWE MPOFU WALSH	University of the Witwatersrand / Lecturer	Virtual	July 2020
DR GILAD ISAACS	Institute for Economic Justice / Director	Johannesburg	November 2021
ANDILE MNXGITAMA	Economic Freedom Fighters/ Former Founding Member	Virtual	July 2020
DR GILLIAN HART	University of California (Berkeley)/ Professor Emerita & Professor of the Graduate School in Geography	Virtual	October 2019
MATTHIUS PAUWELS	University of Johannesburg	Johannesburg	August 2021
NICK BAUER	Journalist	Virtual	March 2020
SIPHO	Economic Freedom Fighters / Member	Virtual	May 2020
FORMER FOUNDING MEMBER[109]	Economic Freedom Fighters / Member	Virtual	June 2020
KWANELE	Economic Freedom Fighters / Member	Virtual	July 2020

[109] The EFF was founded at Uncle Tom's Hall in the South Western Townships (SOWETO). Although as many as 19 individuals are listed as key role players in the founding of the party, I was able to speak with two. One interviewee agreed to have their full name listed and the second asked to be identified only by their affiliation to the party (i.e., former founding member).

OMPHEMETSE	Economic Freedom Fighters / Member	Virtual	July 2020
DIMPHO	Economic Freedom Fighters / Member	Virtual	July 2020
BANDILE	Economic Freedom Fighters / Member	Virtual	June 2020
EFF STUDENT ORGANISER 1	Economic Freedom Fighters / Student Organiser	Virtual	November 2020
EFF STUDENT ORGANISER 2	Economic Freedom Fighters / Student Organiser	Virtual	November 2020
POLITICAL COMMISSAR OF THE EFF STUDENT COMMAND	Economic Freedom Fighters / Student Organiser	Virtual	July 2020
POLITICAL COMMISSAR OF THE EFF STUDENT COMMAND 2	Economic Freedom Fighters / Student Organiser	Virtual	July 2020
POLITICAL COMMENTATOR 1	No Affiliation	Virtual	August 2020
DR RUPERT ROBINSON	Medical Doctor	Cape Town	November 2021
THIBEDI LEBELOANE	Activist	Virtual	August 2020
WARREN	Economic Freedom Fighters / Student Command	Virtual	August 2020
COMMANDER HAPPY	Economic Freedom Fighters / Provincial Leadership	Virtual	June 2020
GEMMA	Democratic Alliance / Student Leader	Virtual	July 2020
MATTHEW	Democratic Alliance / Student Leader	Virtual	July 2020
LWAZI	ANC/Student Leader	Johannesburg	November 2021
NOMPENDULO	ANC/Student Leader	Johannesburg	November 2021
ZIYANDA	ANC/Student Leader	Johannesburg	November 2021
JABU	Domestic worker	Johannesburg	August 2021
DOROTHY	Domestic worker	Johannesburg	August 2021
TRACEY	Domestic worker	Johannesburg	August 2021
PATRICK	Mineworker	Virtual (Limpopo)	May 2020
SIPHAMANDLA	Mineworker	Virtual (Limpopo)	May 2020
PROSPER	Patrick's Brother / Mineworker	Virtual (Rustenburg)	May 2020

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