For the many, not the few

An idea analysis on populism in speeches by leaders of the
Labour Party at party conferences 1998-2018

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Abstract

Through an idea analysis that utilizes an ideal type of populism, this study seeks to find out how the use of populist ideas has changed over time in conference speeches by four consecutive Labour Party leaders between the years 1998 and 2018. The method for this idea analysis is based on Göran Bergström's and Per-Anders Svärd's theories on an ideal type-based idea analysis. The theoretical framework that forms the foundation for this thesis' ideal type builds among others on theories on populism by Jan-Werner Müller and Benjamin Moffitt. The findings in this study show that the use of populist ideas by Labour leaders has not significantly increased over time. The study has also found that a populistic style has been used regularly by all the leaders in most of their speeches during the last two decades. Another finding is that the populist ideas present in leader's conference speeches have changed significantly in the last decade to include a more populist message related to the economy.

Key words: Idea analysis, Populism, Labour Party, Political speeches, United Kingdom
Words: 9864

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1   Introduction

When you say the words populism and United Kingdom, Brexit might be the first thing that comes to mind. And while there are some clear links behind the vote to leave the European Union and the political phenomenon of populism, that event is not the only manifestation of populism that has been a hot political topic in the UK during recent years.

Another widely discussed and related political topic is Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party. Corbyn got elected as leader, even though he was opposed by large parts of the media, many members of parliament within his own party and even the previous Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair (Blair 2015). This, combined with his rhetoric about a rigged system and tax-dodging elites, led to some political commentators even comparing him to UK's version of Trump (Gray 2017). Even his predecessor Ed Miliband was attacked during his time as leader by the media for similar reasons (Martin, Chesters & Eccles 2015).

These recent, supposedly populist, developments within the Labour Party raise many questions for political scientists to study. The importance of understanding what has happened within the party is highlighted by the fact that the Labour Party has over 560 000 members, being one of the largest political parties in Europe (Audickas 2018).

2   Problem and purpose

This study seeks to contribute to the understanding of how the Labour Party has changed in recent decades. Does the party communicate in a more populist style today than what it did a decade or twenty years ago? How populist were the speeches by the leaders of New Labour - Tony Blair and Gordon Brown? Are there differences between the populistic styles of the leaders? Trying to answer these kind of questions about the Labour Party is a meaningful task for understanding today's political landscape, considering that the party is one of the major Social Democratic parties in the world.

This thesis utilizes a theoretical definition of populism that views populism more as a political style than a political ideology. The aim of this study is to discover how the usage and frequency of populist ideas in Labour leaders' conference speeches has changed during the last two decades. This will be done by answering the following research question:

"How has the use of populist ideas developed over time in conference speeches made by Labour Party leaders?"

The first hypothesis of this thesis is that populist ideas have been used as much in the conference speeches of previous and more centrist leaders Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. If this hypothesis is proven correct it can be argued that the messaging of the Labour Party leadership has not become more populist in recent years. This would open possibilities for further research on if populism has in fact changed the political style of other major political parties in Europe.

The second hypothesis of this thesis is that the type of populist ideas used in conference speeches has changed over time and that the two most recent labour leaders Ed Miliband and Jeremy Corbyn use populist ideas that challenge the economic establishment more frequently than what their predecessors Gordon Brown and Tony Blair did. If this hypothesis is proven correct, it would offer a valuable empirical contribution to the study of how the Labour Party has changed in recent years.

3   Background

The British Labour Party is a democratic socialist party in the United Kingdom that grew out of the trade union movement of the 19th century. The party was established under the name Labour Representation Committee in 1900 and changed its name to the Labour party in 1906. In 1922 the party had replaced the Liberal party as the largest opposition party to the Conservative party. Among the party's early achievements in government was when it under Clement Attlee's leadership 1945-1951 built an extensive social welfare system, including universal healthcare in Britain under the National Health Service (Webb 2018)

During the following decades the Labour Party managed to get back into government a few times, but never won a second term in government. When Tony Blair got elected in 1994 as party leader, he moved the party from the left towards the political centre and started calling the party "New Labour". This new version of the party was electorally successful and Blair won three consecutive elections, holding the office of prime minister from 1997 to 2007. Gordon Brown took over the leadership of the Labour Party and the title of Prime Minister from Blair in 2007. Brown's time as Prime Minister lasted only until 2010 when the Labour Party under his leadership lost a general election to the Conservative Party (BBC 2016).

Following the electoral defeat of 2010, Ed Miliband was elected to succeed Gordon Brown as the leader of the Labour Party. Miliband endured many attacks from the media under his leadership and was accused by the Conservatives of being in the pocket of trade unions. Miliband led the Labour Party in to the 2015 general election that resulted in a defeat to the Conservatives. This defeat resulted in Ed Miliband resigning as party leader. Surprising many, the Labour Party membership elected Jeremy Corbyn as Miliband's successor. Corbyn was a political outsider, who didn't enjoy a large support from Labour Members of Parliament, but who won 59,5% of the membership vote. After Britain voted to leave the European Union in 2016, many members of parliament were critical of the campaign that Corbyn had led, which resulted in a second leadership contest (BBC 2016). Corbyn managed to win this contest and get re-elected with an increased majority of the votes from the membership (Stewart & Mason 2016).

In 2017, the Prime Minister Theresa May called a general election that resulted in the Conservatives winning. But while winning the election, the Conservatives got fewer seats in Parliament and lost their parliamentary majority. All while the Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership manages to win the largest increase in vote share for the party since 1945. The party also wins more seats than with Ed Miliband during 2015. This cements Corbyn's position as Labour Party leader against the critics within his own party (Landale 2017).

4 Literature review

4.1 Previous research: Idea analysis

The origins of idea analysis within political science lies in an academic interest to study and criticize political texts, messages and ideas (Beckman 2005, p. 12). A political text or message can be defined in many ways ranging from well-defined political ideologies to simplified political statements that can be presented in a daily context (Vedung 1977, p. 17).

Many of the origins of modern idea analysis can be traced back to the Swedish political scientist Herbert Tingsten. Tingsten wanted to critically test the validity of political ideas, instead of just studying their history (Beckman 2005, p. 12). This new way of studying ideas defined many of the essential terms for this method of analysis. He also wrote theories that broke new ground for the method. Tingsten's method was developed further in the 70s by another political scientist, Evert Vedung (Vedung 1977, p. 26).

4.2 Previous research: Political populism

The topic of populism as a political phenomenon has been the source of extensive academic research. On books published that seek to define populism it is worth mentioning Jan-Werner Müller's book *What is populism?* from 2016, where the author defines the core of populism as a rejection of pluralism (Muller 2016). Another recent book that dives deep in to the topic is Benjamin Moffitt's *The Global Rise of Populism*, where Moffitt rethinks the concept of populism as a political style, instead of one clearly defined political ideology (Moffitt 2016).

You can also find an extensive amount of academic articles seeking to define populism. Margaret Canovan's article seeks to both discuss the nature of different aspects of populism and to argue why political scientists should take an interest in the topic (Canovan 2004). Cas Mudde has also written an article on the topic. He defines populism as *"An ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people"* (Mudde 2004).

4.3 Previous research: The Labour Party and populism

During recent years there has been extensive research on whether or not the Labour Party has become more populist during Jeremy Corbyn's leadership. James Watts and Tim Bale (2018) argue that the election of Jeremy Corbyn as the Labour Party's leader was the result of an intra-party populist uprising of ordinary party members against "an establishment" consisting of centrist members of parliament (Watts & Bale 2018).

In their paper titled *Corbyn's Labour and the populism question* Jonathan Dean and Bice Maiguascha study if Labour under Jeremy Corbyn, or Corbynism as it is sometimes called, actually fits within the definitions of populism. The authors argue that Corbynism can't be seen as populism, because none of the key features of populism define Corbynism, even though these features do sometimes occur within that political movement. According to the authors the similarities between populism and Corbynism only occur on a superficial level (Dean & Maiguascha 2017).

In his article *Left and right populism compared: The British case*, Luke March argues that the Labour party cannot be seen as populist, even though it often refers to "the people". Instead according to March, a closeness to the people in the parties political rhetoric is something that characterizes all major political parties in Britain and would be better described as demoticism, because it doesn't fill the other characteristics of populism, like emphasizing anti-elitism and popular sovereignty (March 2017).

Both March (2017) and Dean & Maiguascha (2017) claim in their separate papers with different arguments that Labour today is not a populist party. The only claim of Labour's populist nature, made in previous research utilized for this study, is Watts' and Bale's argument that an internal populist uprising resulted in the election of the current leader, Jeremy Corbyn (Watts & Bale 2018).

5   Methodology

5.1   Idea analysis

When you are constructing an idea analysis you have to initially start by defining the concept of an idea. This thesis uses a definition of an idea that is made by Göran Bergström and Per-Anders Svärd. According to them an idea is either an evaluation of reality, an evaluation of values or an instruction on how to act (Bergström & Boréus 2018, p. 133-134).

The method of idea analysis builds on an assumption that these types of ideas can be studied in an indirect manner, because the ideas leave traces after them in the form of for example texts and speeches. These kinds of traces can in turn be used as an empirical material. An idea analysis seeks to use the empirical material to present how a possible system of ideas that is behind the material could look like. This presentation rests on the researcher's ability to construct believable hypotheses on how ideas are built and how these ideas are connected in the material that the researcher is studying. This whole process can be described as the swinging of a pendulum between the empirical material itself and the researcher's own views on the material (Bergström & Boréus 2018, p. 139).

When analysing through the use of idea analysis one has to decide if they want to use the method to describe or to explain a phenomenon. When the goal is to explain a phenomenon you use what is called an explanatory idea analysis. With an explanatory idea analysis the researcher aims to explain a political message in relation to other phenomenon that exist in society (Beckman 2007, p. 80). When the goal is instead to describe the empirical material, the correct tool to use is a descriptive idea analysis. A descriptive idea analysis is not only about describing the contents of political empirical material. Instead the analysis seeks to systematically arrange the material in a way that tells something about the material that was not obvious to begin with (Beckman 2007, p. 49).

5.2 Ideal types as an analytical tool

This study uses a variant of idea analysis that constructs an ideal type of a political ideology that is used to compare the empirical material with. It is necessary for an ideal type of this kind to build on a strong foundation on how earlier research views the ideology. Every characteristic of this ideal type has to be justified in a logical manner. Nevertheless, an ideal type of this kind can never be a completely accurate description of reality. But as long as this ideal type can be convincingly seen to represent several characteristics of the ideology in question its existence is justified (Bergström & Boréus 2018, p. 148).

Upon constructing the ideal type it will be used to analyse to what degree the empirical material shares characteristics with it. The frequency and nature of shared characteristics forms the basis of the analysis' empirical results. These empirical results can then be analysed by comparing different texts in the material with each other to discover differences between for example different authors and different years of publication (Bergström & Boréus 2018, p. 149).

5.3 Possible methodological validity problems

When one has constructed an analysis that uses an ideal type it is often easy to find content in the empirical material that shares similarities with the ideal type. This method makes it easier to interpret a vast material in a qualitative way. But at the same time there lies a large responsibility on the author of the study to make sure that the similarities between the ideal type and the material are made clear. If the similarities are not obvious and well-motivated, the study can quickly start to suffer from validity problems. Also if the ideal type is not based on a theoretical foundation that is strong enough, the methodology of thesis will be weak and the quality of all the empirical findings made in the study will come in to question.

5.4 The material

The material for this thesis consists of all the leaders' conference speeches that were held at Labour Party conferences between the years 1998-2018. These speeches were retrieved from the website www.britishpoliticalspeeches.org. The site was founded as a result of a research project by Dr. Alan Finlayson and Dr. Judi Atkins at Swansea University. One of the main aims of the website is to "*to provide an accessible resource for all those*

interested in the history, theory and practice of political speech and rhetoric in the United Kingdom" (British Political Speech 2019). The 21 speeches consist in total of 129 393 words.

Below is a complete chronological list of the speeches that are analysed in this study:

1. **Tony Blair, Blackpool, 1998**
2. **Tony Blair, Bournemouth, 1999**
3. **Tony Blair, Brighton, 2000**
4. **Tony Blair, Brighton, 2001**
5. **Tony Blair, Blackpool, 2002**
6. **Tony Blair, Bournemouth, 2003**
7. **Tony Blair, Brighton, 2004**
8. **Tony Blair, Brighton, 2005**
9. **Tony Blair, Manchester, 2006**
10. **Gordon Brown, Bournemouth, 2007**
11. **Gordon Brown, Manchester, 2008**
12. **Gordon Brown, Brighton, 2009**
13. **Ed Miliband, Manchester, 2010**
14. **Ed Miliband, Liverpool, 2011**
15. **Ed Miliband, Manchester, 2012**
16. **Ed Miliband, Brighton, 2013**
17. **Ed Miliband, Manchester, 2014**
18. **Jeremy Corbyn, Brighton, 2015**
19. **Jeremy Corbyn, Liverpool, 2016**
20. **Jeremy Corbyn, Brighton, 2017**
21. **Jeremy Corbyn, Liverpool, 2018**

5.4.1 Demarcations

Due to the limited size of this study, the empirical material contains conference speeches only from the last 20 years. Because there is only one speech for each year, you cannot draw generalizing conclusions about how the party leaders expressed their views during the rest of the year. Therefore the material can be viewed as narrow when it comes to representing the political worldviews of each individual leader on a specific year. But on the other hand, the material does give a comprehensive view on the specific topic of how Labour Party leaders spoke at party conferences. When combined with an analysis that focuses on the specific topic of populism, you get results that can give indications on political trends within the Labour Party over time and how the four Labour Party leaders differ from each other.

5.4.2 Case selection

I chose to analyse conference speeches because these speeches are among the most important annual political speeches that British party leaders hold and play a role in showcasing a leader's direction for the party as a whole for the coming political year (Kendall 2007). The format and extensive length of these speeches forms a rich empirical material to interpret. Another benefit of analysing conference speeches is that compared to speeches in parliament or at political rallies, these speeches are not tied to any single political topic.

I have consequently chosen to analyse every single speech in the 20-year time period, to be able to draw conclusions on developments within that time frame. A potential problem with validity is that this study has not included every speech by Tony Blair as Labour Party leader, because he assumed the role of party leader already in 1994. At the same time the analysis contains considerably more speeches by Blair than any of his successors, which means that it is reasonable to argue that the analysis does give a comprehensive view on Blair's views as Labour Party leader. This is the case at least for his leadership during the years 1998-2006.

5.4.3 Interpreting the material

This study is about interpreting conference speeches by Labour Party leaders and comparing the contents of these speeches to an ideal type of populism. When interpreting the material, this study will try to maintain a critical view on both the material and the author's personal interpretation of it. This is done by discussing how well different talking points from the speeches actually fit together with the ideal type that they are compared with. By mentioning passages that can be interpreted in different ways the aim is to lessen the chance of the author's personal views influencing the interpretation of the material and also heighten the intersubjectivity of the analysis (Beckman 2007, p. 49-51).

6 Theoretical framework

This thesis' theoretical framework consists of theories on political populism. This is an essential part of the thesis, because the theoretical framework defines what this thesis views as essential characteristics of populism. This theoretical view on the nature of populism is the foundation that the methodological tool of an ideal type of populism is built on. This ideal type is the methodological tool that will be used to perform an idea analysis on the empirical material in order to answer the research question.

6.1 Defining populism

The question of populism's exact nature is a widely debated topic among many academics. Ernesto Laclau defines populism as a strategy that constructs a political frontier that divides society in two camps, the "underdogs" and "those in power". The aim of this political frontier is to mobilize the "underdogs" against "those in power". According to Laclau the political content of populism varies to a degree that makes it impossible to clearly define a specific political programme for populism. So instead of viewing populism as a traditional political ideology, Laclau suggests thinking about more as a way of doing politics (Mouffe 2018, p. 10-11).

Benjamin Moffitt's definition of populism has a lot in common with Laclau's. Moffitt views populism as a "political style". When describing populism as a political style, Moffitt wants to highlight the performative aspects of this political trend. Moffitt identifies three key common features that characterize populism: appeal to "the people" versus "the elite", "bad manners" and crisis, breakdown or threat. Moffitt cites Worsley by saying that this type of populistic style can be applied to various ideological frameworks (Moffitt 2016, p 28-29). Cas Mudde has a definition of populism that is similar to Moffitt's. Mudde highlights the conflict between "the pure people" and "the corrupt elite" and the aim of making politics an expression of the general will of the people (Mudde 2004, p. 562). Another key feature of populism is the notion that politics has somehow become too distant from "the people" (Müller 2016, p 8).

In an attempt to define populism that is relevant for the topic of this study, Margaret Canovan discusses how appealing to the people can be viewed as a classical tactic for western political insiders to gain votes. Canovan arguments that the style of appealing to a "people" as a whole instead of a specific segment of society is an effective tool at the hands of experienced politicians such as Tony Blair. Canovan calls populism used in this way as "Blair-style-populism" and defines it as *"a form of governing in which party is*

sidelined or disappears; where the people are undifferentiated, and in which a more or less "neutral" government attempts to serve the interests of all" (Canovan 2004, p. 243).

Populism can also be used as a politicized term to attack one's political opponents. In Europe for instance "established politicians" use this term to describe their political opponents from new political parties. Some of these "populists" counterattack by wearing populism as a badge of honour, if being a populist means working for "the people" (Müller 2016, p 10). It is also worth noting how the term populism in Europe is often used by liberal political commentators to represent irresponsible policies or political demagoguery (Müller 2016, p 11).

6.2 Criticism on theoretical definitions of populism

Like many essential political terms, the exact nature of populism has been widely contested. According to Benjamin Moffitt the extensive use of the term populism, especially to describe political actors of various forms in a negative manner, could be argued to mean that the term has lost its analytical value and become meaningless (Moffitt 2016, p. 11).

Another criticism on defining populism is given by Jan-Werner Müller. He points out that every politician in poll-driven democracies wants to appeal to "the people" and communicate in a way that coincides how "ordinary folks" think and feel. This raises the question if standing for the people in a populist fashion is just a case of successful politics? (Müller 2016, p. 2).

Margaret Canovan highlights a problem with defining populism as an ideology. Compared to other ideologies such as liberalism and socialism, populism does not descend from a continuous history and many politicians who are defined as populist refuse to adhere themselves to that ideology. Instead populists are often defined as such by their political opponents. Populists across the world also lack any common ground when it comes to a political programme or a social base. This lack of origin, self-use of the term populist and any common political programmes, does raise the question if populism can be viewed in the same category as established ideologies (Canovan 2004, p. 243).

6.3   Ideal type of populism

The theoretical definitions of populism outlined in chapter 6.1 have been used to construct the following ideal type of populism. This ideal type will be used as a methodological tool to conduct an idea analysis with in chapter 7.

The ideal type consists of four distinctive features:

- A view of society where the people should rally against the elite in power

- Talk about a crisis, breakdown or threat

- A view where politics has become too distant from "the people"

- An appeal to stand for "the people"

7   Analysis

The analysis is divided into 5 chapters, where each chapter includes 3-5 speeches from one leader. The only leader who has two chapters dedicated to himself is Tony Blair, because he was the Labour leader for 9 of the 20 years that this analysis focuses on. Each chapter in the analysis reviews the passages from each speech that match the ideal type for populism that was presented in chapter 6.3. These results will reveal the type and frequency of populist content for each speech and each speaker. The results of the analysis will be further discussed and compared to each other in chapter 8. Finally the findings of this thesis will be used to answer the research question and test the two hypotheses in chapter 9.

7.1   Tony Blair 1998-2001

The only populist part found in the speech in Blackpool 1998 that matches the ideal type is when Blair talks about how his Labour government has given more power back to the people. He develops this argument by arguing against the hereditary "elitist" institution that is the House of Lords.

"Now, this government is giving more power back to people than any government this century. Yet still, you know, the Tories call us arrogant. People say there is no Tory opposition any more. Well, there is. It is alive and well and unelected, in the House of Lords with a three to one majority over us. Not a vote to their name, but able to vote down the plans that the people voted for in our manifesto. I call that arrogance. And when we use the mandate the British people gave us at the ballot box to get rid of the power of those hereditary peers, I call that democracy" (Blair 1998).

In his speech in Bournemouth in 1999 Blair paints a picture of his opponents in the Conservative Party as a group of privileged individuals that have held the British public back.

"A New Britain where the extraordinary talent of the British people is liberated from the forces of conservatism that so long have held them back, to create a model 21st century nation, based not on privilege, class or background, but on the equal worth of all" (Blair 1999).

He furthermore cements a picture of the Conservative Party as the elite by describing them as advocates for fox hunting and highlighting the fact that the Conservative Party dominate

the hereditary House of Lords. Furthermore he quotes a member of the public who claims that the Conservatives are not listening to the British people, therefore representing a form of politics far away from "the people".

"Like the letter I got last week from a man who said did I know the Tories had been listening to Britain. They can't have been listening too hard, he said. They're still here" (Blair 1999).

He even speaks about his political opponents using the terms "elites" and "the establishment", both hallmarks of populist rhetoric and this happens several times during his speech, like for example in this paragraph:

"Arrayed against us: the forces of conservatism, the cynics, the elites, the establishment" (Blair 1999).

In his speech in Brighton in 2000, Blair talks in terms of fighting for the people and their future.

"We do not lie down in the testing times.
We hold firm. We listen and we lead.
We can be confident in our policies, confident in the record we will put before the British people.
Confident that we will repay the trust the British people put in us.
Confident that we share their basic decent instincts and values.
Confident that we are winning the big arguments on the big issues" (Blair 2000).

Besides this, the speech lacks further content that fits together with the ideal type that represents populism.

There is nothing in Blair's 2001 Speech in Brighton that can be seen as populist according to the definition of the ideal type constructed for this study.

7.2   Tony Blair 2002-2006

Tony Blair's conference speech in Blackpool 2002 does not contain anything that fits within the ideal type's definition of populism. But there is a populist paragraph in Blair's speech in Bournemouth in 2003.

"Not the daily diet of froth; not turning serious politics into soap opera, debasing it, turning it into an endless who knew what, when, as if politicians simply competed on villainy. The British people deserve better from the politicians and with respect, from parts of the media too. But real politics about real people" (Blair 2003).

This talk about how the British people deserve better from both politicians and the media, can be seen as typically populist, because it pits the people and "the establishment" against each other. He even mentions "real politics for real people", further utilizing the populist definition of standing for "the people".

The speech that Blair holds in Brighton in 2004 includes a line about his party, Labour not being a part of "the ruling class", which can be seen as another term for "the elite".

"The trouble is even now, even after the lessons of 18 years of opposition followed by two terms of Government, we still think they're the Party of Government, they're the ruling class and we're not part of it. And we're not. Neither should we be" (Blair 2004).

Blair continues rallying against the elites, advocating a rule by the people.

"But the point is: Britain doesn't need a ruling class today.
The rulers are the people" (Blair 2004).

This is another example of creating a clear conflict between "the elite" and "the people". He furthermore talks about concentrating power in "the hands of the many", something that can be seen to stand for "the people".

The speech in Brighton in 2005 contains only one passage that somewhat fits within the ideal types definition of populism. The passage highlights the need for a ruling party to implement the will of "the people".

"People suffered in those 18 years because we let them down. We did so not because we meant to, but because we forgot that the first rule of any party with aspirations to government is to understand first the aspirations of people and how they change with time" (Blair 2005).

Blair's final conference speech that was held in Manchester in 2006 contains several lines that are similar to populism as defined by this thesis' ideal type. Firstly Blair praises "the people".

"But above all else, I want to thank the British people.
Not just for the honour of being prime minister but for the journey of progress we have travelled together. Leaders lead but in the end it's the people who deliver" (Blair 2006).

Furthermore he paints a threatening picture of how Britain was in the midst of a crisis with rampant crime and poverty when he started leading the Labour Party.

"In 1994, I stood before you for the first time and shared the country's anger at crumbling school buildings, patients languishing, sometimes dying in pain, waiting for operations, of crime doubled, of homes repossessed, of pensioners living in poverty" (Blair 2006).

Lastly he credits the successes of his governments to being in service of "the people".

"This Labour government has been unique.
First time ever two full terms; now three. Why? How?
We faced out to the people, not in on ourselves. We put the party at the service of the
country.Their reality became our reality. Their worries, our worries" (Blair 2006).

7.3   Gordon Brown 2007-2009

In his first conference speech in Bournemouth in 2007, Brown speaks about the need to listen and involve the British people and to fix democracy.

"All of the challenges we have to face can only be met by listening to and involving the British people themselves. And I have no doubt that the best answer to disengagement from our democracy is to renew our democracy" (Brown 2007).

This coincides with the populist concepts of standing up for the people and speaking of democracy having become too distant from "the people". In this speech Brown also makes a pledge to represent the British people.

"So this is my pledge to the British people:
I will not let you down.
I will stand up for our schools and our hospitals.
I will stand up for British values.
I will stand up for a strong Britain.
And I will always stand up for you" (Brown 2007).

The populist lines in Browns 2008 speech in Manchester are relatively short in length. Firstly Brown speaks about being elected to serve the people of his parliamentary constituency.

"I didn't come into politics to be a celebrity or thinking I'd always be popular. Perhaps, that's just as well. No, 25 years ago I asked the people of Fife to send me to parliament to serve the country I love" (Brown 2008).

Secondly he talks about coming to parliament to change the establishment.

"And I didn't come to London because I wanted to join the establishment, but because I wanted and want to change it" (Brown 2008).

And lastly he talks about the importance of putting the people first.

"The people of Britain would never forget if we failed to put them first - and friends, they'd be right" (Brown 2008).

In Brighton 2009, Brown talks about nationalizing the banks to benefit the hard working majority, not the privileged few.

"Our choice was clear; we nationalised Northern Rock and took shares in British banks, and as a result not one British saver has lost a single penny. That was the change we chose. The change that benefits the hard working majority, not the privileged few" (Brown 2009).

This kind of rhetoric of standing up for the majority is then repeated in three consequent paragraphs. Furthermore he adds that the British people will not pay for the banks, but that the banks will pay the British people.

"And so I tell you this about our aims for the rescue of the banks: the British people will not pay for the banks. No, the banks will pay back the British people" (Brown 2009).

This part of the speech regarding the banks can be viewed as a classic populist way of creating a conflict between the people and the ruling elite. Brown even talks according to another key populist feature in his 2009 speech, when he talks about democracy and how it needs to work for the people.

"And if we want a politics that is more open, more plural, more local, more democratic, then we will need to make big changes because the only way to ensure politics serves the people's values is to make all those who wield political power genuinely accountable to the people" (Brown 2009).

Towards the end of his 2009 speech, Brown mentions once more the need for change that benefits the many, not the privileged few.

"And so when our opponents talk of change, ask yourself. Is that change that will benefit my family, or only a privileged few?" (Brown 2009).

He even talks about the economic crisis in order to point out that his political opponents, want to prioritize helping "the elite", not "the people".

"If you're a family that's feeling the pinch – don't take it from me – just ask them the question. If you care about me, why is your first priority to give a 200 thousand pound tax giveaway to each of the 3,000 wealthiest estates?" (Brown 2009).

7.4 Ed Miliband 2010-2014

Ed Miliband's first conference speech as Labour leader 2010 in Manchester includes a few populist elements. Firstly he talks about building an economy in the interest of "the people".

"This generation wants to change our economy so that it works better for working people and doesn't just serve the needs of the few at the top" (Miliband 2010).

Furthermore he talks about the dysfunctionality of today's politics, and how it is disconnected from "the people".

"Let's be honest, politics isn't working. People have lost faith in politicians and politics. And trust is gone. Politics is broken. Its practice, its reputation and its institutions. I'm in it and even I sometimes find it depressing. This generation has a chance - and a huge responsibility - to change our politics. We must seize it and meet the challenge" (Miliband 2010).

In his 2011 speech in Liverpool Miliband criticises his political opponents for showing disrespect for parts of the country.

"I will never write off whole parts of our country by calling them sick. We are not a country of bad people but great people. Great people in a great country" (Miliband 2011).

This can be seen as pinpointing a contempt for "the people" by "the establishment" and therefore something of a populist nature. Miliband also talks about big vested interests going unchallenged and ripping off ordinary people.

"But you've been told that if companies are big enough or powerful enough they can get away with anything. And what's happened? Big vested interests like the energy companies have gone unchallenged, while you're being ripped off. We need to change that. To give power to the public. So I will take on the vested interests wherever they are because that is how we defend the public interest" (Miliband 2011).

He also criticizes the Conservative Prime Minister at the time, David Cameron for not enacting change that benefits the majority.

"And let me tell the British people: If you want someone who will rip up the old rules so that the country works for you, don't expect it from this Prime Minister. On the 50p tax rate, on the banks, on the closed circles of Britain, on welfare, on the NHS, he's not about a new set of rules. He's the last gasp of the old rules" (Miliband 2011).

This way of associating his opponent with the past order that ruled Britain works to present his opponent as a member of the elite.

Talking 2012 in Manchester, Miliband returns to the topic of the elite playing by different rules.

"And I want to say to them, yes our problems are deep. But they can be overcome. Deep problems about who Britain is run for and who prospers within it. One rule for those at the top, another rule for everybody else. Two nations, not one. I want to say to them today it's not the Britain you believe in. It's not the Britain I believe in. It's not the Britain this party will ever be satisfied with" (Miliband 2012).

He also criticizes the Conservative Prime Minister for trying to hide the ripping off of the British people by the elites.

"So that's the reality in Britain today. It is a rebate for the top. It's rip-off for everybody else. It's a recovery for the top. It's a recession for everybody else. This Prime Minister said: 'We are all in it together.' Don't let him ever tell us again we are all in this together" (Miliband 2012).

Miliband even attacks The Labour Party under Blair and Brown for not standing up to "the elite".

"But so too it is right to move on from New Labour because New Labour, despite its great achievements, was too silent about the responsibilities of those at the top, and too timid about the accountability of those with power" (Miliband 2012).

He also pledges in a populist fashion to take on the powerful interests of the country and to start holding them accountable.

"The richest in society have the biggest responsibility to show responsibility to the rest of our country. And I've got news for the powerful interests in our country, in One Nation no interest, from Rupert Murdoch to the banks, is too powerful to be held to account" (Miliband 2012).

The only overtly populist part of Miliband's 2013 speech in Brighton is his critique of the current government not fighting the powerful interests.

"Now some people will just blame the companies but actually I don't think that's where the blame lies. I think it lies with government. I think it lies with government for not having had the strength to take this on. Not having stood up to the powerful interests. Not having the strength to stand up to the strong" (Miliband 2013).

Miliband's final speech as Labour leader in Manchester in 2014 includes a critique of how today's Britain is run only for the elite.

"To do that we have to go back to the very foundations of who we are and how we run things. We just can't carry on with the belief that a country can succeed with a small minority doing well. Prosperity in one part of Britain, amongst a small elite, a circle that is closed to most, blind to what is going on for everyone but a few. They're sending the message to everyone but a few: You're on your own" (Miliband 2014).

He even talks about a rigged system.

"But if the question is how to build a future together, the Tories can never be the answer. If you want the best example of the "you're on your own", insecure, rig the system for the powerful few, trickle down, throwback dogma, then just look at this government" (Miliband 2014).

The speech also includes talk about how the government only help the elite, not the struggling people.

"And if you're one of the nine million people renting your home, they won't act to support you. Because they say that would be like Venezuela. And you're on your own. You're on your own they say, because they don't believe in government intervention. Really? Of course they do. If you are a millionaire they've intervened to give you a tax cut. You will never be on your own" (Miliband 2014).

Miliband follows this reasoning by painting a detailed picture of exactly how his political opponents being a part of the elite.

"And by the way, if you are a Conservative supporting, gold mining, luxury hotel owning, Putin award winning, Tory ball attending, Russian oligarch, and you have got a £160,000 to bid in an auction? You won't be on your own either; you will be on tennis court playing doubles with David Cameron" (Miliband 2014).

7.5   Jeremy Corbyn 2015-2018

Jeremy Corbyn's first speech as Labour leader in 2015 in Brighton, does not include much content that fits with the essential characteristics populism according to the ideal type defined for this thesis. The only such phrase is the following about putting the people first.

"Both threatened by the idea that profit comes first, not the needs and interests of our people. That's the difference between us and the Tories. So let me make this commitment. Our Labour Party will always put people's interests before profit" (Corbyn 2015).

But the speech that Corbyn holds 2016 in Liverpool has a few more populist elements. He talks about how his political opponent the Conservative Prime Minister Theresa May failed to work for the benefit of "the majority".

"Even Theresa May gets it, that people want change. That's why she stood on the steps of Downing Street and talked about the inequalities and burning injustices in today's Britain. She promised a country: "that works not for a privileged few but for every one of us". But even if she manages to talk the talk, she can't walk the walk" (Corbyn 2016).

Further along the speech Corbyn develops his criticism of the Conservatives.

"Who seriously believes that the Tories could ever stand up to the privileged few? They are the party of the privileged few, funded by the privileged few, for the benefit of the privileged few. They've cut taxes for the privileged few sold off our national assets to them, always on the cheap and turned a blind eye to their chronic tax avoidance. They're so committed to the interests of the very richest they recruited Sir Phillip Green into government as something called an efficiency tsar. Well, government might be a bit more efficient if the super-rich like Sir Phillip actually paid their taxes" (Corbyn 2016).

This picture of the Conservatives being the elite and the establishment is highlighted by the fact that they appointed a hereditary peer that according to Corbyn doesn't pay his taxes in to the government as the person in charge of government efficiency. This whole passage from the speech fits well with the populist way of painting your opponents as the elite that are out of touch with the people.

In Corbyn's 2017 speech in Brighton he addresses the populist topic of connecting politics to "the people".

"For people to take control of their own lives, our democracy needs to break out of Westminster into all parts of our society and economy where power is unaccountable. All around the world democracy is facing twin threats: One is the emergence of an authoritarian nationalism that is intolerant and belligerent. The second is apparently more benign, but equally insidious. It is that the big decisions should be left to the elite. That political choices can only be marginal and that people are consumers first, and only citizens a distant second. Democracy has to mean much more than that. It must mean listening to people outside of election time. Not just the rich and powerful who are used to calling the shots, but to those at the sharp end who really know what's going on" (Corbyn 2017).

He also paints a picture of his party representing the will of "the people":

"This is the real centre of gravity of British politics. We are now the political mainstream. Our manifesto and our policies are popular because that is what most people in our country actually want, not what they're told they should want" (Corbyn 2017).

In Corbyn's most recent speech as Labour Party leader 2018 in Liverpool he highlights how Labour is financially only beholden to "the people".

"We have also been raising more money for our party. But not a penny of our funds came from a dodgy donor or a shady businessmen's club. Our money comes from hundreds of thousands of people across our country who believe in what we stand for. So I don't have to play tennis with an oligarch to keep our party organisation running. Labour trades in hope for the many, not favours for the few. Our mass membership is not just a source of funds of course. That membership and our millions of affiliated trade union members are the voice of their workplaces and communities, and with our new community organisers we will anchor everything we do in people's day to day experiences" (Corbyn 2018).

This way he is making the case that his party is supported by the people, not the elite. He then develops his antagonism towards the elite.

"You may have noticed that not everyone is entirely happy about all this. It turns out that the billionaires who own the bulk of the British press don't like us one little bit. Now it could be because we're going to clamp down on tax dodging. Or it may be because we don't fawn over them at white tie dinners and cocktail parties" (Corbyn 2018).

This hostile attitude from the media is something that he uses as a way to highlight that he stands for "the people". Corbyn also wants to point out who he thinks that his political opponents work for.

"The only winners have been the rich and the party of the rich: the Conservatives" (Corbyn 2018).

In a populist way he emphasizes that the party needs to succeed in speaking to "the people".

"We must speak for the people to whom Theresa May promised so much but has delivered so little" (Corbyn 2018).

8 Discussion

In this chapter the results of the analysis are discussed by both looking at the contributions of each individual leader and comparing what the different leaders have in common and what sets them apart. Finally the findings from the empirical material will be discussed as a whole.

8.1 Tony Blair

The populist tendencies found in Tony Blair's speeches often focus on representing the British people and rallying against the old "elite" that he claims the Conservative Party is a part of. In his speech in Manchester 2006, Blair even utilizes the populist strategy of painting a picture of a country in crisis. Blair wants on several occasions to paint the Conservatives in a negative light, this is done among other things by associating them with the hereditary unelected upper chamber of parliament called the House of Lords. Unlike his successors, Blair doesn't count big businesses as a part of the "establishment" or antagonize them. He prefers instead talking about forces of Conservatism that hold the country back.

Tony Blair's conference speeches in 2001 and 2002 do not interestingly contain anything that would fit within this thesis' definition of populism. He also has several speeches with only one talking point that can be seen as populist. That is the case for the speeches held in 1998, 2000, 2003, 2004 and 2005. At the same time Blair's 1999 speech in Bournemouth is the speech that has most content that can be seen as populist in the whole empirical material. It is also worth noting that Blair's last speech in Manchester 2006 has the second most populist content of all his speeches, meaning that it is difficult to argue that Blair's use of populist rhetoric in conference speeches would have lessened with time. Even though you could view his last speech as leader as a unique case where he takes more rhetorical freedoms before leaving office.

In general Blair's speeches paint a mixed picture. You could definitely argue that he regularly utilizes the political style of populism, but at the same time some of his speeches in the 2000s do not contain any notable populist content.

8.2   Gordon Brown

A variety of populist content can be found in Gordon Brown's three conference speeches as Labour leader. Brown both wants to represent "the people" and to move politics closer to the people. What makes Brown different from his predecessor Blair is that Brown antagonizes the banks in his 2008 speech, painting these institutions as a part of "the elite". The only populist element that is completely lacking in Brown's speeches is the talk about a crisis or a threat facing the nation. Another unique thing with Brown's speeches is the complete lack of populist-style attacks on his political rivals, the Conservative Party. All the other three leaders at some point refer to the Conservative Party in their speeches as a party that only cares about "the elite" or the rich.

Each of Brown's three speeches utilizes populist ideas, even though these ideas do not define a single one of his speeches. The speech with the most populist features in it is his final speech 2009 in Brighton, while his other two speeches both have a handful of populist talking points in them.

It is hard make conclusive statements on the increase or decrease of populist ideas in Brown's speech compared to Blair's, because the analysed material from Brown consists of only three speeches compared to Blair's nine. What you can say is that a new kind of populist message was used by Brown, when he rallied against the "elite" consisting of the banks. This could just be a result of the global financial crisis of 2008 and not a result on actual political differences in the leadership views between Brown and Blair.

8.3   Ed Miliband

Something that differentiates Ed Miliband's conference speeches from the ones held by his two predecessors is an increased emphasis on building an economy that works for "the people", not "the elites". Like Brown before him, even Miliband talks about politics having become too distant from "the people". Like Blair, even Miliband wants to invoke a picture of the Conservatives as heirs to an old and unfair system and members of "the elite". A distinctive feature with Miliband is that he in his 2012 speech in Manchester attacks previous Labour governments for not standing up to "the establishment". This is something that none of the other leaders who are analysed use in their speeches. In general the most frequent populist feature in Miliband's speeches is highlighting how the "elite" or the "establishment" make life worse for "the people" and how he will fight against these forces. The only populist feature that is completely lacking in Miliband's conference speeches is talk about a crisis or a threat facing the country.

When it comes to the amount of populist ideas utilized, Miliband's speeches do not show a consistent trend. His 2013 speech contains only one populist talking point, and his 2010 has two. At the same time his speeches in 2011, 2012 and 2014 contain more populist talking points than any of the speeches from Brown and more than most of Blair's speeches. So even though you cannot talk about a trend where the amount of populist ideas would increase or decrease as time goes by, you could still argue that overall Miliband's speeches are more populist in nature than both Brown's and even Blair's.

8.4   Jeremy Corbyn

Jeremy Corbyn's first conference speech only contains one populist paragraph, which is in significant contrast to most of Miliband's speeches and even some of the speeches by Blair and Brown. The following two speeches in 2016 and 2017 only contain two paragraphs that fits with the populist definitions outlined by the ideal type. The more recent speech in 2018 on the other hand has far more populist content in it.

Like Ed Miliband, even Jeremy Corbyn likes to talk about putting the interests of the people before the financial interests of the elite. In general many of Corbyn's remarks that can be seen as populist are tied together to economic topics, like the "elites" not paying their taxes. Another prominent populist feature in Corbyn's speeches are his attacks on the Conservative Party as the party of the rich. This type of antagonism is also utilized by Blair and Miliband, but it plays the largest role in speeches by Corbyn.

The frequency of populist ideas in Corbyn's speeches is somewhat lesser than in speeches by Ed Miliband and more frequent than in Gordon Brown's speeches. Compared to tony Blair's speeches, Corbyn uses populist ideas more consistently, even though Blair has a few speeches that have much more populist content in them.

8.5   The findings in general

Based on the analysis of the empirical material this study has found that most speeches by Labour party leaders during the last 20 years have ideas in them that fit with this thesis' theoretical definition of populism. These ideas can be found in speeches by each of the four most recent leaders. It is also important to point out that these populist ideas do not dominate any single speech, even though Tony Blair's speech 1999 in Bournemouth stands as the single example with the clearly most examples of populism in it. At the same time there are a few of Blair's nine speeches that do not contain almost anything that fits with this thesis' definition of populism. Meanwhile Ed Miliband, Gordon Brown and Jeremy

Corbyn all have one speech each that barely contains any content that can be described as populist.

The fact that the two latest Labour leaders' speeches cannot be seen to contain more populist content than the speeches of their predecessors would seem to suggest that the Labour Party has not become more populist, at least when it comes to their leaders and how they articulate the party's vision. This also proves correct the first hypothesis for this study.

But even though one cannot point at a clear decrease or increase in the use of populist ideas in the empirical material, there are some clear changes in what type of populist ideas have been used. Tony Blair's use of populist ideas was focused on standing up to the British people and unlocking their potential by releasing them from the control of the old elite, represented by the Conservative Party. Blair was also the only one of the leaders included in this study that utilized the populist strategy of describing the nation being in crisis. Blair's successor Gordon Brown on the other hand didn't attack the Conservative Party for representing the elite a single time. Instead Brown focused on attacking the elite by targeting the banks.

A common theme between Blair and Brown is the talk of representing the people. Even though political communication that focuses on representing "the people", can be viewed according to March to stand for demoticism instead of populism. Demoticism is a common feature in all British political parties. A political message is closer to demoticism than populism if the talk about "the people" is not combined with a message that emphasizes anti-elitism and popular sovereignty (March 2017). But because anti-elitism does appear in both Brown's and Blair's speeches, it is not a reasonable conclusion to claim that their political messaging is completely devoid of populism, even though demoticism can also factor in.

The use of populist ideas evolves with Ed Miliband to something new that was not present with Blair and Brown. Miliband combines the message of standing up for the people with the economy, frequently advocating an economy that works for the many. Unlike Blair, Miliband talks about the elites making life worse for people, instead of the elites just holding the people back. But there is a common populist theme between Blair, Brown and Miliband: talk about representing the people. This theme is also utilized by Jeremy Corbyn. Corbyn also continues on the theme that Miliband started, where he wants to put the financial interests of the people, before the financial interests of the elite. Corbyn also makes frequent use of describing the Conservatives as a part of the elite, just like Blair and Miliband. But unlike Blair, Corbyn's description of the elitist nature of the Conservatives relies more on them being a party of the rich, than their supposed Conservative values. This way of talking about the rich Conservatives began with Miliband and expanded with Corbyn.

Another interesting finding is the fact that there was such a degree of populism in conference speeches by Labour leaders in the 90s and 2000s, when the party was in government and had profiled itself as a moderate and centrist party. This discovery ties

into Canovan's writings about Blair-style populism, where the government wants to appear neutral by appealing to serve an undifferentiated mass of people, devoid on divisions such a class (Canovan 2004, p. 243).

9   Concluding remarks

This study has used an ideal type based idea analysis to answer the following research question:

"How has the use of populist ideas developed over time in conference speeches made by Labour Party leaders?"

The empirical results answer the question by showing that populist ideas have been a steady, but non-dominant feature in conference speeches by Labour Party leaders during the last two decades. The frequency of these ideas has changed on a year-by-year basis, but there does not exist a clear increasing or decreasing trend. This proves correct this thesis' first hypothesis. The messaging of the Labour Party leadership has not transformed to include more populist ideas in recent years.

However the findings made in this study do suggest that there has been a change over time in what type of populist ideas Labour Party leaders choose to use in their speeches. Attacking the economic elite was a populist feature that was completely absent in Tony Blair's speeches. This idea manifested itself for the first time in Gordon Brown's critique of the banks and later became a main aspect of the populist style used by both Ed Miliband and Jeremy Corbyn. This verifies the second hypothesis for this study, proving that challenging the economic establishment has become a more common feature in Labour Party leaders' speeches.

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